
THE BASICS

REVISED EDITION

A Categorical Bible Study

As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: *“Freely you have received, freely give”* (Matthew 10:8). This six-word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and audio ministries of Basic Training. All audio materials and publications are provided **without charge** to anyone who requests them. For information on available materials, write:



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*“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier
of Christ Jesus.”* 2 Timothy 2:3

This book is edited from the 30-tape series, “The Basics,” taught by Gene Cunningham in 1988–1989.

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“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:4–10

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled by means of the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

1. *We must be believers in Jesus Christ* (John 3:16). It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth man is blind to the things of God. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again*" (John 3:6–7).
2. *We must be filled by means of the Spirit* (1 Cor. 2:12). Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When we confess our sins, God is always faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.
3. *We must approach in faith* (Heb. 11:6). Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

In Appreciation

To express my gratitude to all of the wonderful people who have made this book a reality is a difficult task for me. I do not want to overlook anyone and, yet, so many have been involved, it would be impossible to name each and every one. You all know who you are, if you are not named. More importantly, our gracious God knows, and He keeps the books!

After a mission trip to Nigeria and Ghana in 1989, I taught a series of 25 classes at Harlan Park Bible Church, in Conway, Arkansas (one of the finest congregations any pastor could ever have), which I called simply, “The Basics,” to send via cassette to the pastors to whom I had ministered.

My mother Ruth Cunningham was one of the first to insist that it be made into a book. The first book was called *The ABCs*, and the format did not follow the original plan of the classes. It was not very “user friendly.” At this point, one of our members, Jo Ann Pryor, who had been trained in journalism, took up the challenge and spent about two years, with very little compensation, to bring it into its present format. Thank you, Jo Ann for your tenacity!

Many members of our church at that time spent countless hours transcribing the tapes to word-for-word notes, which Jo Ann then edited. My secretary, Alice Smith, did hours and hours of typing. When we did the first printing, members of the church would gather around tables with the pages laid out and walk around them for hours to collate the material in order to save money. Thank you to all who put their “fingerprints” on this book, which has now sown seed all over the world.

A new team of volunteers has accomplished our current revisions. My deepest thanks to Col. Ken Curcio (USMC Ret.), President, Basic Training Bible Ministries Board of Directors, and his wife Sharon (our “Editor-in-Chief”), who have led the way and spent hours revising, verse-checking, and communicating with me. Thanks to Margi Robison, who provided a digital copy from which to do the editing. A special thanks to Claudia Dideum, co-Editor, whose fingers just fly over the keys, formatting and making corrections in record time.

A special thanks to Benjamin Phenicie who, once again, has provided us with a fresh, new cover for this revised edition.

Many have volunteered to read and verse-check the present copy: Paul Stanton (our web-master) and his wife Phyllis, Amber Dewitt, Blair and Aurora Buselli, Susan Doran, and Gloria Bassett—thanks to all of you!

This list wouldn't be complete without thanking my sister, Cheryl Watkins, BTBM Administrator, who literally receives thousands of requests for copies of *The Basics*. She faithfully sends them out all over the world!

I simply cannot name all the translators and helpers who have produced this book into many languages around the world. God knows.

In writing this, I am reminded of Paul's "thank you" section in Romans 16:1–16 to those who labored with him. Truly, none of us stands alone. How I thank God for the gracious, patient, and faithful service of every one of you. By the grace of God, we will celebrate the impact of this book throughout eternity!

Salute!
Gene

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“Advanced techniques are the basics mastered.”
~ 17th Century Samurai Code

Preface

The fundamental principles which underlie any course of study are called simply “the basics.” The basics are the ABCs—the nuts and bolts. They are the essentials, the things we must master before we can become proficient in any particular field. But the basics are also the things to which we must return when we lose our bearings. They are the bedrock, apart from which we have no hope of standing.

As new believers, we learn the basic principles: the love of God, the destructiveness of sin, salvation by faith, the authority of the Word, the sufficiency of grace. We begin to practice the basic exercises: confession, prayer, study, service.

As we mature, we come to realize that proficiency, skill in living the Christian life, is not a matter of moving beyond the basics, but is a matter of delving more deeply into them. We will never outgrow our need for confession or prayer or service; in fact, growth intensifies our need for and our pleasure in these things. And even though we learn more promises, more principles, more doctrines every day, we will never plumb the depths of even the most basic truths of God’s Word.

The more we grow in the grace and knowledge of God, the less impressed we will be with ourselves and the more impressed we will become with the Lord Jesus Christ, “*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col. 2:3).

As a pastor-teacher, my goal in teaching “The Basics” series from which this book was written was to lead my sheep to a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. My prayer is that this book will be used by God to encourage others to study with renewed enthusiasm and diligence the written Word, through which alone we can come to know the Living Word—the Lord Jesus Christ.

G.C.

Introduction

God has a desire for every one of His children to become great. In eternity past, He designed a plan that would bring us to greatness. He foresaw everything we would need to fulfill our destiny, and He set aside a lifetime of provisions for each of us.

The purpose of this book is to lay out that plan, to show from the Word the goal He wants us to reach and the means by which He intends we get there.

Unit 1: The Plan of Redemption, explains why man is in the mess he is in and how God saw the problem before time began. It describes the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in providing the solution and tells us how to lay hold of it.

Unit 2: The Provisions of God's Grace, outlines five essential provisions that God has given to every believer. In Christ, we are incredibly rich, but these riches are of no practical value to us until we know what they are. Not until we understand what is available to us can we begin to grow spiritually.

Unit 3: Spiritual Growth, describes the upward path from infancy to maturity in the spiritual realm. Once we know what God has made available, the next logical step is to use those resources, to let ourselves be trained for the work God has prepared for us. This unit explains both the alternative to growth and the joys of growth and describes the goal of growth—spiritual maturity.

Unit 4: The Christian Way of Life, describes the greater spiritual riches and the more subtle spiritual tests that accompany maturity. In maturity, it is imperative that we have 20/20 spiritual vision. This is the point at which the “normal” Christian life really begins. The kind of life God intends to be “normal” for His children is the kind of life hinted at by men like Joshua, Caleb, Daniel, Gideon, and exemplified in Paul—men who God could entrust with the work because He knew they would trust Him.

Unit 5: Spiritual Warfare, opens the curtain on the spiritual battle that rages on this Earth, describing both the strategy of the enemy and the ultimate futility of his cause. Focusing on Job, it puts into perspective the suffering and pain through which heroes of faith are forged.

Four of these units describe phases of spiritual growth to the point at which we must make a decision. Our freedom to choose is important to God. He is a gentleman; He will never force us to go any further with Him than we want to go. He wants to take us all the way to greatness, but He has chosen to limit Himself by our faith.

In Unit 1, the Gospel is made absolutely clear. It takes us, therefore, to the point at which we face the most important decision anyone ever makes: What will I do with Jesus Christ? Our eternal destiny hinges on how we answer that question. If we believe in Him, we enter eternal life. If we reject Him, we remain in death—and doom ourselves to an eternity in Hell. God sends no one to Hell; men go there by their own free choice.

Believing in Jesus Christ is only the first of many choices that will determine the course of our lives and the rewards that will—or will not—be ours in Heaven. Unit 2 takes us to the point at which we have to ask ourselves: Do I want to grow? If we say yes, all we have to do is receive and use the resources God has given.

By the end of Unit 3, we will be beginning to understand the next great decision we must make. In order to reach the high ground of spiritual maturity, we have to choose to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God, to subordinate everything we want in life to the plan of God.

Of the few who choose to press on to spiritual maturity, fewer still will make it through the minefields described in Unit 4 to the point at which we must decide: Do I want to become a hero of the faith? To move beyond this point, we must have come to the place where the spiritual realm is more real to us than the physical.

By the time we reach the end of what is described in Unit 5, we will have no more decisions to make. The day will come when each of us will face the result of all our previous decisions. On that day, we will stand alone before the Lord Jesus Christ. If we have chosen for the plan of God and have finished the race He set before us, we will hear the only words that a disciple wants to hear His Master say “*Well done, good and faithful [servant]!*” (Matt. 25:21).



Lesson 1–1: The Problem—*Sin*

Genesis 2:16–17
Genesis 3:1–7, 12–16, 21

The book of Genesis takes us back to the beginning of human history. In the first two chapters, we see a perfect environment created by a perfect God; over and over again, God looked at what He had made and said, “It is good.”

In this perfect environment, God placed perfect man and perfect woman and gave them the gift of freedom. To make the freedom real, God gave the man and woman real choices. And so, in the Garden of Eden, there was a test of the human will.

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”
(Gen. 2:16–17)

God knew that the minute He gave man and woman freedom, danger would enter this perfect environment. He knew that with freedom man could make a personal decision to reject Him and, with Him, everything good. He knew that with freedom man could turn Paradise into hell on Earth. The fact that He was willing to give to the human race this marvelous gift, despite the dangers it created, should tell us something about the value God places on human freedom.

The Bible does not tell us how long Adam and Eve had been in the Garden of Eden before the events of Genesis 3. It could have been a week; it could have been a thousand years.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?”’” (Gen. 3:1)

The Hebrew word for serpent is *nachash*. *Nachash* means “the shining one.” This creature, whatever it was, did not at this point look like a snake. Not until after the Fall did God curse the serpent and it became a symbol of sin. In Revelation 12:9, the serpent is identified as the devil, Satan—the one who deceives the world.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan is working through this creature. He approaches the woman by implying that God is keeping something from her and is, therefore, not a good God.

“The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said “You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.”’” (Gen. 3:2–3)

Notice that the woman is not surprised when this creature speaks. She makes a half-hearted attempt to defend God but, in doing so, she misquotes Him. He had not told them that they could not touch the fruit, only that they could not eat it. Already there is clearly a problem in the human race: ignorance of the Word of God. Though Adam and Eve had the spoken Word and we today have the written Word, the principle is the same: ignorance of God’s Word always leads to defeat. When we today are not clear in our understanding of the Bible, when we add to or subtract from His instructions, we will be defeated.

“And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’” (Gen. 3:4–5)

Having planted in the woman’s mind the seed of doubt about the goodness of God and His plan, Satan now makes further use of her lack of understanding of God’s Word. He gives her a half-truth and tells her that the penalty for eating the fruit is not really what she thinks it is. He knows that Eve is thinking in terms of physical death. He also knows that she will not fall down and die physically

the instant she eats from the tree, so his words are half true. God's warning of Genesis 2:17 uses the Hebrew word for death, *muth*, twice: "*In the day you eat of this tree, dying you shall surely die.*" God was telling them that they would die spiritually, as a result of which they would eventually die physically. That is, of course, just what Adam and Eve were about to learn firsthand.

Death

Webster's dictionary defines death as "*a permanent cessation of all vital functions; the end of life.*" Though it is often associated with extinction, death in the Bible never means the end of existence. Instead, it means separation from or the inability to function in a particular realm. Seven deaths are described in the Word:

1. **Spiritual death** is separation from God. As a result of the Fall, all human beings are born spiritually dead, captives of "*the domain of darkness*" (Gen. 2:17; Col. 1:13; Rom. 6:23).
2. **Positional death** is separation from sin and the sin nature. Every believer is made spiritually alive and placed in Christ at salvation. We now have the ability to choose every moment whether we will serve our old sin nature, which will not be taken away until we die physically, or our new nature (Rom. 6:1–4, 10–11; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12, 20; 3:3).
3. **Temporal death** is carnality, separation from fellowship with God. Every time we as Christians give in to temptation to sin, we enter temporal death (James 1:15; Rom. 8:2, 6, 13; 1 Tim. 5:6).
4. **Operational death** is separation of our profession of faith from the practice of that faith (James 2:26; Eph. 5:14; 1 John 1:5–6).
5. **Sexual death** is the inability to function sexually (Rom. 4:19–20; Heb. 11:11–12).
6. **Physical death** is the separation of soul and body, the inability to function in the physical realm (Heb. 9:27; Gen. 5:5).
7. **The Second Death** is the judgment of unbelievers, eternal separation from God (Revelation 19–20).

Eating from the tree, Satan says, will not bring death; it will bring enlightenment and will cause Eve to be like God. This, we know from Isaiah 14:13–14, is exactly what Satan wanted for himself. Consider Satan’s logic: “You can be like God by rejecting God.” The woman is about to swallow the lie.

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.” (Gen. 3:6)

Notice that the serpent did not mess with Adam; he did not have to. He got to Adam through the woman. Eve was faced with the temptation to be like God. But Adam was faced with an entirely different temptation. When he met her after she had eaten the fruit, he immediately saw that she was not the same woman; she was a fallen creature. He knew instantly that he now had to make a choice between the woman and God.

First Timothy 2:14 makes it clear that although Eve was deceived, Adam was not. She believed that if she ate from the tree, she would become like God. Adam did not believe that—not for a second. He did not believe that God had held something back from him that was good, and he did not believe that the fruit of the tree

Doctrine of Sin

What is sin? Lewis Sperry Chafer writes in *Systematic Theology* that it *“is essentially a restless unwillingness on the part of the creature to abide in the sphere and limitation in which the all-wise Creator placed him. In general, sin is lack of conformity to the character of God”* [*Systematic Theology*, ed. by John F. Walvoord (2 vols.; Wheaton; Victor Books, 1988, p. 1,367)]

The only standard for measuring sin is the holy character of God. Sin is sinful because it is unlike God. If we do not have a clear understanding of the character of God, we will never understand sin. The only way to come to an understanding of God is to listen to what He has to say about Himself, to study and meditate on His Word.

How serious is sin? Again, the only way man can understand how awful sin is, is by hearing God’s own assessment. Sin is so terrible that the angels who sinned will never escape the Lake of Fire. Sin is so terrible that one act of Adam and Eve brought degeneration, depravity, and unfathomable suffering

was going to enhance him one ounce. He simply made a decision: “Eve has fallen and I can choose her or I can choose God.” He chose Eve. This is why the Fall is called “the sin of Adam.”

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.” (Gen. 3:7)

Did Satan tell Eve this would happen, that their eyes would be opened? He did. Was it the way he led her to believe it would be? No. Sin is never what Satan promises it will be.

Adam and Eve had been naked before the Fall, but now, because of sin, the possibility of perversion enters their minds. They respond by trying to make coverings for themselves. This is the first instance of human religion—the man and woman’s first attempt to solve their problem themselves—to hide their sinfulness from each other and make themselves acceptable to God.

They inherently know that the coverings they have made are not enough, and so Adam and Eve are afraid and try to hide from God. In Genesis 3:9, the Lord God calls for them. He knows where they are. What He wants from them is a simple confession, an admission that they know where they are. That is always what He wants from us when we sin: simple, honest

Doctrine of Sin ... cont.

to all humanity. Sin is so terrible that the perfect Son of God suffered to an infinite degree on the cross to redeem all mankind.

All men have to deal with three kinds of sin:

Imputed sin is the sin of Adam placed to the account of every one of his offspring (Rom. 5:12). Because of imputed sin, every member of the human race is born spiritually dead and under condemnation (John 3:17).

Inherent sin is the sin nature every human being inherits from his parents (John 3:6; Gal. 5:17). Our areas of natural weaknesses and natural strengths—like our physical characteristics—are combinations of the tendencies of our parents. Sin natures are as individual as fingerprints—no two are exactly alike.

Personal sin is the result of choices we make and is the outward evidence that everyone has a sin nature (Rom. 3:23). Personal sin is what is usually referred to as “sins” in the Bible. Sins fall into three categories: mental (thoughts), verbal (words), and overt (actions).

confession. First John 1:9 promises that if we confess—which simply means to name or acknowledge—our sins, He will forgive and cleanse us. Adam and Eve, instead of admitting their guilt, do what we usually do: they each put the blame on someone else.

“The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” (Gen. 3:12–13)

Adam blames God because God had given the woman to him; the woman blames the serpent. Both are unwilling to take responsibility for their disobedience.

Already, four effects of the Fall are obvious: perversion, conscious guilt, fear, and hostility. We face the same effects every day. Perversion is the evil we can do with the good things God gives. Conscious guilt is the inner awareness that we have sinned and are accountable to God. Fear—the great power of Satan’s realm—is the inevitable result of refusing to admit guilt and accept forgiveness. Hostility toward God and toward other people is the outworking of uncontrolled fear.

We start out saying, “If God were really a good God, He would not keep from me the things I want.” So, we go our own way to get those things and get hurt in the process. Then we blame God for the pain and, in our anger, we lash out at Him, “Why did God let

Doctrine of Sin ... cont.

But God has provided a solution. On the cross, Jesus Christ became sin for all men, that all who believe in Him might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Because He bore all condemnation, all men have the opportunity to be set free from sin and its consequences. But that freedom depends on a choice.

Adam, who was free in the Garden, looked at the tree and, knowing what the consequences would be, chose to partake of it. The result was death. We, who are dead in Adam, stand before another tree. We can look at the cross and, knowing what the consequences will be, choose to partake of it. The result will be life and freedom.

In the cross is the solution to all three kinds of sin:

this happen to me?” It all starts with a question: “Why won’t God give this to me?” And it ends with a question: “Why did God let this happen to me?” These are the effects of the Fall of man.

God did not intend to leave man lost and hopeless. From the very beginning, He had a plan. His first revelation of that plan is in Genesis 3:15.

*“And the LORD God said to the serpent,
‘Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly shall you go,
And dust shall you eat
All the days of your life,
And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed,
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise Him on the heel.’”* (Gen. 3:14–15)

This is the first promise of the Savior—the Messiah. What the Lord God describes here is the work of the cross, where Satan would bruise the heel of Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ would smash the head of the serpent. Sin is the barrier between God and man. At the cross, Jesus Christ would remove the barrier and open the door to God so that anyone could have freedom to approach God by faith in Him. The rest of the Bible is an account

Doctrine of Sin ... cont.

Imputed sin is dealt with by the fact that we are placed in Christ at the moment of salvation. While in Adam we were guilty, we are now seen as innocent in Christ. *“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive”* (1 Cor. 1:30; 15:21–22; Rom. 4:22–24; Phil. 3:9).

Inherent sin is dealt with by the fact that when we believe in Jesus Christ, we are given a new nature, a spirit which cannot sin. *“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature”* (2 Cor. 5:17).

Personal sin is dealt with by the fact that Jesus Christ paid for every sin ever committed (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:6). Because He paid the penalty for all sins, when we do sin and break fellowship with God, we can confess and be forgiven (1 John 1:9; Eph. 5:18b).

of God keeping the promise He makes here. Everything in the Old Testament points forward to the fulfillment of this promise of the seed of the woman. In Genesis 12:1–3, the promise is narrowed to the seed of Abraham; in Genesis 49:8–10, to the seed of the tribe of Judah; in Isaiah 7:14, to the seed of a virgin; and finally, in Matthew 1:18–23, to the Seed of Mary—Jesus the Messiah.

“Then the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.” (Gen. 3:21)

God’s clothing of Adam and Eve is the first biblical picture of redemption. A guiltless animal is sacrificed to provide a covering for sinful man. In accepting the covering, Adam and Eve acknowledge that they are helpless to bridge the spiritual separation from God that their sin has brought into the world.

Though they are helpless, they are still free, and they exercise their freedom this time by choosing to look forward in faith to the coming of the promised Redeemer.

Free Will

“Free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight, compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this Earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.

“Of course, God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently, He thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with Him. But there is a difficulty about disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes; you could not be right and He wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source ... If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will—that is, for making a live world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings—then we may take it, it is worth paying.”

~ C. S. Lewis

(Mere Christianity, New York; Macmillan Publishing Company, 1952, pp. 52–53.)



Lesson 1–2: **The Plan—Redemption**

Romans 8:28–30

With the Fall of Adam and Eve, the entire human race was separated from God, plunged into depravity, and set on the path to destruction. But the purposes of God were not hindered by disaster at the dawn of human history any more than they are hindered by disaster today. From eternity past, God had a plan for the universe. In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul explains the relationship between the eternal plan of God and the everyday life of man.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Rom. 8:28)

“*We know*” is from the Greek *oida*, which refers to certain knowledge, absolute understanding. In the perfect tense, it refers to knowledge held in the present because it was learned in the past. This could be translated, “We have come to know with certainty.” Paul is not talking about everyone; he is talking about those who have been taught and who, therefore, know absolutely that there is a reason they exist and what that reason is.

When Paul writes that “*God causes all things to work together for good,*” he is not saying that God lets only good things happen, but that He weaves both things that are good and things that are bad and makes them together produce something that is good.

“All things work together ...”

Romans 8:28 does not say that all things are good but that all things will work together for good in the life of anyone who will trust God. He lets things happen to His children that look bad but in His hands are designed for good. Genesis 37–50 is a textbook case of how Romans 8:28 works in real life.

It was bad that Jacob favored his son, Joseph. It was bad that Joseph’s brothers hated him. It was bad that they threw him in the pit. It was bad that they sold him to the Ishmaelites. It was bad that he was taken to Egypt in slavery. It was bad that after working his way into a position of authority he was thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit.

One bad thing after another assaulted Joseph, but God intended every single thing for good. Joseph was able to keep perspective because at every “calamity” in his life, he trusted the God who stood ready to work the bad things together for the long-term good, not only for Joseph and his family and the Nation of Israel, but for everyone who would hear his story.

When Jacob died in Egypt, Joseph’s brothers were terrified: *“What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!”* (Gen. 50:15). But Joseph had too great an understanding of God’s providence and grace to blame his brothers for what he had suffered. *“Do not be afraid,”* he told them, *“for am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good ...”* (Gen. 50:19–20).

“Good” here is *agathos*; it means “absolute good, ultimate good.” Ultimate good is not always immediate good. God, who is eternal, takes the long view. He is concerned not so much with where we are at this moment, but with the character we are developing over time and with our eternal destiny. Any person who has no concern for eternity, who is focused on time and on what he can get in time, has set himself against the machinery of the universe. Such a person cannot expect this promise to apply in his life.

To whom does God make this promise? The phrase, *“to those who love God”* points to those who are focused on God through the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said unequivocally in John 14:6 that no one could reach God except through Him: *“I am the*

way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.” Anyone who talks about God but despises Jesus Christ has a god who is a figment of his imagination. He cannot expect that anything will work for ultimate good in his life.

“Love” here is *agapao*. In the present, active, participle, it refers to a constant, habitual action. This promise is to those who have a lifestyle of loving God. But what does that mean? In John 13:17, Jesus told His disciples, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” In John 14:15, He said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” “Keep” is from the Greek *tereo*, which means “to guard or to treasure.” Reverence for the Word is an expression of love. No one obeys perfectly all the time; everyone fails. But the person who stands up and tries again and again after he fails, who consistently pursues God—this person has such a lifestyle.

The person who hates God or ignores God should not expect anything “to work together for good” in his life. To hate the Creator of the universe, to despise the Power behind life, to turn away from the Planner behind history and expect everything to go well in life is to be a fool.

“Those who love God” is amplified by the phrase “those who are called according to His purpose.” *Kletos*, literally “the called,” is in the dative case here, in what is known as the dative of advantage. Paul is saying that these people have an advantage because they responded to a call. What was the call? An invitation to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. To whom has the call gone out? To the whole world!

“The called” are all who answer the call by faith in Jesus Christ. “According to His purpose” in Greek is *kata prothesis*. *Kata* means “according to a norm and a standard.” *Prothesis* is from *pro*, “beforehand,” and *tithemi*, “to set in place.” God has set standards. His standards are absolute and eternal. They will never change, just as He will never change.

Before time began, God set the order for the physical functions of the universe and for the spiritual functions of man. He did not wind up the universe like a toy and turn it loose with no idea of what would happen to it. He had a plan before creation, and He has revealed His plan in increasingly greater detail throughout Scripture.

Romans 8:28 sets two conditions on God’s promise to work all things together for good in our lives. We must love God and we

The Call of God

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.” John 3:16–17

God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Because of this, He has revealed and continues to reveal Himself to man through creation (Psalm 19:1–2; Rom. 1:18–20), through human conscience (Rom. 2:14–15), through His written Word (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16), through the Living Word (John 1:1–4, 14–18; Heb. 1:1–2), through the spoken Word (1 Cor. 2:6–7, 13). He has set eternity in the hearts of all men (Eccl. 3:11).

But God created us truly free and allows us to choose how we will respond to His offer of life. Each of us comes to a point at which we are aware that God exists. This is called “the age of accountability,” or the point of “God-consciousness.” If at this point we are positive toward God, if we want to know more about Him, He will see to it that we hear the Gospel.

If, however, we want nothing to do with God, He will give us over—in time and in eternity—to our own desire for separation from Him. God does not send anyone to Hell, and Hell is not the place where people pay for their sins. All sins were paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross. Hell, which was created not for man but for fallen angels, is the eternal destiny, which individuals **choose** when they reject the call of God (Matt. 25:41; John 3:16–18; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

must be called according to His purpose. That means we must be living according to His purpose, willing to follow His plan. If I buy an automobile and want it to run as it was designed to run, I follow the manufacturer’s maintenance instructions. If I build a house and want it to stand, I follow the architect’s blueprint. If I am an athlete with my heart set on winning Olympic gold, I follow my coach’s training schedule. If I want everything to work for good in my life, I follow the plan of God.

Does following the plan mean that we will always, only experience good things? Not at all. We will face adversity and suffering, as well as blessing and prosperity. We will face the

same things everyone in life faces. But there will be a difference in our lives. We will know that all things—the good things and the bad things—have a purpose. We will know that everything is working toward an ultimate goal: infinite, final, lasting good. What is the ultimate good that God wants to work out in our lives? He wants us to be conformed to His Son.

“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” (Rom. 8:29–30)

“Conformed” is *summorphoo*, from *sun*, “together,” and *morphoo*, meaning “form, appearance, essence.” God wants to take all of His children in form and appearance and essence, and bring them together in the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The best possible destiny is not to be rich, to be famous, to be successful; the best is to be like His Son. The highest goal that God could have for our lives is to make us like the greatest Man who ever lived.

Paul names five actions undertaken by God in eternity past on behalf of those who would become His children in time.

The Plan of God

“... I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established.’” Isa. 46:9–10

“The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.” Psalm 33:11

“Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand.” Prov. 19:21

“The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, ‘Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.’” Isa. 14:24

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” Isa. 40:8

“For I am God, and there is no other, I am God and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will

1. He foreknew. Before human history began, God saw the ultimate end of everything in time. From the foreknowledge of God comes the idea of divine providence. The word providence comes from the Latin *pro videre*. *Videre*—from which we get video—means “to see.” *Pro* means “beforehand.” The word “provide” comes from the same roots. Because God saw, He was able to provide.

God, looking down from eternity past, saw everything that would ever happen in time. He saw each of us. He knew when we would exist. He knew every thought we would ever think. Because He knew every sin we would ever commit, He was able to pour out those sins on Jesus Christ at the cross. He knew whether we would accept or reject the invitation to believe in Christ. And He knew that if we rejected the invitation, we would never be one of “the called according to His purpose.”

2. He predestined. The idea of predestination scares people. In Greek it is *proorizo*. *Pro*, “beforehand;” *horizo* “to set boundaries.” The word also means “to establish a destiny.” God established a destiny for every person who would respond to Jesus Christ. On this Earth, that destiny is to enter into union with Him and accomplish a particular work designed by Him (Eph. 2:10). In eternity, that destiny is to have eternal life and an eternal inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3–5).

The Plan of God ... cont.

accomplish all My good pleasure, calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken, truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.” Isa. 46:9b–11

“This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” Acts 2:23

“So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown, but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.” Acts 5:38–39

“He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.” Eph. 1:9–11

God set the boundaries in each of our lives. He knew before He created us exactly what it would take to conform us to Christ. He knew how much adversity and how much prosperity we could handle, and He set limitations on both.

3. He called. “Call” is from *kaleo*. God simply gave the invitation, and the invitation was accepted. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we enter into that salvation prepared beforehand.

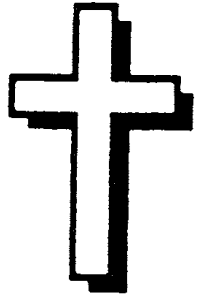
4. He justified. “Justify,” *dikaioo*, is from a Roman legal term that meant to declare someone to be legally righteous. God declares us righteous—not on the basis of anything we do, but on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by faith. God made His Son to become sin for us so that He could make us the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Righteousness is a gift.

5. He glorified. “Glorify,” from *doxazo*, means “to make glorious.” In his writings, the Apostle Paul uses “glory” as a comprehensive term for all that is of God. “Glory” speaks of any work or act which reveals God’s essence. Whenever God’s character is reflected, this is also glory. We were created for this very purpose: to reflect the glory of God (Isa. 43:7; Rom. 9:23; Eph. 1:6, 12–14).

Every one of these verbs is an aorist, active, indicative. Aorist tense means the action took place at a point of time; active voice means that God produced the action. He is the one who foreknew, who predestined, who called, who justified, who glorified. He did it all. The indicative mood is a dogmatic statement of reality.

God did it all, at one point, at a point of time before time, a point we call “in the beginning.” He knew how each of us would respond to Jesus Christ, and in that knowledge, He set our eternal destiny.

Before there was ever a problem in human history, God had a solution. Every problem we face in time, God saw beforehand. Because He saw and because He cares, He came up with a plan. In this plan, He provided every solution and wrapped them all in a package called the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Peace—the Lord Jesus Christ. And what did He send Him into this world to do? To take our problems away? No, to give us something within that enables us to face our problems. We can lay hold of the solutions—if we take hold of the Savior.



Lesson 1–3:

The Provision—*The Cross*

John 1:1–5, 14, 18
1 Corinthians 15:1–4

In eternity past, God planned for the salvation of men and women whose creation and fall had not yet become a reality in time. After their creation and fall, at the perfect moment in human history, Christ came to Earth to execute the plan.

Everything in the universe points to the Savior. Every principle, every promise, every truth in the Word of God has value only as it relates to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Colossians 1:18 says that the whole plan of God is summarized in one thing: that He have preeminence—first place—in everything.

Christ’s preeminence stands on two things: His Person and His work. Who is Jesus Christ? He is—and always was—God. At a point in time, He became—and always will be—man. Near the end of the first century, at a time when the doctrines of both the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ were under attack, the Apostle John wrote to clear up the confusion over just who Jesus was.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (John 1:1–2)

Go back, John says, as far as you want to go, a million years, a billion years before creation, and wherever you start, the Word “was.” This word is *eimi* in the Greek, meaning “to be.” In the imperfect tense, it means continuous existence in the past.

Not only did the Word exist in the beginning, but the Word was “*with God.*” The Greek *pros* means “face-to-face.” John is declaring the uniqueness of the Word, the fact that He is set apart from God the Father. In the beginning the Word existed; the Word had eternal existence in the past and was face-to-face with God and, therefore, stands unique from God. And “*the Word was God.*” John could not be any more dogmatic about the deity of the Word.

He repeats the idea of the uniqueness of the Word in the statement, “*He was in the beginning with God.*” This time John uses the personal pronoun *houtos*, meaning “this unique person.” John is stressing the fact that this Word is not a force, not a power, not an emanation, but a Person. This Person has existed forever, is unique from God, and yet is God.

“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:3–5)

“*All things*” includes everything that is created. “*Came into being*” is from the verb *ginomai*, which means for something to come into existence that was not in existence before. In the phrase “*by Him,*” John uses *dia*, the preposition of instrumental agency. This tells us that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things. A few verses later, in John 1:10, we are told that “*the world was made through Him.*” Apart from Jesus Christ, “*nothing came into being.*”

Later in his account, John would record similar words spoken by the Lord on His last night with the disciples, “*Apart from Me, you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). As nothing came into being in the physical creation apart from Jesus Christ, so nothing comes into being in the spiritual realm “*apart from*” Him. Apart from relationship with Him, nothing in life has meaning or reality.

This is the idea John is expressing when he writes “*in Him was life.*” In Greek, there are two words for “*life.*” *Bios* refers strictly to the physical aspect of life. *Zoe*—the word used here—refers to life in the absolute sense—life as God has it. This is the word used for quality of life, value, meaning. In the word “*was*” (the tense

says “always was”) essence and quality of life and “*the life was the Light of men.*”

With the Fall, man had become alienated from this life (Eph. 4:18). But now, somehow, all of the qualitative life that existed in the second Person of the Trinity throughout all eternity, became the Light of men when the Word entered the human race. He came that all men might become partakers of this life through faith in Him (John 3:15; Col. 1:21–22).

This life was the Light in the darkness of a dead world, the Light that shone and was not comprehended. This Light that revealed to the fallen human race how God could bring to bear all His divine essence on the problems of man, this Light was illustrated in the Person and life of Jesus Christ.

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

“*Became*” indicates a transition from eternal pre-existence to existence in time. The Word laid aside the glories of Heaven or, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:9, “*though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.*” The word “*poor*” used here refers to utmost, absolute poverty. Why did He become poor? So that we could become exceedingly rich!

The word “*dwelt,*” *skenoō*, means “to tabernacle.” It means that what was seen in the Old Testament in the tabernacle of Israel—the Shekinah Glory—had now become flesh and blood. God no longer resided in the temple; He now resided in a human body and His glory was concealed in the tabernacle of human flesh.

God the Son chose to set aside the rights of His deity, leave the throne room of God, and travel through billions of light years in space to take upon Himself the form of an infant and enter into this world. He who was omnipotent chose to subject Himself to the frailty of human flesh. He who was omniscient chose to subject Himself to the limitation of human thought. He who was omnipresent chose to confine Himself in the flesh to the limitations of time and space and matter.

God Revealed

“No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared [explained] Him.” John 1:18 (NKJV)

Jesus Christ is the only visibly revealed member of the Trinity. The Greek word translated “explain” in the New American Standard Version and “revealed” in the King James Version is *exegeomai*. It means “to draw out in narrative, to unfold in teaching, to recount, declare, reveal.”

Every Old Testament appearance of God was the preincarnate Christ. The second Person of the Trinity appeared on Earth in bodily form described in some cases as *“the angel of the LORD”* (Gen. 16:7–13; 22:11–18; 31:11–13; 48:15–16; Exod. 3:2–14; Judg. 6:11–23; 13:2–22), in some as *“a man”* (Gen. 18:1–33; 32:24–32; Josh. 5:13–15; Dan. 3:24–25), and in some simply as *“the God of Israel ... the LORD”* (Exod. 24:9–11).

At times, He appeared in a form called “the glory of the Lord.” He was the cloud and pillar of fire that led and defended the Jews throughout their wilderness wanderings (Exod. 13:21–22; 14:19; 16:7, 10; 24:16–17; 33:18–23). He was the luminous cloud which rested over the ark of the covenant, between the golden cherubs, in the holy of holies, in the tabernacle and later in the temple (Exod. 25:22; 33:9–10; 40:34–38; Lev. 9:23; 26:11–12; Num. 16:42; 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:13–14).

The term “Shekinah Glory” or simply “Shekinah,” from the Hebrew *shakan*, which means “to dwell,” came to be used by Jews to describe these visible manifestations of the presence of God. Jesus Christ is the Shekinah Glory. With the incarnation, this glory entered humanity. *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

He did not lose any of the powers that were His as deity; but as a man, He chose to live under the rules He would expect us to live by. He submitted Himself to the will of the Father (John 6:38). He taught the teachings of the Father (John 7:16). He did that which was pleasing to the Father (John 8:29). He sought the glory of the Father (John 8:50).

“And,” John says, *“we beheld His glory.”* “Glory” means God’s character and essence reflected. It was not the glory of wealth and riches, not the glory of personal appearance or attractiveness. It was what is called in the Old Testament “the

beauty of holiness.” It was the beauty of total perfection, total purity—the most beautiful thing in the universe: God’s character revealed in a single human being, a man “*full of grace and truth.*”

“No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” (John 1:18)

God is spirit; He is invisible. But the Son has “*explained*” Him. Jesus Christ is God, born into this realm as the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). “*When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law*” (Gal. 4:4). Now God in human flesh reveals God in eternal spiritual essence. “*Explain*” is *exegeomai* from which we get the English word “*exegesis.*” It means “to bring out the true meaning, to reveal in the light, to fully explain, to display something in its fullest sense.” Jesus Christ displays, in the fullest sense, the character of God and reveals God to the human race.

Jesus did not come just to show man how to live a good life, to be an example. He was born to die. Without His death, His perfect life would do man no good at all. Man’s problem was not lack of a high enough standard; it was his inability to live up to any standard. The Law had proved that man could never work his way to God. Between man and God stood the barrier of sin. Man was helpless to pay the penalty for the past and hopeless to do better in the future. He was helpless and hopeless, that is, until the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:1–2)

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul explains first the power and then the content of the Gospel. What Paul was making known was the Gospel he had preached. The word *euaggelizo*, from which we get “*evangelize,*” simply means “to proclaim good news.” In order for the Gospel to accomplish its purpose, someone has to proclaim it.

After Paul proclaimed the Gospel, these people received it. *Paralambano* means “to take as one’s own.” These people were

given the message and they received it by grace through faith. They believed in Jesus Christ.

The verb “*stand*” is from *histemi*. In the perfect tense, it means that at a point of time in the past they took a stand with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, with the result that they will stand forever. Paul uses this tense to emphasize their eternal security. According to Romans 5:2, the stand of the believer is in grace. “*Saved*” is in the present tense. Paul is saying, “You are saved now; you are going to be saved tomorrow and next week and next month and next year. You are going to be saved forever.” Why are these people saved? Because they believed in the Gospel.

If Paul is saying that these people have eternal security in Christ, why does he suggest in 1 Corinthians 15:2 that they might have believed “*in vain*”? His statement can only be understood in the context of the whole chapter. What Paul means by believing “*in vain*” is explained in verses 12–19.

We know from verse 12 that there were in the Corinthian church people who did not believe that someday there would be a physical resurrection. The idea of physical resurrection was totally foreign to the philosophies under which the believers in Corinth had been

Greek

The New Testament was written in the language used in the Greek-speaking world from about 300 B.C. to about A.D. 500. It was known as Koine or “common” Greek because it was street language—the language of the people—as opposed to the classical Greek of literature.

Koine Greek was devised by Alexander the Great for one reason: to conquer the world. When Alexander first began pulling together an army from the Greek city-states over which he had won ascendancy, he found he had a serious problem. When his drill sergeants bellowed, “Left face, forward march,” every soldier moved in a different direction. There was no **one** Greek language. The men of Athens spoke with the classical eloquence of Attic Greek; the Spartans communicated in the monosyllabic grunts of Doric Greek.

Before he could ever hope to conquer the world, Alexander had to conquer the tongue. His Greeks had to have one clear, easy-to-understand language. The language through which God would communicate the New Testament message was originally designed to be so clear, so exact, that in a combat

raised. Greeks looked at the body as a prison. When Paul taught a bodily resurrection, they thought of being in prison forever.

Faith in Jesus Christ had saved these people, even though they denied the physical resurrection. But Paul wants them to grow now, and he knows they need to understand the doctrine of the resurrection. In verses 12–14, he tells them that if there is no physical resurrection, then Christ Himself has not been raised from the dead. If Christ has not been raised, then both Paul’s preaching and their faith are “*in vain*”—empty, meaningless, useless. If Christ has not been raised, there is no solution for sin. If their hope in Christ is meaningful only in time and not eternity, then they are wasting their lives believing in Him.

The only way a person can believe in vain is if the message he believes is false. In verse 2, Paul is saying, “Look, if you believe this message and you believe that Jesus Christ is raised from the dead, then you are saved and you do stand in grace. If you believe some other message, then whatever you have believed is worth nothing.”

Greek ... cont.

situation every person on the battlefield would immediately understand his commanding officer’s instructions.

Alexander had been taught by his tutor, Aristotle, to think with mathematical precision. When Alexander’s desire for accuracy and clarity in language met with his mathematical mindset, Koine Greek was the result. It was the perfect language in which to communicate absolute truth.

Nowhere is the potential for accuracy clearer than in the Greek system of verbs. Every Greek verb has a three-fold fix, so the reader can know exactly what the verb means. The three “fixes” are tense, voice, and mood.

There are five tenses in Greek. Each tense tells the reader two things about the action the verb is describing: the time of the action and the kind of action. The possible times are past, present, and future. The possible kinds are linear (continuous or progressive action) and punctiliar (action that occurs at a point of time). A line (_____) illustrates linear action. A point (●) illustrates punctiliar action.

The present tense shows progressive action in the present time (_____). When Jesus says in Matthew 7:7, “Ask ... seek ... knock,” the present tense tells us that He does not mean,

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Cor. 15:3–4)

Now Paul goes back to the basics, to that of first importance. What is the most important thing to know about the Bible? It ought to be this right here. Paul says this is number-one priority. This is the most important doctrine we can have clear in our minds because it is the most important thing that Paul received.

1. **Christ died for our sins.** This was His substitutionary death. He died the death we all deserve because *“the wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23). He paid the penalty for every sin ever committed—every sin in the past, in the present, in the future. All our sins were poured out on the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

2. **Christ died according to the Scripture.** Christ’s death was according to the plan of God, and that plan was pictured in the Old Testament. Everything in the Old Testament points forward to the promised Messiah, to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. (For a very few examples see Gen. 3:15, 22; Leviticus 1–5; 16; Job 19:25–27; Psalms 16; 22; and Isaiah 53.)

Greek ... cont.

“ask once and then quit,” but “keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.”

The aorist tense shows action that takes place at a point in time—that point could be in the past, present, or future (●). In Acts 16:31, Paul’s instruction to the Philippian jailer is in the aorist tense, telling him to make a once-for-all decision: *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”*

The perfect tense, which cannot be adequately expressed in English, shows completed, past action having present results (●_____). John 19:30, *“It is finished,”* says that the work of Christ on the cross was completed at that point in time, but its results continue forever.

The imperfect tense shows continuous action in the past (_____●). In Acts 1:6, the disciples *“were asking”* the risen Lord if He was about to restore the kingdom to Israel. The imperfect tense here tells us that they did not ask just once; they kept asking the same question over and over again.

The future tense can show either continuous or completed action in the future.

3. **Christ was buried.** Why is it important that He was buried? Because He had to be truly dead. First-century Jews believed that the soul and the spirit did not totally depart from the body until the end of the third day. So, the fact that Jesus was buried and was in the tomb for three days was crucial to the message.

4. **Christ was raised from the dead.** The fact of Christ's resurrection is the only basis for the Christian's hope. The verb here is in the perfect tense, which means it was a past action having continuous, present results. The result of the resurrection is efficacious every day. Because of victory over death, Jesus Christ is to the believer the source of resurrection life (John 10:10–11; 11:25–26; Eph. 2:7; Col. 3:1–4; 1 John 5:11–12) and the source of resurrection power (Rom. 6:4; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:19; Phil. 4:13).

The Gospel—the Good News—is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are all born physically alive but spiritually dead (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12; 6:23). When we believe the Good News, we are turned around. Identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, we are now dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:21). We have become a new creation.

Greek ... cont.

The three Greek voices show the relationship of the subject to the action of the verb. In the active voice, the subject produces the action (implying, therefore, choice on the part of the subject). In the passive voice, the subject receives the action. In the middle voice, which has no English equivalent, the subject produces the action and participates in some way in the result or the action. The middle voice is like a boomerang.

Mood shows the relationship of the action to reality from the viewpoint of the speaker. There are four moods in Greek. The indicative mood expresses real action. The subjunctive, optative, and imperative moods express three different kinds of potential action.

First Corinthians 15:1–2 gives a good illustration of how clearly Koine Greek can communicate—and of how inadequate English is to express the subtleties of Greek. In two verses, there are seven different verbs and five different constructions:

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.”

Greek ... cont.

I make known is present, active, indicative	_____
I preached is aorist, middle, indicative	•
You received is aorist, active, indicative	•
You stand is perfect, active, indicative	•_____
You are saved is present, passive, indicative	_____
You hold fast is present, active, indicative	_____
You believed is aorist, active, indicative	•

The present tense and active voice of the verb “*make known*” tell us that at the time Paul was writing this letter, he was choosing to continuously proclaim the Good News. When he says he “*preached*,” the aorist tense tells us that at some earlier point in time, he had told the Corinthians how to be saved and they had, in a moment of time, made a decision to “receive” the Word—they believed in Jesus Christ. With “*stand*” in the perfect tense, Paul is saying that at a point of time, they took their stand, with the result that they will stand forever. (The stand they took was faith in the only solid foundation—Jesus Christ.) The present, passive, indicative “*are saved*” tells us that they did not save themselves. They received a salvation that is always in the present—it will last forever.

Because of the phrases, “*if you hold fast*” and “*unless you believed in vain*,” this verse is often used by people who deny the eternal security of the believer. In English, it does sound as if salvation depends on our being able, in our own strength, to hold on. But there can be no question about what this verse says in the Greek.

In Greek, there are four ways to say “if.” The first-class condition means “if, and it is true.” When Satan said to Jesus in Matt. 4:3, “*If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread*,” he used a first-class condition. Satan had no doubt that Jesus was God.

The second-class condition means “if, and it is not true.” When Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7:39 said to himself, “*If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is*,” he used a second-class condition. Simon was saying, “If Jesus were a prophet, but He is not ...” He was displaying his unbelief.

The third-class condition in Greek is closest to the English “if.” It means “maybe it is true and maybe it is not.” When Jesus said in John 14:15, “*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*,” He was saying that we have a choice. Maybe we will choose to love Him and maybe we will not, but if we do love Him, we will keep His commandments.

Greek ... cont.

The fourth-class condition, which is very rare, means “if, and I wish it were true, but it is probably not.” Peter used the fourth-class condition in 1 Peter 4:16 when he wrote, “*If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed.*” The people to whom he was writing were suffering; Peter wished they were suffering because of their faith, but he knew most of their suffering was because of their lack of faith.

In 1 Corinthians 15:2, Paul uses a first-class condition. A more literal translation would be, “*by which you are saved [since] you hold fast the word ...*”

The meaning of the second “questionable” phrase in 1 Corinthians 15:2, “*unless you believed in vain,*” is just as clear, but only when studied in the context of the entire chapter (*cf.*, 1 Cor. 15:12–19, especially verse 14, where “*in vain*” is defined. See page 24–25).

Koine Greek is by far the most accurate language known to man, but it is still a human language. In interpreting the Word, if we know the rules of the Greek language, but do not know the rules of Bible study (see page 58), we will veer off course in our theology. Even if we understand the Greek language and the science of interpretation, but are not filled by means of the Holy Spirit when we study, we will not understand a single thing God has to say to us (1 Cor. 2:14).

The Cross

The work of Christ on the cross is:

1. **Punitive.** It was a payment, a judgment. Jesus took upon Himself the judgment for all sin (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21).
2. **Substitutionary.** Jesus Christ died in our place. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our transgressions (Isa. 53:5–6; Lev. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24).
3. **Voluntary.** Jesus knew the plan of the Father, and He went willingly to the cross (John 10:18). Isaiah says that He set His “*face like flint*” (Isa. 50:7).
4. **Redemptive.** “*Redeem*” is *exagorazo*. *Agorazo* means “to buy in the slave market.” *Ek* means “out.” When Jesus Christ entered this world, we were in the slave market of sin. He walked in, paid the price for all of us, and opened the gate so all who wanted to, could go free (Gal. 3:13; 4:5).
5. **Propitiatory.** It satisfied God’s righteous demand for a perfect sacrifice for sin; Christ was that perfect sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 3:2).
6. **Reconciling.** By it, we are restored to a relationship of peace with God (Rom. 5:1).
7. **Efficacious.** It is effective. When anyone puts faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, that work accomplishes his salvation (Rom. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:13; Heb. 9:11–12).
8. **Revelatory.** It reveals much about God—His love, His compassion, His mercy and grace, His condescension, and more (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9–10).



Lesson 1–4:

The Power—The Holy Spirit

John 7:37–39; 14:15–17

John 15:26–27; 16:7–14

Midway through His public ministry, Jesus stood in the crowded Jerusalem temple on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles and made an extraordinary promise.

“If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”
(John 7:37–38)

Jesus was quoting from the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah (Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Isa. 12:2–3; 44:3; 55:1; 58:11). We do not know how many of those who heard these words understood what Jesus was talking about. With the advantage of hindsight, the Apostle John, writing long after the event, explained what the Lord meant.

“But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:39)

Jesus Christ, speaking before the cross, was saying that at some point in the future those who believed in Him would receive the Holy Spirit. But, as John explains, the Spirit would not be given until Jesus had won His victory on the cross. Not until His last night with the apostles did Jesus again approach the subject of the coming of the Holy Spirit. John 13–17 is known as the Upper Room Discourse. In these chapters, Jesus is preparing His disciples for what would happen after His death and resurrection. He wants

them to understand that the power on which He relied, the power by which His life was victorious, will be available to them. And so, He introduces them to a new age—the Church Age—and to the two great resources that would make this time unlike any before it: the completed Word of God and the indwelling Spirit of God. The heart of His message here is the soul filled by means of the Spirit and filled with the Word. Throughout His life on Earth, Jesus had relied only on these provisions. With them alone, He had met every temptation, every obstacle, every trial. At the very beginning of His public ministry, He had set His course, going into the wilderness filled by means of the Holy Spirit and answering each of Satan’s assaults, not with logic or argument or physical power, but with the Word of God.

Now, He wants these men who will be responsible for taking Christianity to the whole world, to understand that when the Spirit of God and the Word of God meet, they generate divine power that is always a reflection of the life of Jesus Christ.

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

“Love” here is the present, active, subjunctive of the verb *agapao*. The active voice means that they must produce the action of the verb; they must choose whether or not to love Him. The present tense means continuous action. The subjunctive mood

The Holy Spirit and Christ

The Holy Spirit is, like the Father and the Son, both personal and individual. Though all three members of the Trinity are equal and share the same divine essence (Isa. 6:8–9; Jer. 31:31–34; 1 Cor. 12:11; 2 Cor. 13:14), the works of each differ. The Holy Spirit was intimately involved in the work of Jesus Christ on Earth.

1. The Holy Spirit was the agent of Christ’s conception (Matt. 1:18).
2. The Holy Spirit’s sustaining ministry to the incarnate Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa. 11:2–3; 42:1–4; Matt. 12:18–21).
3. The Holy Spirit was given without measure to Christ (John 3:34).
4. The Holy Spirit had a special relationship to Christ during His earthly, public ministry (Matt. 3:16–17; 4:1; Mark 1:12).

indicates potential: Jesus is saying, “Maybe you will decide to keep on loving Me and maybe you won’t. But if you do, you will keep My commandments.” “*Keep*” is *tereo*, meaning “to guard, to watch over, to preserve, to treasure.” We only watch over and guard those things that we value in our lives. Therefore, while obedience is implied in Jesus’ words here, it is not really the main thrust of this verb. There are other words He could have used for simple obedience. He chose this word because He is emphasizing an attitude of watchfulness, an attitude that values and seeks to preserve His commandments—His Word.

If we really love Jesus Christ, we will guard, preserve, and treasure His Word. The Word will have value to us because it is His Word and we love Him. If we do not have this kind of personal relationship, then we have religion without reality. But when that intimacy exists and we treasure His Word, our lives are entirely changed. Life becomes a continuous adventure because we know who we are and why we exist and who it is who loves us. When we treasure His Word, we begin to live the same abundant life that He lived.

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever, that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.” (John 14:16–17)

The Holy Spirit and Christ ... cont.

5. The Holy Spirit provided the power to Christ’s earthly ministry (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14–15).
6. At the cross, the Holy Spirit withdrew from Christ. During the last three hours on the cross, the Holy Spirit did not sustain Jesus who was, in that time, experiencing spiritual death (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; Psalm 22:1).
7. The Holy Spirit was actively involved in Christ’s resurrection (Rom. 1:4; 8:11; 1 Pet. 3:18).
8. The Holy Spirit provided the power for the resurrection ministry of Christ (Acts 1:2).
9. As the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry, so He empowers the Body of Christ—the Church—today through the filling of individual Christians (1 Cor. 12:7–13; Eph. 5:17–18).

The Spirit in the Old Testament

While the Holy Spirit has always sustained all life (Job 27:3; 33:4), He has worked differently in the lives of individual men and women in different ages.

The Holy Spirit is directly mentioned in Scripture only five times in the period before Abraham, but His ministry of revealing God to men is evident in the amount of divine truth understood by men like Job and Noah.

In the time between Abraham and Christ—the Age of Israel—the Holy Spirit came upon certain men, usually for the purpose of revealing truth, or preparing or empowering for service (Gen. 41:38; Exod. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Num. 11:18–25; 27:18; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:9–10; 16:13; Daniel 4:8; 5:11–14; 6:3; Zechariah. 4:3, 12–14). Believers could obtain the Holy Spirit by asking (2 Kings 2:9–10; Luke 11:13), but they could also have Him taken from them (Psalm 51:11).

In the Church Age, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells every believer (John 7:37–39; 14:16–17; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19–20; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 3:2; 4:6).

The word “other” is *allos*, referring to another of the same kind, the same kind as Jesus Christ. “Helper” is *parakletos* from *para*, which means “beside,” and *kletos*, which means “to call.” A *parakletos* was someone who was called to another’s side to encourage, to give help, to succor. It is sometimes translated “comforter,” sometimes “helper,” sometimes “counselor.” It can also be translated “encourager.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, who is “*the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Heb. 13:8), has promised that He will never leave us and will never forsake us (Heb. 13:5). When He promises that the Holy Spirit will be with us forever, we can take that promise to the bank. God, who never changes, has given His Word. The fact that He will be with us forever means that no believer is ever alone—ever. We may think we are alone, we may feel lonely, but we are never alone. “*The Spirit of truth*” is one of many names by which the Holy Spirit is known in the Bible. Among those names are “*the Spirit of wisdom and understanding*” and “*the Spirit of counsel and strength*” (Isa. 11:2), “*the eternal Spirit*” (Heb. 9:14), “*Spirit of*

glory” (1 Pet. 4:14), “*Spirit of life*” (Rom. 8:2), “*Spirit of holiness*” (Rom. 1:4), “*Spirit of wisdom*” (Eph.1:17), and “*Spirit of grace*” (Heb. 10:29).

Three times in this discourse, Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit as “*the Spirit of truth*” (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). First John 5:7 says that “*the Spirit is the truth.*” In His closing prayer for the disciples—and for all those who would believe in Him through them—Jesus asks the Father to sanctify them in the truth. Then He adds this explanation: “*Your word is truth*” (John 17:17).

This title—“*the Spirit of truth*”—reminds us that what the Holy Spirit does in us, He does through the truth, the Word of God.

When the Lord promises that He who has been **with** them will be **in** them, He is telling these disciples that a marvelous, miraculous change is about to take place. The Spirit of God had been with them by virtue of the fact that He indwelt and empowered Jesus Christ during His 33 years on this Earth. When they stood near Jesus, they were standing near the Holy Spirit. When they saw the power in Jesus, they were seeing the power of the Holy Spirit. But Jesus is telling them that someday soon, the Holy Spirit would come to indwell and empower each of them. That day was the Pentecost described in Acts 2.

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (John 15:26–27)

Now the Lord begins to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in this new age that is about to dawn. When He comes, Jesus says, the Spirit will bear witness of Christ.

First, He will bear witness to the believer. Romans 8:16 says His Spirit “*bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*” The Holy Spirit witnesses to us of the relationship that we have to God. He emphasizes to us the provisions that we have in Christ. It is because of the Holy Spirit that we are able to cry “*Abba, Father,*” to the Almighty God (Rom. 8:15).

Then the Holy Spirit bears witness through us. This is the ministry of evangelism or what Paul calls, in 2 Corinthians 5:14–21, the ministry of reconciliation. We are, Paul says, ambassadors of Christ.

Parakaleo

Parakaleo is one of the oldest and richest words in the Greek language. The compound, *para*, “alongside,” and *kaleo*, “to call”—conjured up at least five vivid pictures to the Greeks. It was used to mean:

1. **To rekindle a flame.** *Parakaleo* pictured someone gently, patiently blowing on dying embers to bring a fire to life again.
2. **To call forth comfort.** *Parakaleo* pictured the cries of a frightened child in the night calling for the comfort and reassurance of his mother and father.
3. **To call a physician.** *Parakaleo* pictured someone who was injured calling for a physician to set his broken bone or bind his wound.
4. **To stabilize the troops.** *Parakaleo* pictured the military officer who, in the heat of battle, could calmly encourage, exhort, and steady the frightened soldiers in his ranks.
5. **To plead one’s case.** *Parakaleo* pictured the counsel for the defense, making an appeal for his client before a judge.

Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would be the *Parakaletos*—the Encourager, the Helper, the Consoler, the Comforter—who would take His place. All the things that Jesus was to the disciples, the Holy Spirit would be when Jesus was gone. The Spirit would do **in** the disciples what the Lord in the flesh could only do **for** them.

The progression here is important. We must listen to the Holy Spirit’s witness to us before we have anything to say to a lost and hurting world. If we are not listening to the still, small voice of God the Holy Spirit telling us what we have in Jesus Christ, if we have allowed the enemy to rob us of our assurance and conviction and inner strength, if we have not trusted in His Word, and if we have denied the Spirit’s ministry to us, how can we expect Him to have a ministry through us to other people? How can we hope to tell other people that Jesus Christ is the answer if we are confused ourselves? How can we hope to give other people encouragement if we are discouraged? We have to allow God the Holy Spirit to perform His work in us first.

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” (John 16:7)

“*Advantage*” is the Greek *sumphero*. It means “to hold everything together.” When the Lord Jesus Christ said, “*It is to your advantage that I go away,*” the disciples’ faces probably fell. They did not want Him to go away. We would not have either. When He said, “*It is to your advantage,*” He was saying, “It is so that you can hold everything together that I am going away.”

Jesus is promising that the Holy Spirit will come to make us able to cope, able to function under the strain of life, to handle the everyday disappointments, attacks, temptations. The Holy Spirit is the source of the supernatural power that propels us and is the only possible explanation of how any of us are able to live the Christian way of life. But the Lord reminds the disciples that without His death and resurrection there would be no life for anyone.

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.” (John 16:8–11)

“*Convict*” is from *elegcho*, a word used for ancient courtroom cross-examinations. It means “to totally and completely refute an opponent.” Who is the opponent here? It is Satan, the adversary, the accuser, the slanderer, the liar, the murderer (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:10; John 8:44). The Holy Spirit’s first work in men is that of conviction. To convict means to make the truth of the Gospel clear to the unbeliever, so that he knows the choices before him. He convicts unbelievers of three things:

1. Sin. The sin here is unbelief. Jesus said men have sinned “*because they do not believe in Me.*” The first thing the Holy Spirit wants the unbeliever to know is that it is a sin to reject Jesus Christ.

2. Righteousness. The righteousness is the victory of Jesus Christ on the cross. The second thing the Holy Spirit wants the unbeliever to know is that Jesus Christ is victorious in the angelic conflict and that the only basis of righteousness for man is Christ’s work on the cross.

3. Judgment. The judgment is the eternal separation from God which is coming because Satan, the ruler of this world, has

been judged. The third thing the Holy Spirit wants the unbeliever to know is that each of us chooses for ourselves whether we will share in the eternal damnation of Satan or in the eternal glory of Christ.

If you are an unbeliever, the Holy Spirit has three things to tell you. He will not tell you where Cain got his wife. He will not give you the illumination to answer the exact time of the writing of the book of Daniel, or whether there were two or three Isaiahs, or any of the other theological disputes people get caught up in. All He wants you to know is: number one, it is a sin to reject Jesus Christ; number two, the only righteousness that counts with God is what Christ won on the cross; and number three, Satan has been judged and if you reject Christ, you will share his destiny.

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me; for He will take of Mine, and will disclose it to you.” (John 16:12–14)

After He has convicted us for salvation and we have believed, the Holy Spirit becomes our companion and guide. He will not mystically pour truth into us or visit us with rapturous feelings of ecstasy. His mission is to guide us into the truth, but we have to make ourselves available to His leading. This means we must study the Word. As we study, the Holy Spirit will enlighten the eyes of our heart (Eph. 1:18) so that the Bible will begin to make sense to us. He will teach us that which we study. He will help us recall that which we learn.

When the Lord Jesus Christ at the Feast of Tabernacles first hinted at the coming of the Holy Spirit, His call went out to all who were thirsty. His promise was that the Spirit would quench the thirst of everyone who believed in Him. *“He who believes in Me”* (John 12:44) is the condition on which the promise is fulfilled.

If you are an unbeliever, you will never know genuine contentment in life. You will never know the moment-by-moment stability that comes from having the thirst of a parched soul quenched by God the Holy Spirit.

If you are a Christian and you have gone through this day in fear, in defeat, battered and blown by the winds of life, then you have not believed in Jesus Christ today. You have doubted Him, and if you doubted Him, your spiritual thirst was not quenched.

When we let the Holy Spirit satisfy us, He will give us the opportunity to satisfy others. That same water that quenches our spiritual thirst will quench the thirst of others around us. It will widen from a trickle to a stream and from a stream to a river—a river that will refresh many. As the water flows, the Holy Spirit's mission is accomplished: Jesus Christ is glorified!



Lesson 1–5: The Potential—*Faith*

Luke 19:1–10
Luke 17:5–6

With a perfect plan and perfect provision, God reaches out to us. We have only two choices: we can choose to believe what God is telling us and receive what He has to give, or we can choose to not believe and not receive. In Luke 19, we are told the story of one man’s response to the invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And He entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; and he was a chief tax-gatherer, and he was rich. And he was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. And he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

“And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, ‘Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ And he hurried and came down, and received Him gladly.

“And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’ And Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.’

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”
(Luke 19:1–10)

To the Jews of Jesus' day, there were few classes of people more hated than the publicans, Jewish men who collected taxes in Israel for the Roman Empire. Zaccheus, whose name means "pure," would have been an outcast from Judaism, considered not only religiously unclean but politically traitorous.

Like another publican, the Apostle Matthew, Zaccheus would have been unwelcome in the homes or at the social gatherings of "good" Jews. His only friends would have come from the circle of people referred to by the religious leaders as "sinners."

Zaccheus was looking for something; he did not know exactly what. He did know, though, that it was important that he see this man Jesus. Unknown to Zaccheus, long before he set his sights on Jesus, Jesus had set His sights on him. Zaccheus was being sought by God's grace.

Before He reached the tree and looked up, Jesus knew where Zaccheus was—physically and spiritually. He knew this was a man who had been goaded all his life—a small man, a hated man who others took delight in insulting and vilifying. Jesus knew every humiliation Zaccheus had ever endured.

Jesus knew the other side, too. He knew every fraud Zaccheus had ever indulged in. He could count every penny he had squeezed from every merchant and tradesman in Jericho. Yet Jesus, the sinless Son of God, stopped and looked up to the man everyone else looked down on. The most important man in Palestine—the most important man in the universe—wanted time with Zaccheus so much that He invited Himself, *"I must stay at your house."*

Before Zaccheus could meet the Lord, the Lord had to seek him. Jesus had a desire from eternity past for this meeting. He had seen Zaccheus before He created him and had determined to die on the cross for this man.

How did Zaccheus respond to the invitation of Jesus? He *"received Him gladly."* The moment he opened his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation came to the house of Zaccheus. The charity and the restitution that Zaccheus promised in Luke 19:8 were not requirements for his salvation. They were freely given responses to salvation. Jesus did not require anything of Zaccheus except faith in Him. God is delighted when His children give *"not grudgingly or*

under compulsion” but freely, cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7). Faith is the only thing that has ever been required for salvation.

To the grumbling of those who were appalled that Jesus would enter the house of a “*sinner*,” the Lord had a message in verse 10: His sole mission in life was to seek and to save the lost, the sinners.

“*To seek*” is the aorist, infinitive *zeteo*, “to pursue.” It means to look until you find what you are looking for. David used the Old Testament counterpart to this word in Psalm 23 when he declared, “*Surely goodness and [mercy, NKJV] will follow me all the days of my life.*” The word had much more intensity of meaning than the translation “*follow*” conveys. It meant to hunt someone or something down, to chase with a passion.

With passionate intensity, Jesus Christ had sought Zaccheus. He still seeks the lost with that intensity. He is the initiator, the pursuer. All He asks of us is that we let ourselves be found and carried to safety, that we receive by faith the life only He can give.

Once we have, by faith, received that life, we find there is only one way to live the life—by faith. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith, it is impossible to please God. If only faith pleases God, then one of the greatest things we can ever say is what the apostles said in Luke 17.

“And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’”
(Luke 17:5)

What had brought the usually thick-headed apostles to the point at which they recognized their great need of faith? It was one of the most simple, mundane situations of life. Jesus had just told them to forgive each other. He had said that if their brother sins against them seven times a day and returns asking for forgiveness seven times, they must forgive him.

In a similar account in Matthew 18, Peter had come to Jesus and asked a question something like this: “Lord, if my brother sins against me seven times and I forgive him seven times, then can I deck him?” Peter probably felt that his brother Andrew had reached his limit of allowable offenses. He was probably proud of himself for being willing to forgive his brother seven times. But the Lord looked at Peter and said, “*Seventy times seven.*”

Jesus was telling His disciples to forgive and forgive and forgive again—490 times a day if necessary. And their response was, “This is going to take some faith. Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5)

“*Increase*” is *prostithemi*. *Tithemi* means “to place.” *Pros* means “face-to-face” or “before.” *Prostithemi* was a banking term which meant “to make a deposit.” They were saying, “Lord, we don’t have enough to handle this; we need you to deposit more faith to our account.” Why? Because He was requiring of them a most practical thing—forgiveness.

Faith is practical. It relates to every issue of life, and one of the greatest areas of need in our lives is in personal relationships. We have to deal every day with people who make us mad, who exhaust our patience, who take us to our limit. The Lord’s solution is not for us to change other people’s behavior, but for us to learn grace. If we want to learn to forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32), we will need faith.

“And the Lord said, ‘If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and be planted in the sea’; and it would obey you.’” (Luke 17:6)

When they ask Him to increase their faith, Jesus answers by explaining how faith works. He is telling them that it is not the size or amount—but the object—of their faith that matters. If they had

Faith

1. **Faith unleashes the omnipotence of God.** Omnipotence means “divine power.” In Romans 1:16a, Paul writes, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”* The power of God is at our command, but we can only activate it by faith.
2. **Faith is a one-word summary for the Christian way of life.** Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38 all tell us that *“the just* [in both Hebrew and Greek, this word can also be translated “righteous”] *shall live by faith.”* *“By faith”* is the only way we can experience the abundant life Christ promised (John 10:10). Anything that detracts from faith robs us of spiritual life.

faith like a mustard seed, He says, they could do anything.

According to Matthew 13:31–32, the mustard seed is the smallest of domestic garden seeds, yet it grows into the largest of shrubs. Jesus uses the mustard seed to illustrate His point because it represents growth from the smallest to the greatest. The question is not how much faith we have, but what we place our faith in. The power is not in the person who has faith, neither is it in the faith itself. The power is in the object of faith. The only proper object of faith in the universe is Jesus Christ. In the Bible, “*we have the mind of Christ*” (1 Cor. 2:16). Our faith may be very small, but if it is resting in the truth of the Mighty God, it can accomplish the impossible.

In the Matthew passage, Jesus tells His disciples only how faith works. In Romans 10:17, the Apostle Paul tells us where faith comes from. “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*”

If we want to increase our faith, we need to increase our study of the Word. If we want to trust God more, we need to know Him better. If we know more of the Person of Jesus Christ and know more of the Word, our faith will gain in strength because the strength is in the object of our faith.

Faith ... cont.

3. Faith is the foundation of our hope in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is substance, faith is proof. The noun “faith” can mean two things: Subjectively, it is the act of believing; objectively, it is the content of what we believe. Our “*faith*” can never be stronger than the object of our faith. For the Christian, the object is Jesus Christ, the living Word, revealed in the written Word.

4. Faith comes through the study of the Word of God.

Romans 10:17 tells us that “*faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*” Every Christian needs to hear the Word taught. First Thessalonians 2:13 says that the Word of God performs its work in us who believe. After study should come action, that we would be “*doers of the Word and not [just] hearers ...*” (James 1:21–22).

Faith ... cont.

5. **Faith alone can please God.** Hebrews 11:2 and 11:6 tell us that faith alone pleases God. When God is pleased with us, an amazing thing happens—we are happy. As Creator, God planted within every soul a mechanism that cannot find contentment or fulfillment apart from His will. Because God loves us, what pleases Him most is what is best for us. Therefore, to please God is to find absolute satisfaction. Without faith, it is impossible to please God, and without pleasing God, it is impossible to be happy.
6. **Faith is the foundation of Christian virtue.** Christian virtue is built on a trinity: faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Pet. 1:12–23). As our faith increases, we come to have hope. Biblical hope—which is absolute assurance—enables us to have a relaxed attitude toward other people. Without a relaxed mental attitude, we will never be able to love. Love for others is demonstrated in our lives by simple thoughtfulness and courtesy. When we lose these, we have lost love; and the reason is because somewhere along the way, faith went out the window.
7. **Faith works.** Faith is power; it is dynamic. Faith can't **not** work. Its nature is to work (James 2:14, 17, 26). Faith works in the impossible, in the hopeless, in the helpless. We were created by Christ Jesus for good works (Eph. 2:8–10). Work without faith is worthless; faith without works is dead.
8. **Faith alone overcomes the world.** *“Whatever is born of God,”* the apostle says in 1 John 5:4–5, *“overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”* If we believe that He is the Son of God and if we have His presence with us, what do we have to be worried about?

Ways of Learning

All human learning starts with faith. When a toddler sees his first picture of an elephant, he gazes at his mother with a face that says, "What in the world is this?" When she tells him it's an elephant, he takes her word for it, and learning has taken place. The next time he sees that picture, he'll probably point and shout, "Elephant!"

The young student who dares his teacher, "Prove to me that $1+1=2$ or else I won't believe it!" will find that learning in his life will come to a grinding halt. If he refuses to exercise faith in the formula, he won't be able to balance his checkbook when he grows up, but that won't matter because if he never exercises the faith to get through basic math, he most likely will never earn enough to need a checkbook!

There are three basic methods of learning: empiricism, rationalism, and faith:

Empiricism is reliance on sensory perception for the discovery of truth. It is the basis of scientific investigation. The empiricist says, "Only if I can see it or touch it, will I believe it." But empiricism is flawed because there are so many things that cannot be seen or measured or accounted for.

Rationalism is reliance on human reason for the discovery of truth. Its standard of measure is the human intellect. The rationalist says, "Only if I can reason it out with human logic, will I believe it." But rationalism is flawed because it can never extend beyond the tiny limits of human intelligence.

Faith is reliance on the word of someone you trust—someone more experienced than you—for the discovery of truth. In the biblical sense, faith is reliance on the inspired Word of God. The man or woman of faith says, "Because God said it, I believe it, and in His time, I will see it and understand it."

While both empiricism and rationalism have roles to play in discovery and in education, neither is of any use in man's attempt to find or to know God. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1, makes it very clear that God planned for man to find Him, not through either sensory perception or human intellect, but through faith alone.

Isaiah 55:8–11 points out how vastly superior are the thoughts and ways of God to the thoughts and ways of men. God is omniscient and omnipresent—He knows all things and is in all places. He knew the end of human history before there was a beginning. God is perfectly righteous and perfectly fair. He never lies, and He always keeps His Word. God can be believed! It is always safe to trust Him, and only faith can please Him (Heb. 11:6).

Hebrew Words for Faith

Because the Jews thought in concrete rather than abstract terms, Hebrew words were designed to form mental pictures. There are five Hebrew word-pictures of faith found in the Old Testament. They are progressive, and they illustrate steps in spiritual growth:

1. **Amen** means “to lean on for support.” It is usually translated “believe.” It is used of the faith for salvation and pictures someone leaning on God. Genesis 15:6 tells us that Abram *“believed in the LORD and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”* This “leaning faith” is the faith of spiritual infancy.
2. **Batach** is a wrestling term that draws the picture of someone body slamming his opponent to the mat. Usually translated “trust,” *batach* is found in Psalm 55:22a. *“Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you.”* “Wrestling faith” is analogous to the experience of spiritual adolescence, the time when believers—having acquired a little biblical knowledge—begin to enter the spiritual conflict.
3. **Chasah** means “to flee for refuge,” as a rabbit might seek protection from pursuing wolves in the cleft of a rock. It is the faith of spiritual maturity—when the believer can be bold and confident because he has come to understand that the Lord is his fortress, his stronghold, his shield, and his deliverer (Psalm 144:2). David, in the Cave of Adullam where he had fled for his life from King Saul, understood this kind of faith: *“For my soul takes refuge in You”* (Psalm 57:1).
4. **Yaqa!** means “to trust in extreme pain, to trust under pressure.” It is usually translated “hope” and draws the picture of applying healing salve to a wound. This is the faith that heals the wounds that spiritual heroes pick up in their advance. Job displayed the heart of a hero of faith when he wrote in the heat of his affliction, *“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him”* (Job 13:15a). Jeremiah, distraught over the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of her people, was able to face another day because of this kind of faith (Lam. 3:21–23).
5. **Qawah**, the strongest Hebrew word for faith, is translated “wait.” The word was originally used for the process of making rope by weaving frail, easily broken strands into cords that could not be broken (see Eccl. 4:12). *Qawah* is the patient endurance that comes from weaving together promises, principles, and doctrines from the Word of God into an unbreakable rope of faith. This is the faith of the friend of God. The Hebrew in Isaiah 40:31 promises that those who wait for the Lord will *“gain new [exchange] strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”*

Unit I Review

Lesson 1–1

1. What is man's problem?
2. Why did God allow the Fall?
3. What was the temptation to Eve?
4. What is death?
5. What is sin?
6. How do we know how serious sin is?
7. What are the three kinds of sin?
8. What are the three categories of sins?
9. What was God's solution to sin?
10. Where in the Bible is the first promise of a Savior?
11. What act in the Bible is the first picture of redemption?
12. How were Adam and Eve saved?
13. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend the origin of and reason for evil in the world? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Genesis 2:16–17

Genesis 3:4–5

Genesis 3:21

Lesson 1–2

1. How do we know God operates by a plan?
2. What does it mean that He “causes all things to work together for good”?
3. For whom does He cause all things to work for good?
4. Using the life of someone from the Old Testament as an example, explain how Romans 8:28 works.
5. What does “predestined” mean?
6. Who are “the called”?
7. Explain how God “calls” people.
8. What is His goal for each of His children?

9. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend the fact that God had a plan for man even before man had a problem? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Romans 8:28–30

Genesis 50:20

Lesson 1–3

1. Who is Jesus Christ?
2. Who is “the angel of the Lord” described in passages like Genesis 16:7–13; Exodus 3:2–14; and Judges 6:11–24?
3. How do we know Jesus is God?
4. Why did Jesus become flesh?
5. What happened to Jesus on the cross?
6. What are the four most important facts in the Gospel?
7. Can a Christian lose his salvation? How do you know?
8. Why was Greek the perfect language for explaining New Testament truth?
9. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend the meaning of Christ’s death on the cross? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

John 1:1–5

John 1:14

John 1:18

1 Corinthians 15:3–4

Lesson 1–4

1. What was Jesus’ first promise about the Holy Spirit?
2. If we love Jesus, what will be our attitude to His Word?
3. From the Scriptures in this lesson, describe the Holy Spirit—what is He like and what does He do?
4. Why is the third Person of the Trinity called “the Spirit of truth”?
5. What is truth?

6. What did Jesus say the Spirit would do in the lives of believers?
7. What is the Spirit's goal in these works?
8. What is the meaning of the name Jesus used for the Holy Spirit, *Parakletos*? Describe five pictures the word would bring to the mind of a Greek.
9. How was the Spirit's ministry to Old Testament believers different from His ministry to Church Age believers?
10. What three things does the Spirit say to unbelievers?
11. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend who the Holy Spirit is and what is His message to that person? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

John 7:37–39

John 14:15

John 14:16–17

John 16:8–11

John 16:13–14

Lesson 1–5

1. How can we lay hold of God's perfect provision?
2. Retell the story of Zaccheus' encounter with Jesus.
3. What did Jesus come to do on Earth?
4. What does it mean "to seek" the lost?
5. What do we have to do for salvation?
6. What do we have to do after salvation for growth?
7. How can we increase our faith?
8. Explain seven things the Bible says about faith.
9. Explain the progression of faith using five Hebrew words.
10. Describe the three basic ways of learning.
11. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend how to be saved? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Luke 19:10

Luke 17:5–6



Lesson 2-1:

The Manual—*The Bible*

2 Timothy 3:16–17

2 Timothy 2:1–2, 15

1 Peter 1:22–23

The believer's manual is the Bible: "*the Word of God*" (Heb. 4:12), "*the mind of Christ*" (1 Cor. 2:16), and "the voice of the Spirit" (Heb. 3:7). Through the Bible alone comes the instruction, training, strategy, and tactics to carry on the spiritual warfare that is the life of faith.

In John 17, Jesus prays that the Father will sanctify all believers in the truth. Sanctification is the process by which we are conformed to the image of Christ. But where will we find truth? Jesus Himself tells us: "*Your word is truth*" (John 17:17).

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

The Greek word translated "*inspired by God*" is *theopneustos*, from *theos*, "God," and *pneuma*, "breath." "All Scripture is God-breathed."

Ancient rabbis taught that the Spirit of God rested on the Old Testament prophets and spoke through them, using them as human mouths to speak in God's place. We speak of "inspiration" as that power by which God the Holy Spirit supervised and superintended the authors of Scripture so that they recorded accurately and exactly what God had to say through them. God's inspiration extended to

the very words—and all the words—of the original manuscripts written by those through whom God chose to speak.

When God chose these men to communicate His Word, He used that person's perspective, vocabulary, and experience as His channel. This is how 66 books, written by more than 40 different authors, spanning 1,500 years, can be so different from each other in style and yet be absolutely noncontradictory and absolutely consistent in message.

The Bible declares itself to be the absolute, final, accurate, authoritative Word of God. It was given by God for the profit of man. When Paul says that all Scripture is profitable, he uses a word that means advantageous, beneficial. Then he lists four purposes:

1. For teaching. *Didaskalia* means “that which is taught, doctrine.” The Bible gives us the body of truth—the doctrine upon which we are to base our perspective and make our decisions in life.

Five Works of the Spirit Regarding the Word

1. **Revelation** (2 Tim. 3:16). Revelation is the means by which God the Holy Spirit revealed His message to prophets and apostles. God communicated to man what otherwise could not be known—things which man could never discover by either reason or observation. While the existence of the physical world discloses the fact that there must be a Creator, the natural world by itself cannot reveal such things as the Creator's righteousness, love, and grace, or the salvation He holds out to man. For this, God Himself spoke to men. (See 1 Pet. 1:20–21.)
2. **Inspiration** (2 Pet. 1:21). Inspiration is the work by which the Spirit controlled and superintended the writers of Scripture so that what they wrote was exactly the message He wanted written. The authors of Scripture did not simply write what they felt like writing; they were “moved” or “carried along” by the Holy Spirit. Each person, through whom the Spirit worked, retained his unique viewpoint and style, but the Spirit guided each so that no error intruded into the original manuscripts and so that the very words were the exact words that God the Holy Spirit wanted written.
3. **Preservation** (1 Pet. 1:25). Only the doctrines of inspiration and preservation can explain the existence of the Bible today. The Bible is one book with one message, but to make this one book, the Holy Spirit caused to be brought together 66 individual books written in three languages by more than 40 authors over a 1,500-year

2. For reproof. *Elegchos* means “to convict of error and to rebuke.” The Holy Spirit uses the Word to show us where we have wandered off course.

3. For correction. *Epanorthosis* means “restoration to an upright or right state.” Along with the conviction that we are going the wrong way, the Word always sheds light on the right way. If we are humble before God, from the reproof will come a change in our attitude, which will result in personal action that sets us on the right course again.

4. For training. *Paideia* means “instruction and discipline given with the goal of raising a child to maturity.” The Bible is a guidebook to lead us from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity and beyond.

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. 2:1–2)

Five Works of the Spirit in Regarding Word ... cont.

time span. Today, 2,000 years after its completion, the Bible continues to be the most widely distributed book ever written. Only God could undertake to preserve Scripture, and He has promised to do just that. The Word of God is firmly fixed, settled, and preserved in eternity (Psalm 119:89) and will last forever (Psalm 119:152).

- 4. Illumination** (John 16:13). To illuminate means “to cast light on.” Only the Holy Spirit can cast light on the Word and make it clear to man. By himself, man is blinded by Satan and is unable to understand divine truth (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4). In the work of illumination, the Holy Spirit makes the written Word understandable and applicable to the individual believer’s needs. Whether the Spirit will open our eyes when we study depends on our attitude when we approach the Word (John 7:17). This is why it is essential to be filled by means of the Spirit when we study.
- 5. Interpretation** (2 Pet. 1:20). To interpret means “to explain or tell the meaning of.” The Apostle Peter makes it absolutely clear that there is only one correct interpretation of any passage in the Bible and that is the Bible’s own interpretation. Only by applying the laws of hermeneutics—rules of systematic study—can any student discover the correct interpretation of any passage. While there is only one interpretation, there may be many applications—ways in which a scriptural truth may be used in a person’s life.

The Importance of the Word of God

1. The Bible is “*the mind of Christ*”—His thinking on every subject (1 Cor. 2:16).
2. God places the highest priority on His Word and has magnified it above His very name (Psalm 138:2, NKJV).
3. The Word existed, in the form of wisdom, before human history (Prov. 8:22–30).
4. The Bible surpasses all human intellectual achievement (1 Cor. 1:17–31; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).
5. The Bible is our most important provision for daily life (Matt. 4:4; illustrated in Luke 10:41–42).
6. Our response to the Bible determines whether we will receive God’s blessing or cursing in time (Eph. 3:16–20; Prov. 8:33–36; Deut. 30:15–19).
7. Our response to the Bible is the basis for our eternal reward (Heb. 11:9–16; James 1:25; 2:12–13; 2 John 8; Heb. 10:35–36).
8. Nations stand or fall based on their attitude toward the Bible (Hos. 4:1–6).

Throughout this last letter of Paul to Timothy, the seasoned apostle again and again stresses to the young pastor the importance of staying focused on the Word of God.

The strength Paul tells his spiritual son to stand in comes from one place: the study of the Word. Paul urges Timothy to teach others what has been taught to him, so that they, in turn, can teach still more. The word “*entrust*” means “to place on deposit something of great value.”

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15)

If teaching is necessary, then accurate teaching is absolutely essential. So, a few verses later Paul tells Timothy to *spoudazo*, “*be diligent*.” From the noun *spoude*, which means “earnestness” or “zeal,” the verb *spoudazo* means “to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, to give diligence.” By using the active voice, Paul is saying that Timothy alone can supply the spiritual hunger and the inner motivation he will need to be unashamed before God. Diligence is

the one thing we have to add to God's plan. No one else can give us spiritual hunger. We are responsible for choosing to be persistent, motivated, hungry for the study of the Word of God.

"Handling accurately" (rendered *"rightly dividing"* in the King James Version) is *orthotomeo*. The word is from *orthos*, meaning "straight" and *temno*, meaning "to cut or divide." It means "to cut straight, to divide accurately, to properly fit together."

Inherent in this directive is the assumption that Timothy understands and shares some common notion of what is the right way to handle Scripture. Peter declares in 2 Peter 1:20 that there is only one accurate interpretation of any passage of Scripture, and that is the Bible's own interpretation. Peter, too, assumes that his readers understand how to "rightly divide" Scripture. The reason both these apostles make this assumption is because there were at the time—and still are today—commonly known and accepted rules for the science of biblical interpretation.

"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God."

(1 Pet. 1:22–23)

When Peter says that we have been born again from an eternal, imperishable "seed" of the Word of God, he is telling us that our salvation is just as eternal as the Word. Both are unchangeable and absolutely secure.

The Word is the basis of our salvation, our security, and our growth. In 1 Peter 2:2, Peter admonishes his readers to, *"like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."*

"Grow" is *auxano*, a word that refers to the normal, healthy growth of a plant that brings it to the point of bearing fruit. The normal Christian life is to be a life of growth. God's plan is that believers will move from faith to faith (Rom. 1:17), from infancy to maturity, from helplessness to the point at which they can say, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Phil. 4:13).

There is only one way we will be able to fulfill God's plan for our lives: by growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). The first time He taught the multitudes, Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied*" (Matt. 5:6). He promises blessing and satisfaction, but His promise has a condition. We have to supply spiritual hunger, inner motivation. We have to choose to look away from the distractions of the world and to the truth of the Word.

Hermeneutics

In his account of the risen Lord's walk to Emmaus, Luke relates that Jesus reproved the disheartened disciples for not believing what the prophets had spoken. "*Then beginning with Moses, and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures*" (Luke 24:27).

"*Explained*" is the Greek *dihermeneuo*, meaning "to unfold the meaning of what is said; to explain, expound; to translate into one's native language." The root of this word is *Hermes*, the Greek deity known to the Romans as Mercury. Hermes was the god of science, invention, eloquence, speech, writing, and art. It was Hermes who brought the messages of the gods to the mortals. From these words comes the English word "hermeneutics," the science of interpretation.

Second Peter 1:20 says that there is only one interpretation of any passage of Scripture, and that is the Bible's own interpretation. Christians are confused today about biblical interpretation, in part because they do not know what the word "interpretation" means.

In English, "interpret" can be defined at least two ways. In its oldest sense, "interpret" means "to explain or tell the meaning of." In a secondary sense, it means "to conceive in the light of individual belief, judgment, or circumstance; to construe."

In Bible study—as in most of life—the first sense of this word applies. The plain, literal interpretation of anything spoken or written is what the **speaker** or **writer** means by what he says. It is **not** what the listener or reader thinks or feels about the message he receives. So, for example, when an air traffic controller gives landing instructions to the pilot of an approaching aircraft, there is only one "interpretation" of his directions that matters. The pilot has a vested interest in making sure that he understands exactly what the controller meant by what he said.

The statement, "There are many ways to interpret this," is as meaningless—and potentially dangerous—to the student of the

Hermeneutics ... cont.

Word as it is to the pilot of the airplane. The only interpretation the pilot is seeking is the controller's; the only interpretation the Bible student should be seeking is God's. The first goal of Bible study is to determine what God meant by what He spoke through Scripture. This is biblical interpretation.

"It is the first business of an interpreter," said John Calvin, *"to let his author say what he does, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say."* This is not so difficult a task as most people think.

Biblical interpretation, like mathematics, is an exact science. We know that $1+1=2$ in every country in the world. No matter what language the formula is translated into, $1+1=2$. Thirty-five hundred years ago, one plus one equaled two. The Bible says that Moses lived 40 years in the palace of Pharaoh, 40 years in the desert, and 40 years leading the people through the wilderness—a total of 120 years. Is it not amazing that even in the time of Moses, they were somehow able to add 40 plus 40 plus 40 and come up with 120? Of course, it is not amazing—it is mathematics! No one would say of the conclusion that $40+40+40=120$, "That's just your interpretation," because an absolute science cannot be tampered with.

When we work with the science of hermeneutics, we are working with the only science dealing with something more absolute than mathematics—the Word of God. Before mathematics was, the Word of God existed. Long after mathematics is forgotten, the Word will still stand. When the rules of systematic Bible study are followed, the interpretation of any passage is the same, whether the person studying is living in 21st-century America or fourth-century Ethiopia.

Approaches

The science of hermeneutics demands that we approach any study of the Word of God from three perspectives: the historical (*isagogics*), the doctrinal (categories), and the grammatical (*exegetics*):

1. *Isagogics*

Isagogics is a word that has all but disappeared from English-language dictionaries. It is from the Greek *eis*, "into," and *ago*, "to lead." In English, an "isagoge" is an introduction. "Isagogic" is defined in the 1955 *Oxford English Dictionary* as *"introductory studies, especially that part of theology which is introductory to exegesis."*

Isagogics is the study of the historical and cultural background of biblical passages. The Bible must be interpreted in light of the

Hermeneutics ... cont.

time in which it was written. All Scripture was written **for** every believer (2 Tim. 3:16), but not all Scripture was written **to** every believer. If our goal is to understand what the writer wanted his readers to understand, then we have to know something about history.

For example, though the four Gospels are similar, each was written to a different audience for a different purpose. Matthew wrote primarily for Jews to present Christ as king. Mark wrote for the Romans to present Christ as servant. Luke wrote for Greeks to prove the humanity of Christ. And John wrote for the world to prove the deity of Christ. Certain words and phrases are used in each, which uphold these themes, and different historical conditions are relevant to the study of each book.

Another example is chapters 8–10 of 1 Corinthians, which cannot be understood apart from some knowledge of idol worship in Corinth. The city of Corinth was dominated by the temple of Aphrodite, where gluttony, drunkenness, and sexual immorality were a regular part of worship. Most of the Christians in Corinth had been raised in this system, and some were having a hard time getting out of it. In these chapters, Paul is not just talking about meat, he is talking about meat offered to idols.

2. Categories

A category is a specific area of Bible doctrine. The Bible is one book, inspired by one Spirit, with one unified message progressively revealed. To fully understand the biblical teaching on any subject, we must take into consideration all that the Bible has to say on that subject.

For example, what does the Bible teach about divorce? Anyone who attempts to teach on the subject cannot hope to give an accurate picture of the biblical teaching on divorce by only considering Matthew 5:31–32. Balance requires that equal weight be given to other passages such as Deuteronomy 24:1–4; Malachi 2:16a; Matthew 19:3–12; and 1 Corinthians 7:26–28. (On this subject, it is also important to understand the historical settings and, for Matthew 19, to have some knowledge of the rabbinical teachings of the day.)

We will never have a proper interpretation until we take all the passages on a subject and put them together. That is contextual, categorical study; it is time-consuming work, but it is absolutely necessary for accuracy in teaching.

The approach to the Word must also be dispensational. God has divided history into ages or dispensations. So, for example, in the Old

Hermeneutics ... cont.

and New Testaments, the application of faith is different. It is the same faith, the same focus on the Messiah, but under the New Covenant we do not sacrifice lambs. Why? A dispensational approach to Scripture tells us that animal sacrifice is not necessary today. Many of the promises in the Bible are dispensational in character. Unless we understand that and know how to determine which ones apply to us, we will never be able to tap into the power of God.

3. *Exegesis*

“Exegete” is from the Greek *ek*, meaning “out,” and *hegeomai*, “to lead out or go before.” To exegete is to lead or bring out of a passage what is there. *Exegesis* refers to the grammatical study of the Word of God. This means the study of individual words and of how words are put together in sentences and paragraphs.

Because the Bible is inspired by God the Holy Spirit, every word in the Bible is important. In the book of Galatians, Paul builds an entire doctrine of grace on the fact that one word in a passage in Genesis—“Seed”—is singular rather than plural in the original text. Exodus 20:13 is another place where the exact word used in the passage matters. *Ratsach* is one of ten Hebrew words that means “to kill.” It is used only for premeditated murder. The commandment is better translated, “You shall not commit homicide.” Knowing that makes it easier to understand that God did not contradict Himself when He commanded Israel’s leaders to kill their enemies in military situations.

It is important to be able to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek words in Bible study. Books are available that make that easy to do. But in most cases, apparently obscure words can be clarified by studying the immediate context.

Probably the most important rule to remember in Bible study is to study in context. To understand words, study the sentences and the verses that surround them. To understand verses, study them in light of the chapters where they are found. Think about where they fit in the scheme of the entire book. Consider whether they are in the Old or the New Testament.

An example of the danger here is found in Matthew 16:28, where the promise is severed from the continuing context of Matthew 17, where it is fulfilled in the transfiguration of Christ. In the same way, many people separate 1 Corinthians 2:9 from 2:10, thus removing to an uncertain future time a promise that God gave us for today.

Assumptions

The Reformers taught what they called the “analogy of faith”—principles for Bible study based on what the Bible says about itself. Three of the most important of those principles are:

Hermeneutics ... cont.

1. The Bible can be understood.

How would a loving God communicate? In a way that we could understand. God loves us and wants our obedience. We have to believe that He speaks clearly and that if there is confusion, it is in us and not in the passage. So, we use common sense and persistence when we study. That means we study from the center out, explaining difficult or obscure passages by the light of clear passages. We should look for the simple, logical explanation or interpretation of a passage—chances are that is the most accurate interpretation. When we come to a passage that we do not know whether to interpret literally or figuratively, we should use the literal interpretation if it fits. That means we look for repetition—of words or ideas—because we know that if God says something more than once, it is something He probably wants us to take notice of.

2. The Bible is a book of progressive revelation.

A message is being developed in Scripture, and it is more fully and clearly developed toward the end than at the beginning. More about Jesus Christ and salvation is revealed in the New Testament than the Old. More about the function of the Church is revealed in the epistles than in the Gospels. More about the future of the world in Revelation than anywhere else. So, we try to understand Old Testament prophecy in light of the New Testament account of its fulfillment and Old Testament characters in light of New Testament comment on them.

3. The Bible does not contradict itself.

As God, by nature, cannot contradict Himself, neither can His Word to man. To accept this principle means that when we find apparent contradictions, we continue to search for answers in the certainty that there is in Scripture a perfect agreement—which careful study will bring out.

Stance

The Bible clearly lays out three spiritual requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand the Word:

1. We must be born again (John 3:3).

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6), and it is impossible for unbelievers to understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

2. We must rely on the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12).

If we approach the Word without the Spirit, we may find information, but wisdom and power will be beyond our grasp. This is true not just for unbelievers, but also for believers who are walking in the flesh rather than in the Spirit. This is why it is so important to confess our sins and be cleansed every time we open our Bible (1 John 1:9).

Hermeneutics ... cont.**3. We must approach in faith** (Heb. 11:1, 3, 6).

God shares His deepest secrets only with those who approach His Word in humility and trust. True understanding and power are reserved only for those who are willing to obey God. When we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must let the Bible be the authority. Where the Word of God contradicts what we think, our thinking is wrong; where it contradicts what we want, our desires are wrong (John 7:17).

Some Methods**Lewis Sperry Chafer**

1. Consider the purpose of the Bible as a whole.
2. Note the distinctive character/message of each book.
3. Ask to whom a given Scripture is addressed.
4. Consider the immediate context.
5. Compare all Scripture on a given theme or doctrine.
6. Determine the exact meaning of the determinative words.
7. Avoid personal prejudice and preconceptions.

Dr. Harry Ironside*Ten Questions on a Chapter*Information:

1. What is the principal subject (doctrine, theme)?
2. What is the leading lesson (application)?
3. What is the key verse?
4. Who are the principal persons involved?
5. What is the main teaching about Jesus Christ?

Application:

6. What is the primary example to follow?
7. What error is there to avoid?
8. Is there a command to obey?
9. Is there a promise to claim?
10. Is there a prayer to pray?

In Bible study—more than in anything else in life—we get exactly what we have coming. Sloppy study will never fill our thirst. But the more minute and tireless our study, the more we will be rewarded. The people who have great insights into the character and Word of God are the people who have put in the time and effort and who do not quit when study turns to sweat. If we will carefully follow consistent rules of study, we will gradually develop the skill of interpreting the Bible—we will eventually learn how to get to the heart of God's message.

Hermeneutics ... cont.

The goal of Bible study should never be intellectual achievement. We should always approach the Word with the desire to be transformed a little more into the image of Christ. We should never end our study without asking ourselves how this portion of Scripture applies to our circumstances and what we are going to do with the things we have learned.

This is especially important for teachers to remember. We study to learn, not just to teach. If we study only to teach others, the truth never penetrates our own soul or convicts us of our own need for correction. Neither do we continue to grow, for we ourselves are not subject to what we study. If we remain students—if we are disciples—then we will have no difficulty having sufficient information to teach to others, and they will be moved by those things which God has made real and exciting to us in our own growth!



Lesson 2–2:

The Base—*The Church*

Matthew 16:15–18

Acts 2:42; 5:41–42; 6:1–4

Ephesians 1:22–23; 2:4–7

Church is the Greek *ekklesia* from *ek*, “out,” and *kaleo*, “to call.” The Church is the called-out body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The local church is our base, the place in which we are trained, from which we are sent out to carry truth to Satan’s world, and to which we retire to recuperate and find healing from the wounds of battle. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ had little to say about the Church. Until the last week of His life, He had only one time given the disciples a glimpse of what the Church was to be.

He said to them, “*But who do you say that I am?*” And Simon Peter answered and said, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” And Jesus answered and said to him, “*Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it*” (Matt. 16:15–18).

The “*rock*” that Jesus says He will build upon is Peter’s declaration of the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. The fact that Jesus uses the future tense—“*I will build*”—tells us that the Church does not exist at this point, this is something the Lord intends to accomplish at some future time. The phrase, “*My church,*” tells us that it is the possession of Jesus Christ.

The Lord says that when it is formed, the Church is to be engaged in offensive warfare, pounding against the very gates of Hell. The gate in the ancient world was the place where all major decisions were made. It was the place of power and authority. The Lord is saying that the power and authority of Hell will never prevail against His Church.

Not until His last night with the apostles, during the Upper Room Discourse, did Jesus shed any more light on the formation or function of the Church. On that night, He made it clear that two things would make the coming age of the Church unique: the completed Word of God and the indwelling Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the one who forms the Church and empowers it for its mission (John 7:37–39 and John 14–16; Acts 1:4–8 and Acts 2).

The two-fold mission of the Church, assigned to it by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19–20, is evangelism and edification. First, evangelize—win people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then, edify—bring those people to spiritual maturity so that they can function as part of the Body of Christ in further evangelism and edification. To accomplish its mission, the early Church had to set priorities.

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)

Dispensations

Throughout human history, salvation has always been by faith in the revealed Son of God—Jesus Christ the Savior. But the way in which Christ has been revealed and the expression of faith have differed in the various dispensations. *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* defines a dispensation as “*an era of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some definite revelation of God’s will.*” (Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1985, p. 269.)

The Greek *oikonomia*, “dispensation,” is one of four New Testament “time” words.

Chronos, usually translated “time, season, or period,” refers to a succession of events or the duration of a period (Acts. 13:18).

The phrase “*they were continually devoting themselves*” means they were addicted. The imperfect of the verb “to be,” plus the present participle of “*devoting themselves*” is the strongest possible way to show intense concentration on and commitment to the four activities Paul is about to name:

1. Teaching. The believers were dedicated, committed first of all, to the study of the Word of God. Study of the Word is the foundation of everything that comes out of the local church. If teaching the Word is not of primary importance, then the Church has the wrong priority and will not succeed in the work to which God calls it.

2. Fellowship. The Greek *koinonia* refers to joint participation or to working together. The first thing these people in the Jerusalem church did was teach. The second thing they did was apply the teaching in their lives and in the world. They set out to fulfill their ambassadorship, to accomplish their mission, and they did it as a team.

3. Breaking Bread. “*Breaking of bread*” refers to the celebration of the Lord’s table, as a reminder that they needed to keep their focus on Jesus Christ. The Lord had given them this ritual to be celebrated regularly to remind them of His perfect life, His atoning death, and the resurrection power that was theirs.

4. Prayer. The apostles—especially Peter—had learned in the Garden of Gethsemane the price of failure to be alert in prayer. Their experience must certainly have influenced these believers

Dispensations ... cont.

Kairos, also translated “time or season,” is time (*chronos*) divided into sections or eras (Matt. 11:25; Rom. 3:26; 13:11; 2 Thess. 2:6).

“Broadly speaking, chronos expresses the duration of a period; kairos stresses it as marked by certain features; thus in Acts 1:7, ‘the Father has set within His own authority’ both the times (chronos), the lengths of the periods, and the ‘seasons’ (kairos), epochs characterized by certain events; in 1 Thess. 5:1, ‘times’ refers to the length of the interval before the Parousia takes place (the presence of Christ with the saints when He comes to receive them to Himself at the Rapture), and to the length of time the Parousia will occupy; ‘seasons’

to appreciate the importance of discipline and endurance in prayer (Acts 1:14; 12:5).

These were the priorities of the early Church. They studied, they worked together, they kept reminding each other of the necessity to focus on Jesus Christ, and they spent time together in prayer.

As the Church began to grow, opposition and then persecution arose. The enemy is not bothered if Christians gather together and look at the Word; but he is incensed—and terrified—when they get serious about applying it. His reaction to the early Church’s activity was to arouse the ire of Jerusalem’s religious leaders.

“... and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:40–42)

Pressure, instead of bringing discouragement, inflamed the believers with greater courage and clearer focus. They responded with joy to their suffering. Joy is not incompatible with suffering. If we are filled with (by means of) the Holy Spirit, we will inevitably meet suffering with joy (1 Thess. 1:6).

Dispensations ... cont.

refers to the special features of the period before, during and after the Parousia. Chronos marks quantity, kairos, quality,”
(W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966, III, p. 332.)

Oikonomia, translated “dispensation” or “stewardship,” speaks of the administration of an age or dispensation. The manner by which God’s plan is carried out changes in different dispensations.

Aion, usually translated “age” and often incorrectly translated “world” in the King James, focuses attention on one segment or age and the things that make that age unique as part of the whole.

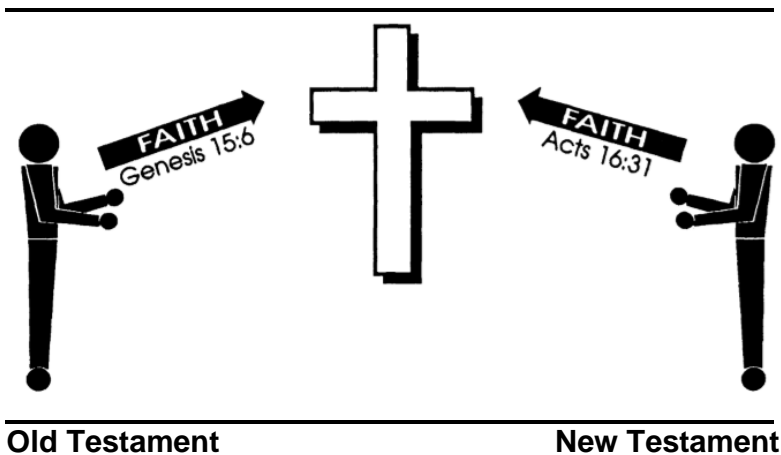
While God’s plan is constant throughout history, the revelation of His plan is gradual and progressive (Heb. 1:1–2). The most basic distinction between dispensations is laid out in Hebrews 8 and Galatians 4 in the division between the Old and New Covenants and between the Law (the Jewish Age) and Grace (the Church Age).

They increased their study. Whenever crisis hit the early church, they always increased their study. Now the Word was being taught every day in the temple and in the houses of believers.

They intensified their evangelism. Not only were they teaching, but they were preaching. “*Teaching*,” from *didasko*, is what takes place inside—instruction for the believers. “*Preaching*,” *kerusso*, is what takes place outside—evangelism, the proclamation of the Good News for the unbelievers.

As the Jerusalem church continued to grow and demands on the leadership mounted, the apostles reached the point at which they had to make a decision about what they would do with their time.

“Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.’” (Acts 6:1–4)



The event that triggered the apostles' self-examination arose out of a disagreement between Greek-speaking, Greek-oriented Jews, and the native Hebrews in the Church. When the apostles said they did not think they should wait tables, they were not being arrogant. They did not think serving tables was below them; they simply knew it was not God's plan for them. They had been commissioned—and gifted—to study the Word and to teach. To have set aside teaching for serving tables would have been to abandon God's plan for their lives.

So, they appointed deacons. The qualifications for deacons are the same today as they were then: good reputation, evidence of being filled by means of the Spirit, evidence of biblical wisdom, ability to be trusted with authority.

The results of the apostles' actions here soon became evident. Acts 6:7 tells us that *"the word of God kept on spreading."* It spread because the apostles knew when to draw the line. If they had allowed this kind of service to distract them from study and teaching of the Word, the Word of God would not have kept on spreading, because they would have been out of line. The other believers in the Jerusalem church deserve credit too: They were willing to do whatever they could to make it possible for the apostles to study and teach.

The Word spread, and because the apostles continued to teach and the church continued to edify, *"the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith"* (Acts 6:7). This is historical impact.

A local church can never afford to let itself be distracted from spiritual priorities (John 21:15–18; 1 Pet. 5:1–4; Eph. 4:11–16). The Church's first priority should always be teaching the Word, but it is also important that every person in the Church find his or her place of service.

Dispensations ... cont.

The cross is the dividing point in history. Throughout history, people have been saved exactly the same way—by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the oldest Old Testament book, written about a man who lived some 2,000 years before Jesus Christ entered this world, Job says, *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God"* (Job 19:25–26).

We know from Matthew 25:15 and Mark 13:34 that God has given to each of us a work to accomplish and the provisions we need to accomplish it. If God has a plan for every life, then every believer's calling is uniquely his own. No two members of the Body of Christ have the same position, so there is never any reason for ambition or competition to create commotion in the local church.

Since God has a place for every believer, every believer should be involved. But, while everyone ought to be involved, some people choose not to be. They have the freedom to choose. It is always wrong to use gimmicks, coercion, or pressure to get people to work in the church. When—through the hearing and application of the Word—believers are motivated to serve, they will find their place.

Every local church is a team with a mission that comes from the authority of God. The two-fold mission—evangelism and edification—must have priority. When a church loses sight of the priority, it will suffer. When a church stays focused, it has phenomenal potential for bringing glory to God in time and in eternity.

Before we can fully appreciate the function of the Church on Earth, we need to understand the destiny for which the Church is being formed by God.

The first chapter of Ephesians is a catalog of the incredible riches every person receives the moment he or she believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the last two verses of the chapter, Paul introduces the Church—the Body of Christ.

Dispensations ... cont.

Job had salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We, who live 2,000 years after the cross, are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation in every age is by faith in the same Redeemer. The only difference is that before the cross, that faith was in the Redeemer who would come. After the cross, it is in the Redeemer who has come.

Without an understanding of dispensations, it is impossible to "rightly divide the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15); and apart from growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), it is impossible to mature in the faith (Heb. 5:11–14).

The Church

1. Formation. The Church was anticipated by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 16:13–18, but the formation of the Church did not take place until the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power who makes possible the formation of the Church (John 7:37–39; John 14–16; Acts 1:8; 19:1–7).

2. Nature. The Church is a spiritual organism—not a physical or human organization. The first chapter of Ephesians is one of the clearest, most concise, and most accurate explanations in the Bible of what the Church is really all about. At the moment of salvation, every believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ. Water baptism is a physical picture of this spiritual event that has taken place (1 Cor. 12:13). This is why the Church is a spiritual organism, not a human organization. People who have never believed in Jesus Christ are not part of the Church, even though they may be part of a church organization. People who have believed in Jesus Christ are part of the Church whether they attend a local church or not.

The local church is the geographic assembly of saints. While the Body of Christ is made up of every believer, all believers cannot be in the same place at the same time. Believers, therefore, gather into local churches for the purposes laid out in passages such as Hebrews 10:25; 13:7–17; and Ephesians 4:11–16.

3. Function. The two-fold mission of the Church is evangelism and edification (Matt. 28:19–20). At salvation, through the power of the Holy Spirit, every believer is given a unique spiritual gift for the purpose of accomplishing God's plan (1 Cor. 12:4–31). Though there are different gifts, there is no such thing as superiority or inferiority in the Church. Every believer is given all spiritual blessings and has equal opportunity and provision to achieve spiritual greatness.

4. Necessity. Apart from involvement in the local church, no believer can achieve the greatness in the Body of Christ for which he or she was designed by God. The local church is the training ground—the classroom for spiritual advance, and there is no spiritual greatness without spiritual advance. The local church is the place where the Word of God is taught. There is no spiritual greatness apart from the understanding and application of the Word of God. The local church is the place of preparation for service, and there is no spiritual greatness apart from service. Therefore, no local church—no greatness. Hebrews 10:25–31 speaks of the sin of disassociation with the local church and shows God's attitude toward believers who have no time for the local church.

“And He [God the Father] put all things in subjection under His [the Lord Jesus Christ’s] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph. 1:22–23)

Paul is turning from describing what God did in the human body of the Lord Jesus Christ on Earth to what He wants to do in the spiritual Body of Christ on Earth. What God accomplished in one human body, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, He wants to continue accomplishing through one spiritual Body—the Church.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:4–7)

The phrase “*in order that,*” in verse 7, introduces the purpose that Paul has been building up to all through Ephesians 1. God gave us all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ—the sum total of His wealth through grace provision made available to us. He did not give us these riches so that we could squander our lives, so that we could live in confusion and frustration, with no purpose, no destiny, no sense of value.

His reason for raising and seating us with Christ, for placing the authority and the dominion of Jesus Christ at our disposal, has to do with “*the ages to come.*” When he uses this phrase, Paul is looking throughout the rest of time and eternity, as far into the future as we can project—a million years, a billion years, a trillion years from now.

In all of the ages to come, from the point of our salvation on, God wants to show something. The word *endeiknumai* means “to display, to bring to light.” It has the idea of proving, of showing beyond question. What does He want to show? “*The surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*”

The Greek word for “*kindness*” is rooted in *charis*, “*grace.*” God, throughout all the *aeons* to come, will manifest the overflowing riches of His grace with which He “graced” us in Christ Jesus. How did He grace us? By giving us all spiritual blessings.

By giving us an eternal destiny. By giving us eternal life and the opportunity to have eternal greatness beyond our wildest imagination.

If we take advantage of the grace God extends to us, we will be great throughout eternity. The entire angelic realm throughout all the ages to come will stand in awe of the Church!

God has poured out His grace in this age in a way and to a degree that He never has before and never will again. Eternity itself will never exhaust God's display of the riches of His grace which are extended to us now, in this age, and which we can apprehend by faith.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Faith makes it possible for us, living under the limitations of time, to reach forward and grasp eternal truth. The substance Paul wants us to grasp in Ephesians 2 is that the Church is going to be the display piece of God throughout all eternity. The Church will someday reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12) and will share in the glory of Christ (Rom. 8:17).

If we understand the Church's destiny and if we understand that we are part of the Church by faith in Jesus Christ, then we should understand this: We have provision, protection, and potential for impact beyond anything we could ever imagine.

Seven Figures of Christ and the Church

Seven New Testament figures of Christ and the Church illustrate the intimacy of the relationship between Christ and believers in the Church Age. Each picture reinforces the truth that fellowship with Jesus Christ is the only thing that can satisfy our souls. Each picture also points to the organic unity of the Church and reinforces the truth that all Church Age believers are irrevocably joined to one another.

1. **The Shepherd and the sheep** pictures the utter helplessness of all believers and the extent of the Lord's tender love (John 10:2–16; 21:15–17). Christ is the Shepherd who provides life, liberty, and sustenance for the sheep. As the Good Shepherd, the crucified Lord laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Seven Figures of Christ and the Church ... cont.

As the Great Shepherd, the resurrected Lord sustains and supplies believers with every good thing in the plan of God (Heb. 13:20–21). As the Chief Shepherd, the returning Lord is the source of eternal blessings and eternal reward for those who follow Him (1 Pet. 5:4).

2. **The Vine and the branches** pictures the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ and the production in our lives that comes from communion with Him (John 15:1–7). Jesus Christ is fruitful through the branches that draw their life from Him. All life flows through the vine; the branch can do nothing on its own. Christian fruitfulness has to do with abiding, with faith, with receiving—never with working from human strength. Only in Christ can we bear fruit.
3. **The Chief Cornerstone and the stones of the building** pictures the invisible, spiritual temple being built by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5–9). Israel **had** a temple, the Church **is** a temple, “*a dwelling of God in the Spirit*” (Eph 2:22). The cornerstone aligns and ties together the entire building. Believers are related to each other as stones, built on one foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). It takes many stones to make a building, and all are dependent on each other. The stones themselves do not do anything except allow themselves to be fitted together by the builder.
4. **The High Priest and priests of the temple** pictures the relationship of service shared by Christ with believers (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5–6). The function of Old Testament priests was to represent the people before God. Jesus Christ is our High Priest (Hebrews 5–8). He is a priest forever (Psalm 110:4). Because He is also the King, we are members of a royal priesthood. As priests, we are to offer worship and sacrifices of praise, of intercession, and of ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15).
5. **The Head and the Body** is the most often used description of Christ and the Church. It pictures the unity of believers and the authority of Christ (Rom. 12:5). In the human body, each member has a specific and individual function. Each member, though different, is necessary. All members take their orders from the brain; but all, by nature, serve the other parts and exist solely for the function of the whole. The Church is one body—the Body of Christ. Every believer is placed “*in Christ*” at the moment of salvation (1 Cor. 12:13) and all believers are exhorted to live as one (Ephesians 4).

Seven Figures of Christ and the Church ... cont.

6. **The Last Adam and the new creation** pictures the risen Christ as the Head of a new race—a new species of creation (1 Cor. 15:45–50). The first Adam brought sin and death; the Last Adam brought righteousness and life. By spiritual birth, believers have become part of the new creation, but the glories of this relationship await Heaven when all believers will be released from their sin natures, will become citizens of Heaven, and will be given bodies like the resurrection body of Christ (John 14:2–3; 1 Cor. 15:20–57; Rom. 8:23).
7. **The Bridegroom and the Bride** is perhaps the most intimate description of the relationship between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:22–23). It pictures not only Christ's authority over and protection of His Church, but also the tenderness, the love, the unity, and the intimacy that will exist between Christ and the Church forever. The Church is not yet the Bride of Christ but will be in the future. She will be claimed by Christ at the Rapture, and she will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12), sharing in His glory (Rom. 8:17–18).



Lesson 2–3:

The Commission—*Evangelism*

2 Corinthians 5:14–21

1 Peter 3:15

In Matthew 16, Jesus Christ declares that His Church will be a body on the march. In Mark 16, He reinforces that idea, telling the disciples to go into all the world with the Gospel. Every believer is an ambassador, commissioned to represent the Lord Jesus Christ to a world full of people who do not know Him.

We cannot be properly motivated to lead others to Christ until we understand God’s love toward us. In Romans 5, Paul writes about this love. Though we were ungodly, though we were totally helpless, though we were hostile to and enemies of the Creator, yet *“God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8).

This love of God for us is the only force that can motivate us to fulfill our commission.

“For the love of Christ controls us ...” (2 Cor. 5:14)

“The love of Christ” is not love for Him that we produce. It is God’s undying, eternal, infinite love for us, manifested to us through the Lord Jesus Christ, and produced in us by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). When Paul says that this love *“controls”* us, he uses the Greek word *sunecho*. *Sun* means “together,” *echo* means “to have and to hold, to possess and to control.” The word can be translated “hold together,” “constrain,” “press on every side,” “urge,” “impel.” It carries the idea of someone possessing something and controlling it for his benefit. In this case, it is God’s

love that possesses and controls us, that drives us continually upward in spiritual growth for our good and His glory.

This driving force is available to every one of us, but not until we begin to understand it through the study of the Word will it be activated in our lives. As we study, we see Jesus Christ more clearly. We understand with progressively more depth and intimacy what it took for Jesus to lay aside the riches of eternity and step in the flesh into time.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 8:9, *“that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”* For us, the awesome God emptied Himself and came in the form of human flesh to live the life of a bondservant. For thirty-three years He humbled Himself, taking one step down after another, after another until the final humiliation of death on a cross (Phil. 2:5–8). He did it all to bring to us the love that provides eternal life.

This is the love that compels us. The more impressed we are with it, the more clearly we will see how empty are the things of time that we once so eagerly sought. We will find ourselves, like the Apostle Peter in John 6, with only one real option. At a time when many of His disciples turned away from following Him, the Lord asked Peter if he, too, were going to leave. But where else could Peter go? He knew no one but Jesus and nothing but the plan

Five Works of the Holy Spirit

Second Corinthians 5:17 does not say that if any man is in Christ he **ought** to become a new creature and old things **ought** to pass away. It does not say that if any man is in Christ, he **feels** like a new creature, or he **acts** like a new creature. It does not say that the old things will **eventually** pass away, and new things will **eventually** come. It says, *“If any man is in Christ, he **is** a new creature, the old things passed away; behold, new things **have** come.”* These are statements of absolute, accomplished fact. They refer to positional reality. When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit instantaneously performs five irrevocable works in us:

1. **Baptism: New Position**

By the baptism of the Holy Spirit we are placed in Christ, becoming a part of His Body forever (1 Cor. 12:13). This

of God would ever be able to satisfy the longings of his soul. The love of Christ had taken hold of Peter.

“... having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.” (2 Cor. 5:14–15)

When Paul tells the Corinthians that *“one died for all,”* the *“one”* he is talking about is Jesus Christ. The entire human race was thrown into sin with the fall of Adam. When he fell, Adam died spiritually (Gen. 2:17). The children of Adam and Eve were born in the likeness of their parents. They and their children were all born spiritually dead, separated from God.

But because of His love, God sent His only begotten Son into this world of death and darkness (John 3:16). Jesus Christ came to die for every member of the human race. He did so with a goal in mind: *“that they who live should no longer live for themselves.”* The phrase *“they who live”* refers to all who by faith in Jesus Christ come out of spiritual death into life. *“Life”* is *zoe*, the word used in John 1:4 to describe the essence of life, which is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus took our place on the cross so that we could take His place in the world. He was imputed with our sins so that we could be imputed with His righteousness. He died for us so that we could live for Him. If we are living for ourselves—following our own

Five Works of the Holy Spirit ... cont.

gives us a new position spiritually. Before we believed, we were dead **in Adam**; now we are alive **in Christ**. We have been identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–4) and have been seated with Him in Heaven (Eph. 2:4–7; Col. 3:1–4).

2. Regeneration: New Life

Regeneration is the work by which God the Holy Spirit makes us spiritually alive (Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:4–6). We are born again, this time as children of God (1 Pet. 1:23; John 3:3–7; 1:12, 18). Whereas before, we were physically alive but spiritually dead, now we are spiritually alive in Christ and positionally dead to the flesh (John 5:21; Rom. 6:13). Eternal life has been imputed to us. We have been transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of light (1 John 5:12; Col. 1:13).

plans, seeking our own desires—then we are not fulfilling the purpose for which Christ came into this world. He died so that we who live should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him.

“Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Cor. 5:16–17)

When we stop living only for ourselves and start living for Christ, we begin to look at other people differently. Before, we saw others only “*according to the flesh*,” from human perspective. We were interested in other people for what we could get out of them or for how they made us feel. But now we know that God wants us to look at others with His eyes. He wants us to see in every unbeliever what He sees—someone precious enough for Christ to die for and, therefore, someone who has the potential of becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Paul is saying that if we are driven by the love of Christ and can no longer live simply for our own pleasures and purposes, then we are no longer able to look at other people superficially. We have to look at people as potential believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We

Five Works of the Holy Spirit ... cont.

3. **Indwelling: New Power**

At the moment of salvation, we are permanently indwelt by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9–11). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit supplies us with an inherent power that can be activated through the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Before salvation, our only source of motivation and power was our sin nature. After salvation, not only is the power of the sin nature broken, but we are now able to draw on the omnipotence of God (John 7:37–39; 14:17–20; 17:26).

4. **Gifting: New Purpose**

At salvation, the Holy Spirit gives each of us a unique spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:7, 11), and a unique work to accomplish (Matt. 25:15; Mark 13:34). The purpose of our spiritual gift is to manifest the power of the Spirit of God within us by edifying the Body of Christ in some way. The work chosen by God for

have to see in them the infinite worth that God vested in them when He sacrificed His own Son. Therefore, our attitude to other members of the human race is completely transformed from human viewpoint, which sees only the surface, to divine viewpoint, which sees all the potential.

Our perception of other people is able to change because of the profound change that has taken place in us. Paul says that “*in Christ*” we are totally new creatures. At the moment of our salvation, the Holy Spirit placed us in Christ and we became new. In the twinkling of an eye, He gave us new position, new life, new power, new purpose, new destiny. The old things passed away and new things have come.

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. 5:18–21)

All these changes that take place when we believe in Jesus Christ are from God. None are the result of our own work. God’s

Five Works of the Holy Spirit ... cont.

us is something that no one else could ever accomplish and will remain undone for eternity if we do not do it. Only in the exercise of our gifts in the work God has chosen, can we fulfill the plan of God for our lives and achieve the eternal greatness for which we were designed.

5. Sealing: New Identity

Sealing is the work by which the Holy Spirit assures our eternal destiny (Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30). In ancient times, the seal signified three things: ownership, security, and safe delivery. In Romans 15:28, Paul applies all three ideas when he says he has put his seal on money collected in Asia for the saints in Jerusalem: The money would be identified, kept secure, and delivered safely to its ultimate destination. In the same way, every believer is marked as God’s private and precious possession, with God’s own guarantee of safe delivery.

plan is a total grace operation. We will never fulfill His plan for our lives unless we understand grace and orient ourselves to it. The only way we can orient ourselves to grace is by faith.

What God gave each of us, He gave us for the benefit of others. The “*ministry of reconciliation*” is from two words: *diakonia*, which means “service,” and *katallasso*, which means “to effect a change or a transformation.” Reconciliation is power to effect a change. The change is between estranged parties—man on one side, in rebellion against and an enemy of God; God on the other side, constantly faithful to man. Between the two was the barrier of our sin. But God reconciled us to Himself by not imputing, or charging, our sins to us. He imputed them instead to His Son on the cross.

God will never impute sins to any member of the human race. No one ever has or ever will commit a sin that was not paid for by the work of Christ on the cross. All it takes to be reconciled forever to God is to believe in that work.

God has entrusted to us the word of this reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ to the unbelieving world. Our message is simple and beautiful and of eternal consequence: God made His own beloved Son to be sin on our behalf. Our sins can no longer separate us from God, and thus from all that is good. The Father

Baptisms

In Hebrews 5:11–6:3, the believers in first-century Jerusalem were called out for their failure to mature in the faith. These believers, who ought by now to have been teachers, were still babes who needed someone to teach them the basics of the Word. The author of Hebrews urges these people to get past the elementary teachings and to press on to maturity. He then lists seven foundational doctrines that believers must understand if they ever hope to reach maturity. One of these is *baptismon didaches*, “the doctrine of baptisms.”

Usage of the Greek word *baptizo* can be traced as far back as the ninth century B.C. The word had two basic meanings: “to change the nature of something” and “to identify something with its purpose.” The first meaning was employed by Homer in *The Odyssey* to describe the tempering of a sword. When the hot metal was plunged into water, the sword was “baptized,” changed from soft to hard metal. The second meaning was used by the Spartans

made Him to be sin so that we could become the righteousness of God. But the righteousness, the reconciliation, and the life are found only in one place: in Christ. We can enter that place one way: by faith.

“But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” (1 Pet. 3:15)

The greatest key to effective evangelism is satisfaction in our own Christian lives. In the Greek, the first part of this verse says, “Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts.” It means put Jesus Christ in His rightful place—first place, the place of preeminence—in your life. Then you will be satisfied and you will have hope.

“*Be ready*” is from *hetoimazo*, a military word that means “to be prepared, equipped, adequate for the task at hand.” To be effective in evangelism, we have to be prepared. To be prepared, we have to be occupied with the Person of Jesus Christ. We have to set Him apart from, and above, all the details of life and then fix our gaze where He is.

“*To make a defense*” is the Greek *apologia*, from which we get the word “apologetic.” *Apologia* means “verbal defense.” It refers

Baptisms ... cont.

who would “baptize” their spears before a battle by dipping them in blood. The process did not change the physical characteristics of the weapon, but served as a picture of its becoming a battle spear—one that had tasted blood.

Seven different baptisms are taught in the New Testament. Four of these are “real” baptisms in which a real change takes place. Three are “ritual” baptisms in which no change takes place, but something is simply identified with its purpose. In each of the real baptisms, where a real change takes place, no water is involved. In each of the ritual baptisms, where no change of nature takes place, water represents something spiritual.

Real Baptisms

1. The Baptism of Moses (1 Cor. 10:1–2). In the baptism of Moses, Moses is identified with a cloud and the children of Israel are identified with Moses. The cloud is Jesus Christ. The people of the Exodus generation passed through the Red Sea from slavery to freedom. No one got wet, but an actual change took place:

to someone who has the facts available and who gives reasonable evidence in court. If the prosecuting attorney in a trial does not have convincing evidence, he will never get a conviction from the court. This verse is saying that until Jesus Christ is given the place of priority in our lives, we will not be able to win our case before the unbelieving world.

Another courtroom word is used repeatedly in the Bible in relation to evangelism. *Martureo*, from which we get “martyr,” means “to be a witness, to testify, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something.” These two judicial terms tell us we had better have our facts and our personal experience straight about Jesus Christ and about salvation. We will not have an effect on the unbelieving world until we are able to give evidence that will stand up in court.

When Peter inserted the phrase “*to everyone who asks*,” he put an amazing twist on what we usually think of as “the right way to evangelize.” He is describing evangelism by response, evangelism upon request. When we are equipped and prepared, God will bring people to us, people who wonder why we have such hope.

These people will ask us “*to give an account*” of the hope that is in us. “*Account*” is from *logos* and it means “a word or message.” “*Hope*,” from *elpis*, refers to absolute assurance, security, stability.

Baptisms ... cont.

2.5 million slaves were identified with God's deliverer and became free men.

2. The Baptism of the Cross (Luke 12:50). In the baptism of the cross, when the sins of all men were poured out on Jesus, the Lord was changed. He became sin (2 Cor. 5:21). On the cross, when Jesus was identified with our sins, He was under condemnation—severed from God the Father and God the Spirit (Matt. 27:46).

3. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). In the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which takes place at the moment of salvation, the person who has put faith in Christ is baptized into union with Christ and becomes a new creature. He is identified with Christ and given His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). He is placed in Christ and sealed there forever by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13).

4. The Baptism of Fire (Matt. 3:11). In the coming baptism of fire, all unbelievers will be identified with the fire of judgment.

In English, “*hope*” is an “if” word. When we hope for something, we want it to happen, but do not know whether it will or not. In both Hebrew and Greek, hope always means absolute assurance. Peter is telling us that when our lives are marked by victorious confidence—by spiritual boldness—then the people around us will sit up and take notice. They will want to know where our stability comes from.

Why should the unbelievers, in their cosmic power and their self-sufficiency, and in all their human support systems, consider turning to Jesus Christ unless we can show them something they do not have? Until unbelievers around us are able to see something that they cannot generate by themselves, they are not going to be interested in what we have to say.

If our neighbors and friends do not see hope in us, they will not ask us about what propels us in life. A breakdown in our spiritual life impedes our ability to meet the needs of other people. The living water that Jesus promised in John 7 has to quench our thirst first, before it can flow through us to quench the thirst of others.

God intended His power to be seen in the life of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot hold the Bible in front of the world and expect people to see the power that is in it. The power is

Baptisms ... cont.

A permanent change will take place at the Second Advent when unbelievers are removed from the Earth and sent to eternal destruction (2 Thess. 1:7–8; Revelation 14; 19).

Ritual Baptisms

- 1. The Baptism of John** (Matt. 3:11; Acts 19:3). The water baptism that John offered to Jewish believers was a picture of their identification with the kingdom.
- 2. The Baptism of Christ** (Matt. 3:13–17). The water baptism of Jesus Christ was a picture of the Lord’s identification with God the Father’s will for His life. In the process, Jesus was identified to the nation of Israel as the promised Messiah.
- 3. The Baptism of Believers** (Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 16:33; 1 Cor. 1:17). The water baptism of believers in the Church Age is a picture of the Christian’s identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is an outward expression of an inward change that has taken place.

there, but they will not see it until it has gone through the converter of our souls. The greatest evidence of the reality of the Word of God is stability, consistency, constancy in the individual Christian's life.

If they see confidence in our lives day in and day out—not just when everything goes right, but when things go wrong, when we are under pressure, when we lose loved ones, when we falter and fail but get right back up—then they will want to know what makes us tick. If they consistently see in us an attitude of spiritual boldness because of the absolute eternal confidence we have in Christ, they will begin asking what this hope is that is in us.

When we are asked what the source of our hope is, we always answer in gentleness and reverence. *Prautes*, usually translated “gentleness” or “meekness,” is another word that in English has a completely different connotation than in Greek. In English, meekness is usually equated with weakness. In Greek, *prautes* means “power under control.”

To respond in gentleness means that we have all the power in the world available to us, but we always hold it in proper pro-

Three Functions of the Believer

God does not save us and then turn us out to wander aimlessly around the cosmic system until He returns. The instant we are saved, we are given three assignments that define the purpose of the rest of our lives and tell us how to deal with everyone we meet. No believer ever has to wonder, “What am I here for?” Those three assignments are:

1. Priesthood: Our Relationship to God (1 Pet. 2:5–9). Every believer is a priest to God and has the right to represent himself before the throne of grace. In Hebrews 10:19–22, we are urged to “draw near” to God, from the Greek *proserchomai*, which means “to come face-to-face.” Because our approach is built on confession, we can walk boldly into the throne room of God, knowing every sin has been paid for and we have been redeemed (Heb. 4:16). God wants us to live face-to-face with Him.

Our priesthood is private—between us and the Lord. No one sees what goes on between any believer and God. We function as priests through the study of the Word, which is God's communication to us, and prayer, which is our communication to Him. Our responsibility is to stay in fellowship (1 Cor. 11:28–32; 1 John 1:7–9), to pray (Heb. 13:15; 1 Thess. 5:17–19), and to

portion. We never demand of others any more than they are able or willing to give. We allow other people maximum freedom because we expect the same for ourselves.

The way to build up people is not to discourage and frustrate them, not to stomp them down, but to take them little-by-little to the limits of their own ability and beyond. Those who are strong have to restrain their own power, so that they can constantly keep leading those younger or weaker on into maturity and to greatness.

This gentleness, like the love that drives us, is not a quality we can produce ourselves. It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). The Holy Spirit—the Helper, the Comforter, the Encourager—is the power in evangelism. In Him alone do we find the motivation, the knowledge, the strength, and the gentleness, to take the Gospel to the world. By Him alone can the unbeliever be convicted of his need for Christ.

Three Functions of the Believer ... cont.

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

2. Ambassadorship: Our Relationship to Unbelievers

(2 Cor. 5:17–20). God has given us the ministry of reconciliation so that we might serve as ambassadors of Christ. We have a duty to the unsaved (Acts 1:8). Jesus Christ came to Earth *“to seek and save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). He began His ministry in the flesh, but He continues it in us (Acts 1:1–2). Our responsibility is to urge men to be reconciled to God.

Hebrews 10:23 tells us to *“hold fast the confession of our hope.”* *Katecho* is a nautical term that means “to steer a straight course toward an objective.” *Elpis*, “hope,” is “absolute certainty.” Confidence in God produces courage before man. As our intimacy with God grows, through the function of our priesthood, so does our effectiveness as ambassadors.

3. Ministry: Our Relationship to Believers (1 Cor. 12:7, 11; Rom. 12:1–8). Each one of us is called to be a servant to every other Christian, and our spiritual gift defines the area in which we are to concentrate our service. At salvation, every believer is given a spiritual gift through which he is to minister to the Body of Christ. That gift, bestowed sovereignly by the Holy Spirit as He wills, outlines the plan of God for our lives. Through the gifts of the Spirit, the Church is built up and strengthened.

Three Functions of the Believer ... cont.

In Hebrews 10:24–25, we are exhorted to “*consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds ... encouraging one another.*” The word translated “*consider,*” *katanoeo*, means “to bear down with the mind, to concentrate.” In the exercise of our spiritual gifts, we should bear down in intense concentration, meditate, and exercise some mental energy in considering other people and their needs. We should constantly ask ourselves, “How can I stimulate someone else to live in the energy of the Spirit? How can I use my gift today to encourage and strengthen someone else?”

Ambassadorship

1. An ambassador does not appoint himself. We are appointed by Christ (2 Cor. 5:18–20).
2. An ambassador does not support himself. God supplies all our needs (Eph. 1:3; Phil 4:19).
3. An ambassador is not a citizen of the country where he is sent. We are citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3:20).
4. An ambassador has instructions in written form. We have the Bible (2 Tim 3:16).
5. An ambassador cannot take insults personally; he is accepted or rejected not on his own merit but because of who he represents. We are not to take it personally when we are despised and rejected by those who hate Jesus Christ (John 15:19–21).
6. An ambassador does not enter a country to profit himself. We are on Earth to serve the Lord (2 Cor. 5:15).
7. An ambassador is a personal representative of someone else. Everything he does and says reflects on the one who sent him. We are representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ by action as well as by word (John 13:35; 17:23; 1 John 3:18).
8. An ambassador’s perspective is service; his prospect is reward. We are commissioned for service and will be rewarded (Matt. 5:12; 2 John 8; Rev. 22:12).
9. An ambassador is recalled when war is declared. The recall of all believers at the Rapture of the Church will announce the beginning of the end for Satan (2 Thess. 2:1–12).

Meekness

Prautes, or praotes, denotes "meekness." In its use in Scripture, it consists not in a person's "outward behavior only; nor yet in his relations to his fellow-men; as little in his mere natural disposition. Rather it is an inwrought grace of the soul; and the exercises of it are first and chiefly toward God. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting; it is closely linked with the word tapeinophrosune [humility], and follows directly upon it, Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12 ... it is only the humble heart which is also the meek, and which, as such, does not fight against God and more or less struggle and contend with Him ..."

The meaning of *prautes* "is not readily expressed in English, for the terms meekness, mildness, commonly used, suggest weakness and pusillanimity to a greater or less extent, whereas *prautes* does nothing of the kind ... It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power. The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but the Lord was 'meek' because He had the infinite resources of God at His command. Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all." (From *Notes on Galatians*, by Hogg and Vine, pp. 294–295.) (Vine, *New Testament Words*, III, p. 55.)

The word *praus*, "meekness," means "power under control." *Praus* was used by the Greeks for a war horse that was trained to obey instantly and absolutely, no matter how great the confusion of battle.

The Lipizzaner stallions are a modern rendition of the ancient Greek warhorse. Some of the stunts these horses do—such as the capriole, where the horse leaps straight up in the air and kicks his hind legs back—were actually used by the Greeks in training their horses for battle.

When the Greeks could take a horse, with the phenomenal inherent power that can propel a thousand-pound animal at speeds over 35 miles an hour, and bring that magnificent animal under the total control of just a touch—maybe just leg pressure or knee pressure—and have that horse do exactly what they wanted, then they called that horse *praus*.

When we talk about the meekness of Jesus Christ, what do we mean? We are talking about the Creator of the universe,

Meekness ... cont.

who measures the universe with the span of His hand, walking around among members of the human race, allowing people to abuse Him, to afflict Him, and ultimately to put Him on the cross. That is what the word *praus* means. It means that He could have snuffed out the universe with the snap of His fingers, but He had His power under control.

(See "*meekness*," "*gentleness*," or "*humility*" as applied to the Lord Jesus Christ: Matt. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1; as applied to believers: Matt. 5:5; 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:23; 6:1; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 3:2; James 1:21; 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:4, 15).



Lesson 2–4:

The Equipment—*Spiritual Gifts*

1 Corinthians 12:4–7

Mark 9:33–37

2 Timothy 2:20–21

At the moment of our salvation, the Holy Spirit equips each of us with a unique spiritual gift. Hidden in this gift are treasures God wants to give us in time and eternity. It is through our gift that we come to know God most intimately and that the world sees most clearly the evidence of God in us. God wants us to know, to understand, and to exercise our gift, because it is only through this that we can achieve the greatness for which He designed us.

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.” (1 Cor. 12:4–6)

The Greek word translated “gift” is *charisma*, the root of which is *charis*, “grace.” Spiritual gifts proceed from the grace of God. Each gift is as unique as the person to whom it is given, yet all gifts bear the stamp of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the giver of the gifts and the power behind the exercise of the gifts, but He always works in the background, never bringing attention to Himself. His work is always to glorify the Son (John 16:14).

In the same way that the gifts are as unique as the recipients, so the outworkings of the gifts are as unique as the lives of the recipients. That outworking or “ministry” is from the word *diakonos*, “one who executes the commands of another.” The word

was used for a servant or table waiter. In the exercise of our gift, we are the hands and feet of the Son of Man, who “*came not to be served, but to serve*” (Mark 10:45). The function of every gift is ministry—servitude—not forced labor, but willing service to the Lord Jesus Christ and for His glory.

When we serve in the filling of the Holy Spirit, there will be results and we will affect people. “*Effects*” here is from the Greek word for operational power. *Energeia*—from which we get the word “energy”—is used in the New Testament only of superhuman power. It is a power that makes us efficient and effective in life, and when we are effective, God the Father is glorified.

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor. 12:7)

“*Each one*” is *hekastos*, which means “absolutely each and every one.” Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is given a spiritual gift. No one ever has been or ever will be left out. “*Given*,” from *didomi*, reminds us that spiritual gifts, like everything else in the Christian life, are a gift, a product of grace. “*Manifestation*” is from *phaneroo*, which means “to reveal, to make clear.” *Phanerosis* is used in the New Testament to describe appearances of God or revelations of His essence

Spiritual Gifts

“The Gift of the Spirit” and “Spiritual Gifts”

1. The phrase, “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*,” relates to salvation and has to do with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the believer’s relationship in God’s family (Acts 2:38–39).
2. The phrase, “*the gifts of the Holy Spirit*,” relates to service and has to do with the energizing or enabling power of the Holy Spirit and fellowship with God (1 Cor. 12:7–11).
3. There can be no spiritual gifts until one possesses the gift of salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No one has a spiritual gift before salvation.

Spiritual Gifts and Unity

1. There is one Spirit who bestows all spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4, 7, 11).
2. There is one Lord over all the gifts (1 Cor. 12:5). Out of the gift bestowed on each believer should come service—ministry. Because believers are the Body of Christ, all service on the part of Christians is a continuation of the things that Jesus

(Mark 16:12; John 2:11; 9:3; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 3:5; 5:8). Our spiritual gift is the channel for the manifestation of God—first to us and then to others. It is as we exercise our gift that God quenches our thirst, revealing Himself to us in ways that He reveals Himself to no one else. Then, He reveals Himself to those around us in ways that He can through no one else.

Each person's spiritual gift is a manifestation of something invisible—the power of the Holy Spirit. Though the power itself is invisible, the evidences of the power will be clearly seen. As Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, we cannot see the wind, but when it blows, we can see its effects. The Spirit is the wind; we are the effects of the wind.

Christians are called to live for Christ, to reflect His character, to reach out with His love to others. The Holy Spirit gives to each one of us the power to display some special aspect of Jesus Christ. No one has a gift like anyone else's. There is nothing in our lives that can have impact on the world like the exercise of our special gift.

This manifestation of the Spirit is given to each of us for an immediate purpose, what Paul calls here, "*the common good.*"

Spiritual Gifts ... cont.

"began to do and to teach" when He was in the flesh on the Earth (Acts 1:1).

3. There is one God who supplies the power and makes the gifts effective (1 Cor. 12:6). Ministry will produce results, effects. The Greek *energeo* is the root of two words used in 1 Corinthians 12:6: "*effects*" and "*works.*" God is the power behind both.
4. All gifts have one goal: to edify or build up the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:12–13).
5. All gifts work by one power and motivation—love (1 Cor. 13:1–3).

Description of the Gifts

1. A spiritual gift is divine enablement or capacity given to each believer for accomplishing some area of service for the edification of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:7, 11–16).
2. Spiritual gifts are sovereignly bestowed at salvation by the Holy Spirit; in this way, His ministry to each believer is personalized (1 Cor. 12:7, 11).
3. The believer can never lose his spiritual gift or have it taken away from him (Rom. 11:29).

This phrase is a translation of one Greek word—*sumphero*, a compound of *sun*, “together,” and *phero*, “to bear a load.” It means “that which is profitable.” In Ephesians 4, Paul tells us that spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of edifying—building up—the Church, the Body of Christ.

If we cannot fulfill our destiny apart from the exercise of our spiritual gifts, then it is absolutely essential that we know what our gifts are. If we are serious about wanting to discover our gifts and to achieve greatness, we should set ourselves not to finding the gifts, but to waiting on the Giver. Study the Word, develop the attitude of a servant, be willing to do the tasks no one else wants to do, and seek to be the last and the least. Learn the lesson that the Lord repeatedly tried to teach His disciples: In God’s economy, the way up is the way down.

“And they came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.” (Mark 9:33–34)

This was not the first time—and it would not be the last—that the disciples let their desire to be recognized and applauded interfere with the Lord’s desire to make them great.

In Mark 9:1–32, we see the events that led to the disciples’

Spiritual Gifts ... cont.

4. Spiritual gifts are distinct from natural talents. Talents are related to physical birth; spiritual gifts are related to spiritual birth. Spiritual gifts are supernatural (1 Cor. 1:26–29; 2:12–14).
5. The gifts of the Spirit are different from *“the fruit of the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:22–23). The presence of a gift is evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit, but the presence of fruit is evidence of the filling of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts can be imitated—the fruit of the Spirit cannot. Unless the fruit is present, the exercise of the gift is unacceptable to God (1 Cor. 13:1–4). The Corinthians exhibited every spiritual gift (1 Cor. 1:7) and placed great emphasis on the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14), yet were totally carnal (1 Cor. 3:1). It is far better to pursue the fruit than the gift. Where the fruit exists, the gift will surely function. Paul calls this *“a still more excellent way”* (1 Cor. 12:31).
6. Twenty different categories of spiritual gifts are mentioned in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. In 1 Pet. 4:11,

“discussion.” Peter, James, and John had just had a “mountaintop experience.” Jesus had taken them up to a high mountain and had been transfigured before them. They had seen Elijah and Moses talking with the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory. They had heard the voice of God.

At the very time that these three were seeing this marvelous sight, the other disciples were in the valley, caught up in a frustrating attempt to cast a demon out of a child. They were failing in front of an expectant crowd.

When Jesus and the three returned, the first thing they heard was the crowd’s complaints against the disciples. The Lord, reminding the people that “*All things are possible to him who believes*” (Mark 9:23), cast the demon out of the boy Himself. Mark 9:30 tells us that Jesus and the disciples then set out to go through Galilee. On the way, He begins to tell them about His coming betrayal and death and resurrection.

Picture the scene: Some disciples have been given a tremendous privilege while the others were unable to accomplish a task they should have been able to accomplish. So, three disciples are on a spiritual high and the rest are depressed as Jesus begins to teach the most critical lesson they could ever learn. The Lord was explaining what Paul would later say were the most important points of the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:3–5). At this moment, the

Spiritual Gifts ... cont.

Peter breaks all gifts into two types: communication and service. Scripture also distinguishes between temporary and permanent gifts (1 Cor. 13:8–10; Heb. 2:1–4). The three categories of temporary gifts were: **prophecy**, which was the means of completion of the Canon of Scripture; **knowledge**, which was the ability to know a truth before it was recorded in Scripture; and **tongues**, the ability to speak in languages not known to the speaker. Tongues was given specifically as a warning to the nation of Israel (Isa. 28:11).

7. Spiritual gifts must be developed or “stirred up” (2 Tim. 1:6). This implies preparation and practice. Romans 12:6–8 emphasizes that each believer is to minister in his own gift and should not attempt to intrude into work that he is not gifted for. The day will come when God will ask each of us: “What have you done with what I gave you?” (Eph. 4:7, 11–16; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 18).

disciples' circumstances—their successes or their failures—did not matter. They were not the issue. Jesus Christ was the issue, and what mattered was what Jesus was trying to teach.

But the disciples were not listening—they were preoccupied. Why? Why were they not impressed with the greatness of Jesus Christ? Because they were impressed with their own greatness. They were concerned with how important they appeared to be. When we are impressed with ourselves, we will not be impressed with Jesus Christ, and we will not recognize our need to hear the Word of God.

So, Jesus, who knew all along that they were not listening to Him, asks the disciples what they have been “discussing.” *Dialogizomai* is from a word that can refer to simple conversation or to argument and dispute among parties.

Here, all the disciples were party to a dispute. The imperfect tense tells us that they kept on arguing. Over and over again, they kept picking at each other. Anyone who has children can imagine what the trip was like. Jesus is walking along and He starts to teach. He is saying, “Now men, I want you to understand, I am going up to Jerusalem. I will be betrayed and I will be crucified ...” and behind Him, Peter jabs John with his elbow and says, “Look, I’m the greatest.” And the Lord says, “I am going to be put in the tomb and after three days I will rise again.” And Matthew comes up from behind, shoves Peter and says, “Says who?”

Under their breath, thinking He doesn’t know, the disciples are constantly arguing, “I’m greater than you are. I’ve performed more service, I’ve seen more amazing things, I’ve done this and I’ve done that.”

The word “greatest” in the Greek is *meizon*, a comparative term from the word *meegas*, which means “great.” *Meizon* is a superlative term; it refers to the greatest of the great.

Is it any wonder that when the Lord was taken in the Garden of Gethsemane everyone fled? Is it any wonder that the disciples did not remember the things that were going to happen? Is it surprising that the dawning of the first Resurrection Sunday found them huddling behind locked doors, afraid, depressed, hopeless? No, it is no surprise at all. Because when Jesus was teaching, they were preoccupied—not with who He was and what He was going to do, but with their own greatness.

“Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.’ Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.’”
(Mark 9:35–37)

When a Jewish rabbi had an important lesson to impart, he would sit down, a signal to his students to take their places, that he was about to teach. So, the Lord sits down and calls the twelve to Himself.

He takes the word they are using, “great,” and changes it to “*first*.” Why would He do that? Because He knew what they really wanted, just as He knows what we really want. The disciples were not asking for greatness, they were asking for prominence. They were interested in recognition. And so the Lord strikes a blow at the inordinate ambition of the disciples, while at the same time holding out to them the potential for true greatness.

“*Last*” is *eschatos*, which means “last in order, last in place.” “*Servant*” is *diakonos*, the root of “ministries” in 1 Corinthians 12:5. In the ancient world, the *diakonos* was a table waiter, a common servant, someone whose sole purpose in life was to serve someone else. The *diakonos* filled his time with serving; he made his living serving. He was recognized by everyone else as one whose only function was service.

Notice that Jesus does two things with the child. He reaches out, takes the child, and sets him on his feet in the middle of the disciples. He then lets the disciples look at the child as He gathers him into His arms. “Gather” is from *enagkalizomai*, an aorist, middle, participle which means “to enfold or embrace.” He wraps Himself around the child and then He begins to teach the lesson about greatness.

“*Receive*,” *dechomai*, means “to welcome.” The word never carries the connotation of mere toleration; it always has the idea of receiving to oneself with an embrace. The Lord has just illustrated what He is now teaching with words. He is telling the disciples—and He is telling us—not just to accept, but to warmly welcome, the smallest and the apparently least important.

Note that He says not only to receive the child, but to do it in

Humility

1. Humility must be sought (Zeph. 2:3).
2. Humility is displayed through restraint (Luke 6:28–29).
3. Humility is produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).
4. Humility is absolutely essential in teaching (2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Cor. 10:1).
5. Humility is absolutely essential to learning (James 1:21).
6. Humility is priceless in the sight of God (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).
7. Humility is the path to divine promotion (1 Pet. 5:6).
8. Humility is the basis of biblical self-esteem (Rom. 12:3).
9. Humility is perfectly exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 11:29; 21:5; Phil. 2:5–8).

“My name.” Our motivation should be the desire to serve the Person of Jesus Christ. Think about what this implies in the smallest functions of life. What we do for His sake, because of our love for Him, we have actually done to Him.

Each of us chooses whether we will have the attitude of service. Then we choose how far our service will go. God allows us to define the boundaries of our own growth in time and of our own greatness in eternity. The farther down we are willing to go now, the more we are willing to serve unnoticed and without acclaim in time, the greater we will be in eternity in Heaven.

“Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Tim. 2:20–21)

Any large Jewish household would have had a great number of vessels, some made of gold and silver, many more made of wood and earthenware or clay. The gold and silver were very valuable and would be used for special purposes. The wood and clay were common and would be used for common tasks.

The great house Paul is talking about here is the house of God, built on the firm foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). Every believer is a vessel in that house.

God gives all of us the option of choosing what kind of vessels we will be. If we choose to be common, God will have for us only common tasks. If we choose to pursue spiritual quality, God will have wonderful tasks for us.

Exactly how are we to go about becoming vessels of honor? Through cleansing. In 1 John 1:9, God promises that “if we confess our sins, He will always forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

If any man cleanses himself, Paul says, “*he will be a vessel for honor.*” This is the assurance of the future tense which indicates the normal, sequential action of a person moving from the point of salvation forward, using confession continually.

At some point after we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and become members of the Royal Family of God, we sin again. But, the moment we confess our sin, we are restored to fellowship with God and are set back on the upward path. As we take in the milk of the Word, we grow. Eventually we are able to take in the meat of advanced doctrine (see also Heb. 5:11–14). For the rest of our lives on Earth, we will commit sins. But as we grow, we learn to confess more quickly and we learn to stay in fellowship for longer and longer periods of time. As we constantly take those upward steps, pressing on to the high ground of spiritual maturity, we will become special vessels that God will use in magnificent ways.

“*Sanctified, useful ... prepared*” are the three results of our continuous cleansing. The person who applies cleansing repeatedly, day-by-day, will eventually be sanctified, useful, and prepared.

“*Sanctified*” means “set apart” to God. Paul uses the perfect, passive, participle of *hagiazō*. The perfect tense indicates past action with continuous results. The passive voice means that we do not produce this action. Paul is saying that somewhere in the past we were cleansed, with the result that we keep on being cleansed. We live daily in the light of the cross, in fellowship with the Lord. And because we are doing this, we are going to be set apart to God.

“*Useful*” is *euchrestos*, meaning “functional, serviceable.” What makes us functional in life? Confession and cleansing,

followed by growth. The formula for usefulness is this: confess; study the Word; apply the Word. “*Prepared*” is the perfect, passive, participle of *hetoimazo*, and it means “to be properly equipped and qualified for a task.” We cannot sanctify ourselves. We cannot prepare ourselves. All we can do is choose to be available to God, choose to humble ourselves before Him in simple confession of our sins. If we want to be sanctified, useful, and prepared for God, we need only to be available.

Available People

1. **Moses** (Num. 12:3; Heb. 11:25–26). To Moses, availability meant self-denial and great hardship to accomplish the plan of God.
2. **David** (1 Sam. 16:13; 17:37; 2 Sam. 10:11). In the battle with Goliath, there was only one person available for the fight—David. What made David so great? The fact that he stepped out of a multitude of warriors and said, “I’ll be the one.” Any other person could have stepped forward and accomplished the task. But David made the voluntary decision to be great.
3. **Elijah** (1 Kings 17:2–3, 8–9). Elijah is considered by many the greatest prophet of the Jews. What made him great? He followed instructions. God told him to go to the brook Cherith, and he went to the brook Cherith. God told him to go to Zarephath, he went to Zarephath. No argument, no complaint—he just obeyed. He was available.
4. **Isaiah** (Isa. 6:8). The great statement of Isaiah’s availability was so simple: “*Here am I. Send me!*”
5. **Esther** (Esther 4:16). Esther was one of the great ladies of the Old Testament. She faced something that could have meant her death, and she said, “*If I perish, I perish.*” She chose to be available.
6. **Mary** (Luke 1:38). When Mary was told that she, a virgin, would bear a child, she said, “*Behold the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.*” She would face slander and maligning, but she was willing to pay the price.
7. **Paul** (2 Tim. 4:16). Though at his last trial everyone deserted him, Paul remained available to God. Throughout his ministry, Paul had poured out his life for the people to whom he took the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:8), and because all along the line he had made decisions for service, he knew at the end that reward was waiting (2 Tim. 4:6–8).

Raw Material

A five-pound bag of iron:

- Made into horseshoe nails is worth \$5.50,
- Made into needles, it is worth \$3,000,
- Made into mainsprings for watches, it is worth \$250,000.

We are raw material in the hands of God. What will be our worth in Heaven? The answer depends on how much refining we allow God to do in our lives on Earth!



Lesson 2–5: **The Supply Line—Prayer**

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Matthew 7:7–11

Matthew 26:36–45

Prayer is the believer’s supply line. The Bible is God’s communication to us; prayer is our response to Him. From His Word, we receive instructions and encouragement. From our prayers, He receives our thanks and our requests. Until the line of communication with God is open two ways, our relationship with Him will never be what it is intended to be.

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
(1 Thess. 5:16–18)

“*Pray without ceasing*” does not mean that we are to pray non-stop, 24 hours a day. The phrase literally says that prayer should be like a hacking cough. Anyone who has ever had a stiff winter cold knows that a hacking cough seems to be always right below the surface, ready to erupt.

We should pray to God throughout the day in the same way that we would talk with a close friend. When two people who know each other well work together, they start a conversation in the morning that lasts all day. The talk will not be continuous. There may be long periods of silence during which they might communicate with only looks or gestures. In the course of a day, their conversation may cover a hundred topics—politics, the meaning of life, what to have for lunch, the colors in a beautiful sunset.

When we finally realize that God is the best friend we have, our prayer life starts to take on this kind of flavor. We come to understand that there is nothing in our lives that we should not pray about. The more we listen to God by studying the Word, the better we understand His character; the better we understand His character, the more clearly we realize that there is nothing we cannot rejoice in and give thanks about.

Communication is the key to a healthy relationship in the physical realm. Even so, our verbal exchanges with other people are never quite what we want them to be. Not one of us is able to fully express what we think or how we feel. Not one of us is able to fully understand or appreciate the thoughts and feelings that others try to explain to us. So in the physical realm, there is always a certain amount of frustration and unfulfillment in relationships.

In the spiritual realm, we have potential for clear and fulfilling communication, for both understanding and being understood. God's Word to us is perfect. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it was perfectly communicated in exactly the form that we need. When we study, the Holy Spirit will enlighten the eyes of our heart so that we can understand what God is saying to us from **this** passage, on **this** day.

The Essence of God

"Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the LORD." (Jer. 9:23–24)

The Apostle Paul subordinated everything in his life to one goal: *"that I may know Him"* (Phil. 3:10). This greatest of all the apostles counted everything else in life as *skor*, "dung," compared to *"the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Phil. 3:8).

There is no higher knowledge in life than the knowledge of God. It is God's desire that we understand Him and that this understanding gives us the courage to conquer, as the heroes of Hebrews 11 conquered, by seeing Him who is unseen (Heb. 11:27). As we learn to concentrate our thoughts on the essence and the attributes of God rather than on ourselves and on our circumstances, we gradually come to realize that we could not

When we pray, the Holy Spirit will intercede on our behalf to the Father, expressing those things for which we cannot find words (Rom. 8:26). And, if we have stored Scripture in our hearts, the Spirit will be able to recall to our minds the words of God that we need at just the moment we need them. We have, in the Christian way of life, a perfect system. As long as we rely on the filling of the Holy Spirit, that system cannot fail.

It has been said that prayer is the gymnasium of the soul. The fourth-century church father, Augustine, said: *“Pray as if everything depended on God, and then work as if everything depended on you.”* His dictum is a summary of the Lord’s instructions to the disciples in Matthew 7:

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

“Or what man is there among you, when his son will ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” (Matt. 7:7–11)

The Essence of God ... cont.

possibly ever have a problem that He cannot solve. We begin to understand that we do not always have to know what God is doing; we only have to know that **He** knows what He is doing.

1. **Sovereignty** (Dan. 4:34–35). God’s divine will is above every will. He always has everything under control. He, as Creator, is King, Ruler over all His creation. He has assigned to every living thing its place in the universe and the scope of its freedom and authority. If we know this to be true, then we should be able, in the midst of the most difficult circumstances, in the darkest times of our lives, to give thanks to Him. Only when we acknowledge His sovereignty and yield ourselves to it can we rest, knowing that we occupy the only safe place in the universe—the center of His will (Psalms 46:10; 97:1; 1 Cor. 15:25; Jude 25).
2. **Righteousness** (Psalm 145:17). God is absolute righteousness, perfect goodness. It is impossible for Him to do anything wrong. He is holy and free from sin or wrong—guiltless. He is absolutely righteous, both in His Person (James 1:17; 1 John 1:5) and in His ways (Rom. 3:25–26). He cannot look upon or have

The Lord gives three commands and three promises: If we ask, God will answer; if we seek, we will find; if we knock, God will open the door.

God wants to answer prayer. To illustrate that point, Jesus uses the analogy of a hungry child asking his father for food. The child makes a request. The parent is “*evil*,” but out of that evil parent comes a good gift. Why? The parent loves the child and love can bring, even from those who are evil, relative good.

Now think of God, who is absolute good. Why is it that we think that the God who is righteous, just, and perfect in every way would give us anything less than the best? How could we imagine that He would be less concerned and less gracious with us than we are with our children?

Each of the three promises Jesus makes regarding prayer is conditional. Each is based on our obeying an imperative—a command from the Lord Himself.

1. Ask. Asking is the expression of the desire of the soul. “*Be anxious for nothing*,” Paul wrote to the Philippian believers, “*but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*” (Phil. 4:6–7).

The Essence of God ... cont.

fellowship with that which is anything less than absolute righteousness. Because He is perfect and right, His plan is perfect and right. If we understand this, then we should realize that whatever He does or allows in our lives is perfect because it is part of His perfect plan and His perfect provision. If we know that He can never make a mistake with us, we can be thankful in all things (Gen. 18:25; Psalms 11:7; 71:24; 111:3; Jer. 23:6; Rom. 8:28).

- 3. Justice** (Deut. 32:4). God is absolutely just—it is impossible for Him to do anything unfair. By virtue of His being the Creator, God has the absolute right of authority over His creatures. He has given to man fair and righteous laws which every one of us has broken (Rom. 3:23). God’s righteousness demands that disobedience against His laws be punished. God’s justice fulfilled that demand when God the Son, on the cross, took the punishment for all men’s sin and disobedience. Because of this, God is just (fair and right) to forgive anyone who accepts Christ’s provision. He is also just to condemn anyone who rejects His provision. God’s justice will see to it that everything that falls in line

Sometimes naming our requests to God is easy; sometimes it is impossible. In those times when we do not know what to say, God the Holy Spirit steps in to communicate for us (Rom. 8:26). He knows our need. He knows the proper request to make.

“Ask,” here, is in present tense, referring to continuous action in the present time. This means that we are to keep on asking; we are to be persistent. But when God answers, will we be listening?

When we ask, it should be because we want answers. If we really want answers, we must study. We should always listen for a correlation between the things we pray for and the things that God talks to us about from the Word. When we study, when we sit in Bible class, we should be alert to the fact that the information we are receiving may, in fact, be the answer to the things we have asked in prayer.

2. Seek. Seeking is a step beyond asking. Once we ask, we go looking for the answer. We go in confidence because Jesus Christ Himself promised that God answers and that if we seek, we will find.

When we have made a request of God, we must maintain the spiritual desire to obtain the answer. Sometimes, after we pray, the situation we are praying about worsens; it begins to look impossible.

The Essence of God ... cont.

with His righteousness will be blessed and everything that does not will be cursed. Understanding God's justice should not only give us the constant assurance that even if the world treats us unfairly, God never will; but it should also remind us that He—who is the only One who knows all the facts—will always discipline the unbelief and reward the faith of His children in His perfect time (Matt. 5:45; 1 Pet. 1:17; James 3:17).

- 4. Love** (1 John 4:8, 16). *Agape*, the love that is part of the essence of God, is nothing like the love that man produces. God's love is part of His eternal Being and thus can never be increased, diminished, or changed. Long before God created anything, love existed among the three Persons of the Trinity. The love that God extends to man is an unconditional love in the sense that it is not based on the goodness or integrity of the person who is the object of love, but on the goodness and integrity of God. God does not love us because of who we are, but because of who He is. The love of God extended to man is not an emotion or a feeling. It is a divine passion for the ultimate good of men. It is not passive; it is active. It is not casual; it is sacrificial. God's love is exemplified in John 3:16 and

God lets that happen often because He wants to know if we believe His promise and are going to follow through. If we pray for someone else, do we really want that person to obtain what we have asked for? If so, are we willing to seek to fulfill that request ourselves? God does answer prayer, but He most often does it—like all of the other miraculous things He performs—through human flesh, through believers—the hands and feet of Jesus Christ on Earth. When we pray that someone else will be strengthened and then we do not go to strengthen that person, or write a letter, or make a phone call, then we have not sought and our prayer is lazy.

When we pray that God will provide for a needy family and we do not give from our store of food or money, then we have not sought and our prayer is lazy. God may answer our prayer, but He will do it through someone else, and we will not be able to enter into the joy and reward of being part of the answer.

A person who wrestles in prayer will never be inactive in life. He will always be involved to the maximum, because he believes in the power of prayer and in the power of God. He believes that if

The Essence of God ... cont.

Romans 5:8. God Himself was the initiator. He made the ultimate sacrifice, not for those who were eager and ready to know and serve Him, but for those in rebellion—for enemies. If we understand this love of God, we know that no matter how lonely or isolated or forsaken we may feel, God loves us. If God is love, then whatever happens to us is an expression of His love (Eph. 2:4; 1 John 3:1; 4:9, 16).

5. **Eternal Life** (1 Tim. 1:17). God always has existed and always will exist. He is the source of all life. He is not subject to time, because He existed before time was and is, in fact, the inventor of time. Therefore, God always sees everything from the eternal perspective. He always has our welfare in view, not only for time but also for eternity. If we understand this, we can be thankful under any circumstances because we know absolutely that God is working for our eternal good (Psalm 111:3; Isa. 9:6; Titus 1:2; 1 John 1:2; 2:25; 5:11).
6. **Omniscience** (1 John 3:20). All knowledge belongs to God. He knows everything past, present, and future—everything actual and everything possible. He also understands all things. He has known and understood everything forever. He cannot be confused or surprised. Nothing is news to God. If we

he asks for something, God may choose to use him as the vessel for fulfilling his own prayer.

3. Knock. Knocking means that we labor to see our prayer fulfilled. We can knock in a number of ways. For example, we knock by way of preparation. Are we willing to keep knocking in preparing for God's plan for our life? We knock in regard to pursuit. Do we pursue the fulfillment for what we have asked for and sought? We knock in the area of practical application. We keep knocking and knock more forcefully. Why? Because we really want what we are asking for. Anything in life that comes without persistence is not worth very much.

“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.’ And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”

The Essence of God ... cont.

understand that God is omniscient, then we will always know that a wisdom greater than our own is in control of circumstances and situations. We will always know where to go with our questions and problems (Job 42:2; Psalm 139:3; Rom. 8:27; Heb. 4:13).

- 7. Omnipotence** (Rev. 19:6). God is infinitely, awesomely powerful. He is able to accomplish anything that He wills, but He never abuses His power and He never wills to accomplish anything contrary to His holy nature. If we understand this, then we need never doubt His ability to keep His promises, to answer our prayers, or to carry out His plan. We can be thankful in the face of our own weakness, because we know His strength (Gen. 18:14; Job 26:14; Psalm 62:11; Isa. 26:4; Col. 1:11).
- 8. Omnipresence** (Jer. 23:24). God is always in all places. He fills the entire Universe. This means He can see and hear everything all the time and is always present in every circumstance of our lives. Because God is omnipotent and omnipresent and independent of time, He always has time

“And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.’ Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.’” (Matt. 26:36–45)

All of us have probably at some point in life said, “The pain is so great I feel like I am dying.” That is exactly how the Lord Jesus Christ felt on this night in the Garden of Gethsemane. He felt unspeakable grief and distress. What did He do in response to the

The Essence of God ... cont.

for everyone. He can give full attention to each of us as if we were the only person on Earth. If we understand this, then we know with absolute certainty that we are never alone, never outside the sphere of His care (Psalm 139:3, 7–10; Prov. 15:3).

- 9. Immutability** (Heb. 13:8). God has never changed and will never change. He can neither increase nor decrease. His essence and attributes will always remain the same, no matter what. If we understand this, then we can rest in the fact that no matter how inconsistent or unstable or undependable we are, God will always be consistent, stable, and dependable. When we feel like He no longer loves us or does not understand us or cannot help us, we can ignore our feelings because we know the fact of His immutability (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:12; James 1:17).
- 10. Veracity** (Psalm 33:4). Because God is Truth itself, He always acts in veracity (“devotion to the truth or truthfulness”) and in faithfulness toward man. Because it is impossible for God to lie (Titus 1:2), we know that His every word to us is true. The Bible is God’s revelation of truth to man (John 17:17). We can always depend on His Word. If we know that God is true and that His Word is true, and if we claim His promises, then the

feelings? He did two things that should be an example to us. First, He prayed about His own situation. Second, He asked other people to pray in His behalf.

Think about the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself asked for prayer support. And after He had opened His heart to His friends and asked them to watch and pray for just a while, He went aside to talk to the Father Himself. When He returned to the disciples, He found them fervently praying. Is that what Matthew says? No. Three times Jesus went aside to pray, and three times He returned to find them sleeping.

When He first found them asleep, He warned them to pray for themselves, that they would not enter into temptation. But they didn't listen. And because Peter, James, and John did not wrestle in their prayer, their rest was soon to be interrupted. If we rest before we wrestle, we will never be rested enough.

When we cannot pray anything else, there are two prayers that are always right and always fitting and always honoring to God. One is "Thank you" (Psalm 50:23; 1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20). The other is "*Your will be done*" (Matt. 6:10; 26:39).

The Essence of God ... cont.

essence of God will become a source of encouragement to us. We will be able to pray in faith, to pray without ceasing, and to pray with thanksgiving (Num. 23:19; Psalm 57:3; 100:5; 119:160).

To help young people commit the essence of God to memory, Gary Horton, former Army Ranger and now a youth missionary, composed the following sentence. Each large letter is the first letter in one of the ten attributes of God:

Stop and
Remember
Jesus'
Love, then
Every
Obstacle will become an
Opportunity for you to drive
On
In
Victory!

Energized Prayer

Prayer is like a lamp. We can turn it on and off, on and off, but if it is not plugged in to the power source—if it is not energized—nothing will happen. Every prayer we pray is either energized or it is not. When it is, we are letting loose an earthshaking power.

James 5:16 tells us that *“the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”* A better translation of that would be: “The energized prayer of any believer has great power.” The word *“effective”* comes from *energeo*, the root of our word “energy”; it means “to energize.” The word *“accomplish”* is *ischuos*, the strongest of five Greek words for power. It means “applied power, demonstrated power.” God will demonstrate His power through the energized prayer of His children.

The *“righteous man”* is anyone who has been imputed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Because we are in Christ, we have access to God 24 hours a day for the rest of our lives (Heb. 4:16). In James 5:17, the Lord’s brother reinforces the principle that anyone’s prayers can be powerful when he says that *“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.”* That is an extremely important little statement. It tells us that the prophet Elijah—known among the Jews for his phenomenal prayer power and prayer ministry—was a natural human being. He had a sin nature, he struggled with areas of weakness; he knew what it was like to sin and to fail. His prayer power was not based on anything in Elijah. It was based on God.

So, how can we “energize” our prayers? Every time we stop to pray, we should ask ourselves two questions:

1. Am I in fellowship (Eph. 6:18)? Sin throws up a barrier between God and us and short-circuits our prayer (Isa. 59:2). Self-examination and confession remove the barrier and restores us to fellowship (1 John 1:9; 3:21–22). If we have unconfessed sins in our lives, if we are not filled by means of the Spirit, our prayers are works of the flesh and have absolutely no power.

2. Am I praying according to the will of God (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14–15)? How do we pray according to His will? We have to know His Word. Lack of study will rob us of the ability to pray effectively. Jesus said that whatever we ask in faith, we will receive. But what is “faith”? It is a response to God’s Word. We cannot ask for something in faith unless the Word of God declares that what we ask is the will of God. When

Energized Prayer ... cont.

we know the Word and our will is in line with His will, then our prayer will be powerful prayer.

Paul tells us in Colossians 4:2 to devote ourselves to prayer, *“keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”* There are five dangers to which we should be alert:

- failure to confess (Isa. 59:2; 1 John 1:9),
- failure to study (John 15:7; 2 Tim. 2:15),
- failure to obey (1 John 3:22; 1 Pet. 3:7),
- failure to ask according to God’s will (James 4:2b–3a; 1 John 5:14–15), and
- infiltration of personal lusts (James 4:2–3).

If we are alert to these dangers and can say “yes” to the previous two questions, we can pray in faith-rest, knowing that what we ask will be done in God’s perfect time (see page 202). Jesus Himself said in John 15:7, *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”*

Unit 2 Review

Lesson 2–1

1. What does “inspired” mean in regard to the Bible?
2. Name three purposes for which the Bible is intended.
3. Where does motivation to study the Word come from?
4. What is the relationship between Bible study and spiritual growth?
5. What are the five works of the Holy Spirit in regard to the Word?
6. List at least five reasons why the Bible is important.
7. What is “hermeneutics”?
8. Define and explain the importance of *isagogics*, categories, and *exegesis*.
9. Name three principles of “the analogy of faith.”
10. What three spiritual requirements must be met before we can understand what we study in the Word?
11. How would you explain to a friend the importance and purpose of the Bible? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17
- 2 Timothy 2:1–2
- 2 Timothy 2:15

Lesson 2–2

1. What is the Greek word for “church” and what does it mean?
2. What is the “rock” upon which the Church is built?
3. Who is forming and empowering the Church?
4. What is the two-fold mission of the Church?
5. What were the four priorities of the early Church?
6. When the dispute arose between Hellenistic and Hebrew Christians in Acts 6, why did the apostles say it was not desirable for them to wait tables?

7. What was God's purpose in creating the Church and what is its destiny?
8. What is a "dispensation"?
9. What is the difference between the Church and the church?
10. What are the seven figures in the Bible for Christ and the Church?
11. How would you explain the nature and the function of the Church to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Matthew 16:15–18

Ephesians 1:22–23

Ephesians 2:4–7

Lesson 2–3

1. What is the believer's commission?
2. What should motivate us to fulfill our commission?
3. Why did Christ die, according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:15?
4. How are believers supposed to look at other people?
5. What is the ministry of reconciliation? What is the message of reconciliation?
6. Describe the method of evangelism outlined in 1 Peter 3:15.
7. Define meekness in the biblical sense.
8. What are the three functions of every believer?
9. What is baptism? What are the two types of baptisms described in the Bible?
10. Is baptism necessary for salvation? If so, which baptism?
11. What five works does the Holy Spirit perform in the believer at the moment of salvation?
12. How would you explain the ambassadorship of the believer to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

2 Corinthians 5:14–21

1 Peter 3:15

Lesson 2–4

1. What is a spiritual gift and what is its purpose?
2. What does “manifestation” mean?
3. Who chooses a believer’s spiritual gift?
4. Who gives spiritual gifts?
5. How important are spiritual gifts in the life of a believer?
6. How can we discover our spiritual gift?
7. What did Jesus say is the number-one requirement for attaining greatness?
8. What does it mean to be, and how can we become “vessels of honor”?
9. How does a person cleanse himself?
10. What does “sanctified” mean?
11. List at least five reasons why humility is important.
12. How would you explain spiritual gifts and the ministry of the believer to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

1 Corinthians 12:4–7

Lesson 2–5

1. What is the relationship between Bible study and prayer?
2. Explain the command to “pray without ceasing.”
3. To what did Jesus compare prayer in Matthew 7:7–11?
4. What are the three promises and the three conditions to those promises in Matthew 7:7–8?
5. What is the difference between asking, seeking, and knocking?
6. What two prayers are always right and always honoring to God?
7. Name ten characteristics of the essence of God and explain the meaning of each.
8. What is “energized prayer”? How can we know that our prayers are energized?

9. How would you explain prayer and the priesthood of the believer to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Matthew 7:7–8



Lesson 3–1:

The Race—*The Christian Life*

Hebrews 12:1–3
1 Corinthians 9:24–27

Three years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus the Roman, an unknown author wrote a letter of warning and encouragement to the Hebrew believers in that city. In a time of impending national crisis, this author reminded these believers that their only safety was in individual orientation to and pursuit of the plan of God.

In Hebrews 12, he compares the Christian life to a race and Christians to athletes who, if they want to experience the ecstasy of victory, will have to endure the agony of training for and running the race. God has set before every Christian a race to run—a personal destiny in His plan. No one fulfills his destiny accidentally; it takes discipline, endurance, and focus on the goal to win the race.

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us ...” (Heb. 12:1)

In ancient sports arenas, the racetrack was in the shape of a horseshoe. Stands encircled the track, so spectators could see the whole race from start to finish.

“*Cloud*,” from *nephos*, means “an innumerable throng.” The word pictures a cloudy, shapeless mass covering the skies. In coliseums like the Circus Maximus in Rome, which seated 200,000, the crowds must have looked cloudy and shapeless to the

athletes on the track. But, though they could not see the spectators clearly, the athletes could certainly hear the sound of their cheering.

“*Surrounding*” is the present, middle, participle of *perikeimai*, a word which can mean “to bind or encompass,” and in this case means “to surround and support,” as the cheering crowds would surround and support the athletes below.

From the context, we know that this cloud of witnesses includes the heroes of faith chronicled in Hebrews 11. These great believers crowd the stands in the spiritual realm and watch us run. And they are not alone; they stand with every believer who has ever lived—all the men and women and children who have already finished their races and have had their faith approved by God. This innumerable throng constantly cheers us on to finish our race with honor and integrity.

We, the athletes on the track, cannot see their faces, but we can hear their cheers echoing from the pages of Scripture and from the accounts of their lives. As we study the Word and the history of the Church, each of us finds people we especially identify with, people who faced difficulties, trials, and temptations similar to ours—believers who had the same areas of weakness that we do. We naturally identify with these people, and their lives especially encourage us.

We have every reason to believe that they identify with us and take special interest in us in the same way. They are genuinely concerned about how we run our race because now they have perfect perspective. At the instant of their death, when they saw the face of Jesus Christ, they knew absolutely what is important and what is not. Now they can see how worthless are all the trinkets that distract us from our race. They know now that the only thing that matters in time and in eternity is that Jesus Christ be glorified.

“... *Let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us ...*” (Heb. 12:1)

“*Lay aside*” is *apothemi*. It means “to put off, to set aside,” as in taking off a garment. “*Encumbrance*” is *ogkos*, “excess weight, bulk.” *Ogkos* could refer to body fat or to something external. Greek athletes would often run, in training, with weights. In either case, the idea is that if we want to win, we have to run unencumbered.

The Old Sin Nature

Our sin natures, like our fingerprints, are absolutely unique, though they share basically the same structure. Every sin nature is composed of areas of weakness, areas of strength, areas of lust, and basic trends.

In the areas of our weakness, each of us is drawn to particular kinds of sins—some to mental attitude sins, some to sins of the tongue, some to overt sins.

In the areas of our strengths, each is drawn toward particular kinds of human good. We are tempted to rely on the positive human character traits that dominate our personalities. These are strengths of character that are not bad in themselves, but that can become entanglements if we rely on them rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Apart from the control of the Holy Spirit, our strengths can produce nothing acceptable to God because “good” without God—“good” which does not recognize its need for God—is evil.

Our lusts are as individual as our weaknesses and our strengths. Some people lust for money, some for power, some for fame, some for sex.

There are only two basic trends in the sin nature, one of which will be dominant and one, subordinate. One is toward asceticism, which leads to legalism; the other is toward lasciviousness, which leads to lawlessness.

An infinite variety of mixes and manifestations can come from these four. For example, an ascetic with a weakness for mental sins is likely to judge the lawless person who falls into overt sins. The lawless man may see the ascetic’s self-righteousness and may himself fall into mental sins by despising what he sees as a hypocrite. A person who lusts for power and has a weakness for sins of the tongue may try to lift himself up by tearing others down through criticism and maligning. Another person with the same lust but with a weakness for mental attitude sins may never say a bitter word and so may **seem** to be a better person. But to God—who alone sees the hearts of men—both are equally guilty.

In Luke 21:34, the Lord illustrated this when He told the disciples to be on their guard so that their hearts would not be “*weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life.*” He was warning them of the very real dangers of being distracted from their mission by the things of time.

The author of Hebrews exhorts each of us to lay aside the sin that entangles us—literally, the sin that ensnares us, the one that we so easily get tangled up in. He recognizes here a very basic principle of the sin nature. Everyone’s is different. No two people are exactly alike physically; no two people have exactly the same personality traits. In the same way, no two sin natures are alike.

Every believer has his own enemies. The thing that is my entangling sin—that area of weakness or strength that keeps me from relying on God—may not be a problem to you at all. We cannot compare ourselves to anyone else.

Notice that the author does not tell us to lay aside what entangles someone else. Each of us is responsible for running our own race. The instant we become preoccupied with someone else’s race, we step out of our lane. We can cheer other people on, we can encourage them, but if we stop to criticize or judge or to give our opinion about someone else’s running technique, we are asking for trouble.

God does not hold us accountable for how someone else runs. He does hold us accountable for how we run. Our responsibility is to understand ourselves, to recognize the things that hinder or entangle us, and to set them aside so that they do not keep us from finishing our race (Eph. 4:22–23). The only way we can set aside our entangling sins is through confession and spiritual growth.

“... and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Heb. 12:1b–3)

“*Endurance*” is *hupomone*, literally, “to dwell under.” The author is telling us that in spite of our pain, we must press on. We must keep on constantly running with endurance. Every one of us faces different obstacles. There will always be times when we are tempted to quit. Especially after we fail, it is so much easier to quit than to get back up on our feet and start running again. But don’t quit! Abide under the pressure, do not try to escape it.

The author of this book was not just ordering the Hebrews to keep on running. Using what is known as a hortatory subjunctive, he was encouraging them to join with him. “Let us run. I’m going; you come with me. Let’s do it as a team. We have to run in our own lanes, but we can run together. We’re all heading for the same place.”

“*Set before us*” is from *prokeimai*, a word that means “ordained or established beforehand.” Every race is tailor-made. We do not get to choose our race—God does. He gives us our niche, our destiny. What He chooses may not be the thing we would have chosen, but the thing that God calls us to is the one—the only—thing that can fulfill us and give us abundant life.

Though the race we are called to run is determined beforehand, we do have choices. We choose whether to run. We choose how to run. We choose whether to endure and to press on to find the will of God for our lives.

Every race has three parts: the start, the middle, and the finish. In a long race, the beginning and the end are the easiest parts. At the beginning, there is always a great deal of excitement. Everyone’s adrenalin is flowing and it is always easy to take off at the sound of the gun. At the finish line, the crowds are cheering, and though the runners are exhausted, they are still invigorated with the knowledge that they have accomplished something—they have reached their goal.

It is often the middle of the race that is the toughest, especially in an endurance race. It is in the middle of the race that the runner’s mind may begin to wander. He starts to lose focus, to lose motivation. It is easy to forget how important that particular part of the race is. An endurance race is very much like the Christian way of life. Phase one of the race, the start, is salvation. In a moment, by a simple act of faith, we are born into the family of God (John 1:12; 5:24; Col. 1:13). It was our first real gaze into the eyes of Jesus Christ that sounded the start of the race for us.

Phase three of the race, the finish, is death or the Rapture. That, too, happens in a split-second. We will break the tape and fall into the arms of Jesus Christ at the finish line!

Phase two of the race, the distance, is spiritual growth. It is the hardest part. It is a process, and every process takes time.

The Will of God

How can we know the will of God for our lives? First, we have to understand what His will includes. God's will for the life of every believer has three dimensions: the what, the where, and the why:

1. The operational will of God is the "what." God has something He wants us to do with our lives. He has a specific task for every believer (Mark 13:33–37), a ministry that is defined by our spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:4–7). One of the ways He tells us what He wants us to do with our lives is by telling us what He wants us to do with our days and hours. Mary said to the servants at the wedding in Cana, "*Whatever He says to you, do it*" (John 2:5). Had they not done exactly what He told them to do, there would have been no miracle, no divine production through them. Our job is to do what He tells us to do today.

2. The geographical will of God is the "where." God has a place He wants us to be. This is the place He will supply all our needs. If we are in the wrong place, we will miss out on His provision. God told Elijah to go to the brook Cherith. "*I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there*" (1 Kings 17:4). The ravens made their drop every morning and every evening at Cherith. If Elijah had been anywhere else, he would not have seen God's provision.

3. The motivational will of God is the "why." God is not just concerned with what we do and where we do it, but why and in whose power. In Matthew 6, the Lord had some harsh words for men who pray, who fast, and who give alms. He had nothing against their actions, but He had everything against their motives. In Hebrews 11:6, we are told that "*without faith it is impossible to please [God]*." Nothing we do—even God's will—apart from faith in Him is acceptable to Him.

To be "in God's will," we have to be doing the right thing in the right place for the right reason. To discover the will of God for our lives as individuals—the undeclared or unwritten will of God—we have to accept the declared and written will of God. We will never find the undeclared will of God until we begin to obey the declared will. And what is His declared will? Seven things we know for sure that God wants us to do:

Be saved (2 Pet. 3:9)

Be sanctified (1 Thess. 4:3)

Be filled by means of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)

Be thankful (1 Thess. 5:18)

Be content (Phil. 4:11–13)

Suffer (1 Pet. 3:17)

Serve (Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 5:15)

When we first step out in the Christian life, we have the enthusiasm of the start, the challenge, the desire to tell other people about how they can have eternal life. We are still naive enough to believe everyone wants to hear about Jesus Christ. But when we get to the middle of the race, we start feeling the pain, the pressure, the opposition. The race becomes difficult. The enthusiasm, the challenge, and the excitement are not always there. We start facing the difficulty of keeping and maintaining focus in our race.

In a horseshoe-shaped track, the finish line seems to be farthest away just as the runner approaches the middle of the race, at the turn. In the Christian life, Jesus often seems farthest away in the middle of the race. Of course, He is no farther away in the middle than He was at the beginning or will be at the end. But He lets our vision be blurred because He wants us to learn to run by faith.

“*Fixing our eyes on Jesus*” is the only way we will be able to endure. Unless we look to the finish line, we won’t make it. Conformity to Jesus is the goal of our race.

“*Fixing our eyes*” is from two words, *apo*, which means “away from,” and *horao*, “to take in a panoramic view.” The compound, *aphorao*, tells us to look away from everything on the horizon and concentrate our gaze on one thing.

In Greek sports competitions, there was always more than one thing going on at a time. As the runners raced around the track, the center field was alive with other kinds of competition. A runner trying to critique the javelin throwers would not have much chance of winning his race. A shotput competitor who got distracted by watching the runners could kill someone with an ill-placed throw. Greek athletes, if they wanted to win, had to *aphorao*. They had to look away from the distractions and train their eyes to focus on one thing—the goal of **their** competition.

Our goal is to be conformed to Jesus Christ. We have to fix our focus on Him. This means that while we run, we remember His race. We remember His courage, His training, His discipline. We remember how, from the virgin birth all the way to the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ had the one thing that makes running the race possible—the focus. He had His eyes focused on the goal, and because He did, He was able to overcome the obstacles and to endure the opposition. He was able to finish His race not by what

He was running, but by what He was running to. He saw the joy beyond. He had His eyes on the celebration—the victory banquet to come.

He is the celebrity, the Hero who has already won the gold and has come back to teach us and to enable us to press on. He is the author and the finisher. He was the first to run the race and now He runs our race with us every step of the way (Heb. 13:5–6). In the same way, His focus on the objective gave Him the strength and the courage to endure, so our focus on the Person of Jesus Christ and our future celebration with Him gives us the ability to run our race with endurance.

The certain danger we face is that if we fix our gaze on anything other than Jesus Christ, we will grow weary and lose heart. If we quit, our race remains unfinished and God’s plan for our life goes unfulfilled. How awful it would be to stand before Jesus Christ and have Him ask, “What more could I have done?” We will someday see—with the absolute clarity that we could have today, by faith—that we had everything we needed to finish our race in glory.

Everyone feels tired or discouraged at times. That is no sin. The sin is quitting. When we reach the point at which we feel that we simply cannot go on, at that moment we need to consider Jesus and then just put one foot in front of the other and take one more step.

“Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave ...” (1 Cor. 9:24b–27)

“Run!” This is a command. Paul, who wrote this letter to the distracted Corinthian church, is now seated in the stands. But he still screams to us through the pages of Scripture, “RUN! Run in such a way that you may win!”

In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul says that he has made himself a slave that he might win all men. Winning was on his mind. Paul was a free man, but by choice he became a slave to Jesus Christ. He exulted in his bonds because he knew that through his service people were being won to Christ and he was winning the race that he had been given.

“*Competes*” is *agonizomai*. We get the English word “agony” from it. If we want to win, we will have to agonize. What kind of agony is Paul talking about? An internal agony that comes from the struggle to achieve self-control. The phrase “*exercises self-control*” is a translation of one Greek word, *egkrateuomai*, from *kratos*, which means “rule or authority,” and *en*, “within.” No one ever becomes a great athlete as long as the only discipline he has is the coach’s discipline. A great athlete is one who develops discipline within, so that whether the coach is around or not, he never lets up in his training. He demands more of himself because he is focused on the goal. Only that kind of self-control can drive him to the end of the race.

If athletes in physical competition can press on so single-mindedly toward a perishable reward, how much more driven should we be who run toward an eternal reward? We are called to do one thing: focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. As we study, meditate on, and apply the Word of God—which is the mind of Christ—we are moving toward the goal.

Everything in the cosmos is dead set against our maintaining that focus. Each of us chooses for ourselves whether we will give in to the distractions and the entanglements or whether we will press on to finish the race with honor.

The Race of Life

1. The race of life is a source of joy to the one who has built strength, who has trained. A strong man loves the challenge of the race (Psalm 19:5). The Christian way of life is enjoyable when we follow the training program.
2. Endurance to run the race comes from the persistent study of the Word of God. Faithfulness to study will enlarge our hearts (Psalm 119:32). We will not be any more persistent in application than we are in study.
3. To keep from stumbling, we have to stay in our own lane, we have to pay attention to the course set before us (Prov. 4:12).
4. The only way to build endurance is to build faith (Isa. 40:31). “*Wait*” in Isaiah 40:31 is *qawah*, the strongest Hebrew word for faith. We do not reach the point where we consistently exchange our strength for His until we have worked our way through *amen* (leaning faith), *batach* (wrestling faith), *chasah* (refuge faith), and *yachal* (healing faith).
5. Our failure in small things tells us that we have an urgent need to build strength, or we will fail in the great things (Jer. 12:5).
6. Disobedience hinders our running (Gal. 5:7).
7. The object of the race is to win (1 Cor. 9:24). We are not competing with anyone else; we are competing with ourselves. Each of us has to take responsibility for our own race, a race that has been perfectly matched to us by an omniscient God (Heb. 12:1). He has provided everything we need to win.



Lesson 3–2:

The Danger—*Spiritual Retreat/Reversion*

Ephesians 4:17–19
2 Samuel 15–17

The Christian life is a life of absolutes. At every moment, we are either spiritual—controlled by the Spirit and running toward the goal set before us, or else we are carnal—controlled by the flesh and running away from the goal.

When we sin, we can always get back on track by confession and correction. But the longer we refuse to confess, the farther adrift we go, and the harder it becomes to turn away from the distractions and entanglements that are so attractive to the natural man. If our spiritual digression—our carnality—is unchecked by confession, it will lead us into the more dangerous and destructive state of spiritual retreat. This condition is illustrated by the Israelites who, after being delivered from Egypt, wanted to turn back to their former state (see Heb. 3:7–15; 10:38).

In his letter to the Ephesian believers, Paul outlines seven steps in the downward spiral of spiritual retreat or reversion. Reversion is defined as “*the act of reverting or returning; return to a place ... practice, belief ... return to a former state or condition*” (*The New Century Dictionary*).

“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.” (Eph. 4:17–19)

The first step of turning back (Heb. 10:38) is negative volition to the Word of God, apart from which there is no spiritual growth (2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17). To walk as the Gentiles walk means to walk in unbelief. It is possible for believers to live as practical atheists. When we are bitter or jealous, when we indulge in self-pity or fear, when we do not actively believe that God is in control—in these conditions of mind, we are saying no to the Word of God. When we give in to these kinds of mental attitudes, we are choosing to be energized not by the Holy Spirit, but by the sin nature. We are stepping off the path of growth and turning back—reverting—to the ways of our natural, unregenerate selves.

The second step is creation of a “vacuum” in the soul. When Paul points to “*the futility of their mind,*” he uses the word *mataiotes*. This can be translated “*futility*” or “*vanity*”; it refers to that which is empty or devoid of truth. When we turn negative toward the Word, we establish a vacuum in our soul. But the soul was not meant to be empty, so when we reject the truth, we will inevitably accept lies. Our soul, like a vacuum cleaner, sucks up the filth around us. We will start to believe false doctrines and to live by rationalism instead of by faith. The longer we stay out of fellowship with God, the easier it becomes to stay away from the Word, to neglect the Bible study that is designed to be our food and drink.

The third step is the blackout of the soul—“having their understanding darkened,” Paul says. The soul, which was designed by God to function on the Word, actually shuts down. The way we think, our understanding, becomes shady as the things we have learned begin to slip away. We can no longer recall doctrines we once knew and understood. The light of the Word is being extinguished from our conscience, leaving behind—inevitably—only darkness.

The fourth step is alienation from grace. We are “*excluded from the life of God.*” Having exchanged the truth of the Creator for the lies of the creature, having forsaken the light of the Word for the darkness of the world, we are cut off from the power of Christ. We are estranged from His abundant life. The Greek *apallotrioomai* means “to be alienated, estranged, shut out from fellowship and intimacy.” Aside from God, there is no other source of grace.

Outside of fellowship with Him, we become everything that is the opposite of gracious.

The fifth step is the build-up of scar tissue of the soul. As we continuously set our hearts against God, we intensify the process of scarring our souls. *Apalgeo* means “to cease to feel; to become insensitive, apathetic, past feeling.” In the perfect tense and active voice, it could be translated here “having cast off all feeling.” It is not that we have become calloused because of some outside force, but that we have calloused ourselves. As a result of our own negative choices, our sensitivity to the Spirit of God is gone, leaving a hunger in the soul that cannot be satisfied.

The sixth step is a frantic search for happiness. When Paul says the Gentiles have “*given themselves over*” to sensuality, he uses the same words that are used to describe the betrayal of Judas. *Paradidomi* means “to give over into one’s power or use.” When we reach this point, we have betrayed ourselves—sold ourselves out, delivered ourselves up—to sensuality. Now we are in a crazed search for something to satisfy our starving souls. We have turned to the world for fulfillment instead of to Christ. And our search for happiness becomes more and more degrading as the hunger of our soul intensifies. Chasing after the instant fix, the rush, the now, we are bartering soul for body. But the body is never satisfied, and so the search can only become more and more frantic.

The seventh step is arrival at the point of implacability. When Paul talks about the practice of “*impurity with greediness*,” he uses the word *pleonexia*. It means “insatiability.” When we reach this point, there is nothing that can make us happy, nothing that can satisfy us. No power, no wealth, no friendship, no physical pleasure is ever enough to satisfy us. The intensified scarring process has destroyed our capacity for appreciation. The prophet, Jeremiah, compares the implacable person, whose soul is shattered, to a ruined vessel, a broken cistern. “*They have ... [rejected] the fountain of living water to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water*” (Jer. 2:13). When our soul becomes a ruined vessel, we have destroyed our ability to enjoy the normal functions of life.

At every step of this downward slide, God administers discipline designed to turn us around. If we refuse to heed His warnings and accept His correction, choosing instead to continue

Discipline

God disciplines His children, but His discipline is never punishment. Jesus Christ on the cross bore the punishment for all our sins. When we get out of line, God disciplines us for the sole purpose of getting us back on course.

God hates sin and knows the destructive power that sin wields in our lives. He has a desire to deliver us from that power (Heb. 12:1–4), so when we sin He administers corrective discipline in three increasingly intense stages:

1. Warning discipline. This is often first sensed by loss of inner joy and happiness. Then things will seem to go wrong all around us. Much discernment is needed to distinguish between warning discipline and testing. Only by self-examination (1 Cor. 11:31) can we determine if there are unconfessed sins in our lives. If there are, confession will produce the result for which the discipline was intended (Heb. 12:11).

Warning discipline can be tough. The author of Hebrews tells us not to faint when we are “reproved” by God (Heb. 12:5). “Reproof” is from *alegcho*, a word that means “to rebuke, to chew out, to chide.” A parent verbally sets standards before his children and when the child disobeys, the father verbally corrects and reviews the standards. When he backs the child into a corner and tells him in no uncertain terms all the reasons he should not have done what he did and what will happen if he does it again, he sounds tough because he wants to spare the child physical pain—the pain his actions may cause and the pain the father’s wrath will cause. When He has to, our Father will back us into the corner and unleash the reproofing power of His Word on us.

2. Intensive discipline. If we do not respond to God’s warning, He will turn up the heat. This is the scourging stage described in Hebrews 12:6. *Mastigoo* means “to whip, to lash, to flay.” A scourging is a painful lashing. This stage may include loss of health, property, or loved ones, and if we do not confess and correct ourselves, it may go on for years. Again, it is important for us to know that though scourging is extremely painful, it is always carried out in love (Rev. 3:19). God’s intention is not to punish us, but to cause us to get back into fellowship, back into the place of blessing.

3. Dying discipline. If we absolutely refuse to recover from our spiritual retreat/reversionism, God will at some point call us home in the sin unto death (1 John 5:16). Maximum discipline is removal from Earth before we finish our race.

As children of God, we will be subject to discipline all our lives because our Father loves us enough to want to make something great out of us (Heb. 12:5–11).

to harden ourselves, He will discipline us with increasing harshness. God takes no joy in giving pain; but as a loving Father, He takes less joy in seeing His children waste their lives. He will continue to discipline us until we turn back to Him or until we reach the point at which He knows recovery has become impossible. At this point, He will call us home to Heaven in what the Bible calls “the sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). Dying the sin unto death is the most miserable and shameful way a Christian can end his race.

In 2 Samuel 15–17, we have the story of a man who died the sin unto death. His name was Ahithophel. He was a cherished friend of King David, a mature believer who was on his way to becoming one of the greatest spiritual heroes of his time. His reversionism was of the most subtle kind. He did not—like David—fall into sensuality and lasciviousness. The temptations Ahithophel gave himself over to were arrogance, self-righteousness, and passing judgment on another believer.

Who was this man Ahithophel? A native of Giloh, a town in the hill country of Judah, Ahithophel was counselor to King David. He knew the Word of God and had the understanding and wisdom that can only come from application of the Word. Second Samuel 16:23 tells us that the advice of Ahithophel “*was as if one inquired of the word of God.*” This man was like an encyclopedia of the Word, and his advice was trusted by both David and his son Absalom.

In 2 Samuel 15:12, Ahithophel joins in Absalom’s conspiracy against David. Absalom was a handsome man with great strengths and tremendous charisma. He had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel by magnifying and amplifying the sin of his own father (2 Sam. 15: 1–6).

On the day that Absalom called for him, Ahithophel was in Giloh offering sacrifices, so we know that he was still involved in religious activity. From the outside, Ahithophel appeared to be anything but a reversionist, so how could he be so far out of line that he would join in a conspiracy against the greatest believer of his age, whom God Himself called “*A MAN AFTER MY HEART*” (Acts 13:22)?

A comparison of 2 Samuel 23:34 with 2 Samuel 11:3 gives us an idea of how Ahithophel had come to this choice. Ahithophel had a son named Eliam. Eliam had a daughter named Bathsheba. Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba. Now the plot begins

to thicken. We begin to understand what has happened in the heart of Ahithophel. The king seduced his granddaughter; she became pregnant; he murdered her husband. Ahithophel's son-in-law Uriah, a valiant warrior, one of David's own mighty men, is dead. His granddaughter is the talk of the town, and David does not appear to be suffering for his sins.

Ahithophel's spiritual retreat must have started in the most subtle way. He took offense at David's sin—he got personal, self-righteous, judgmental. When he saw David apparently getting off scot-free, did he decide to help God bring about justice?

David was a sinner. He obviously had a lascivious trend in his sin nature. Ahithophel was a sinner. He obviously had a legalistic trend in his sin nature. The difference between them was that David understood grace. He had been in reversionism, but he had accepted correction and been restored through confession. He knew how to receive grace from God, and he knew how to extend grace to others.

At least ten years passed between David's great sin and Absalom's revolt. All that time, Ahithophel must have secretly nursed his bitterness.

When David learns that Absalom has won the hearts of the people, he leaves Jerusalem willingly. He does not want to see the city besieged and innocent people killed. Though his heart is broken over the treachery of his son, he knows that God had made him king and that when God gives and then sees fit to take away, it is only for greater blessing. David walks out of the city with nothing, willing to entrust himself entirely to the grace of God.

“And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went. Now someone told David, saying, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ And David said, ‘O LORD, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness.’ It happened as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn and dust on his head. David said to him, ‘If you pass over with me, then you will be a burden to me. But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, “I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father’s servant in time past, so I will

now be your servant," then you can thwart the counsel of Ahithophel for me ... "' (2 Sam. 15:30–37)

As he begins to ascend the Mount of Olives, David is told that his friend, Ahithophel, is among the conspirators. A thousand years later at almost the same spot, the Lord Jesus Christ would be betrayed by His friend, Judas, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

David responds to the heartbreaking news with a prayer. God immediately responds to David's prayer by sending to him Hushai, a man of loyalty.

Look at the difference between Ahithophel and Hushai. Ahithophel had taken his eyes off the Word of God and gotten his eyes on David, a man who—like all other men—had feet of clay. When David fell, Ahithophel forgot the Word and fell into self-righteous arrogance and reversionism.

Hushai, on the other hand, had kept his eyes on the Word. He understood that our part is to make the Word of God the issue in life, give people the right to accept or to reject it, and then let God deal with those people and their decisions. It is not our job to convict or to judge any other believer. Those are rights reserved by God; He is capable of convicting and correcting His children.

Hushai knew that God could take care of David. He knew, too, that loyalty demanded that he remain faithful to the divinely appointed king. Where did Hushai learn this kind of loyalty to authority? Where did he learn how to serve even a king in reversionism, entrusting him to God, knowing that God would deal

Soul Strengths and Soul Kinks

*"Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible." (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 117)*

Every day of our lives, we make thousands of decisions. With every decision, we are choosing what kind of people we will be today and for the rest of our lives. With every choice for or against the Word of God, we reinforce in our souls either strengths or kinks.

with His child? He learned it by watching David in the wilderness and in the mountains, hounded by King Saul, who was in a state of spiritual retreat. He watched David trust the Lord, and he learned from what he saw. Hushai became one of the most noble and honorable people in his generation.

In 2 Samuel 17, Ahithophel advises Absalom to give him 12,000 men so that he can kill David that night. *“I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted,”* Ahithophel said, *“and [will] terrify him so that all the people who are with him will flee. Then I will strike down the king alone”* (2 Sam. 17:2).

Absalom likes Ahithophel’s idea, but he wants to hear what Hushai has to say. Hushai reminds Absalom how fierce are David and his mighty men and how skilled in strategy. He tells Absalom to wait and not attack until he has gathered more troops.

Ahithophel has given the better advice. He has not lost his accuracy, even in spiritual retreat. Had Absalom followed that advice, David would have been defeated. But God answers the prayer of David—David the adulterer, the murderer, but David the corrected believer. Absalom took Hushai’s advice, *“for the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel”* (2 Sam. 17:14). Ahithophel had become an enemy of God. He was warring now not against David, but against God.

Hushai sends spies to David telling him that he has time to cross the river, head into the wilderness, and gain strength for a counter-

Soul Strengths and Soul Kinks ... cont.

Soul Strengths

- 1. Volition.** God made us free. He gave us the ability to choose. The most important (and the smartest) choice we can make every day is to have a positive, receptive attitude toward the Word of God.
- 2. Mentality.** If we are positive, we will look at the whole array of things we can do with the mind and will choose to use it for Bible study. This is where the spiritual battle is most heated because the enemy does not want us to use our minds to understand the Word of God.
- 3. Conscience.** As we study with a receptive attitude toward the Word, our conscience becomes a store house for truth. We know that what we put in our conscience becomes the norms and standards by which we live. Because we are positive and are willing to confess our sins, we can live with a clear conscience.

attack. Because Absalom did not listen to Ahithophel, David and all his household were saved.

“Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself; thus he died and was buried in the grave of his father.” (2 Sam. 17:23)

The instant his counsel was rejected, Ahithophel knew that David would triumph. He knew that he would have to face the king, and he could not stand the thought. He could not handle the consequences of his own arrogant choices. He died, just like Judas a thousand years later, by his own hand.

Because the king’s son, Absalom, emphasized and magnified the sin of his father, God determined to *“bring calamity on Absalom”* (2 Sam. 17:14). He judged Absalom with what David deserved. Because Ahithophel joined the conspiracy, he, too, would die the death that he sought for David.

Ahithophel’s treachery was not a sudden thing. He had made decision after decision to set his focus on David, to let David’s failure become a stumbling block in his life. David’s reversion into lasciviousness could have led him to the sin unto death, but he accepted correction and turned back to God. Ahithophel’s reversion into legalism did lead to death because he refused to respond to the discipline that God is faithful to set before all of us when we sin.

Soul Strengths and Soul Kinks ... cont.

4. Emotion. The emotion is the center of our capacity for living and enjoying physical and spiritual life. The more we are oriented to the Word, the more capacity we have, and the more wonderful life is, regardless of external circumstances.

5. Self-consciousness. When, with an attitude of humility, we base our self-image on what the Word says about how God sees us in Christ, then we can accept ourselves. Because we are looking at the Living Word through the written Word, we see ourselves realistically, and can put both our strengths and our weaknesses in perspective. We never stop driving ourselves toward the goal of conformity to Christ, yet we always rest in the fact that we are infinitely precious to God just as we are.

Soul Strengths and Soul Kinks ... cont.

Soul Kinks

1. **Volition.** We can choose to have a negative attitude to the Word. We can choose to not be interested, to not make the Word a priority. When we make that choice, we automatically choose misery for ourselves.
2. **Mentality.** If we do not fill our mind with the Word, we will fill it with vanity, emptiness. We will live like Lot in torment of soul.
3. **Conscience.** If we are not positive to the Word and not willing to humble ourselves before it, we will never be able to have a clear conscience. We will be eaten alive by guilt, fear, and hardness.
4. **Emotion.** When our emotion is not under the control of God, it becomes a tyrant. We live under a heartless despot who rules and dictates our lives, who lifts us up to dizzying heights only to drop us on our face on the rocks below. This is the rollercoaster of emotional revolt.
5. **Self-consciousness.** When our awareness of ourselves functions independently of the Word, we live in a hell of preoccupation with ourselves. Whether we are wrapped up in how great we are or in how worthless we are it does not matter, because all preoccupation with self is equally poisonous.

Reversion and Recovery

Seven Steps Downward that Lead to Death/Cursing **(Eph. 4:17–19)**

1. **Carnality:** *“walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk ...”* That believers can and do often live like unbelievers is confirmed in 2 Sam. 11:2–4; Rom. 7:8–24; 1 Cor. 3:1–3 and 1 John 2:15–17.
2. **Spiritual vacuum:** *“in the futility of their mind ...”* Disobedience to God assumes a rejection of the authority of His Word. This leads to an empty, aimless pursuit of self-gratification (2 Sam. 11:2–4).
3. **Spiritual blinding:** *“being darkened in their understanding ...”* Every decision has consequences, and evil decisions bring evil consequences. Those who choose not to walk in the light will stumble in the darkness, John 8:12; Luke 11:34; John 12:35.
4. **Spiritual isolation:** *“excluded [alienated] from the life of God ...”* This is a very dangerous stage in spiritual rebellion due to willful ignorance. This is the loss of “abundant life,” loss of joy and purpose. God begins to withdraw both protection and blessing, Judges 16:10–20; Psalm 51; Heb. 6:7–8; 12:15–17.

Reversion and Recovery... cont.

5. Spiritual hardening: “*because of the hardness* [blindness, NKJV] *of their heart.*” The word used for “blindness” refers to a hardening process, a stubborn insensitivity. This process was seen in Pharaoh (Exodus 3–11), and is outlined in Rom. 1:18–32 and Rom. 2:4–5. Once anyone begins to harden their souls to God, there will come a point when He Himself hardens their heart (Rom. 9:17–18).
6. Self-betrayal: “[who] *having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality* [lewdness] ...” The phrase “*given themselves over*” uses the same word for Judas’ betrayal of Jesus (Matt. 26:46; Mark 14:10). At this point, one literally sells himself into slavery and bondage to sin. The word for “lewdness” means “sensuality, indecency, perversion, vice.”
7. Insatiability: “*for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.*” The final stage of spiritual rebellion leads to a soul that is like a bucket full of holes. No matter how hard you try to fill it, it remains empty (see Jer. 2:13). This leads to growing frustration, resulting in the pursuit of ever more degenerate ways to seek gratification. This is the end of the line. The next step is the sin unto death (1 John 5:16).

Seven Steps that Lead to Recovery (James 4:6–10)

All of the steps below can be seen in the recovery and return of the prodigal son in the parable (Luke 15:17–24).

1. Submission to God: “*Submit therefore to God.*” The verb *hupatasso* is a military term, meaning “to take your rightful place under authority.” This is a turning from self-reliance to God-reliance. It is the “yielding” or “*presenting*” of Rom. 6:13 and Rom. 12:1.
2. Resistance: “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*” The verb “*resist*” means to “stand firm against.” It speaks of a determined and resolute opposition. We take this stand on the basis of our union with Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16–18). The temptations of Jesus are the ultimate example of resistance to Satan (Matt. 4:1–11). See 1 Pet. 5:8–9.
3. Draw near to God: “*Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.*” We draw near to God through both prayer and the study of His Word. Our victory over sin is not due to our power, but because He draws near to us in fellowship and deliverance (John 14:21, 23; 15:4–5, 7; 1 John 5:4–5).
4. Purify self: “*Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*” This is the cleansing of both our

Reversion and Recovery ... cont.

inner and outer self. Confession of sin to God (Psalm 51:1–10; 1 John 1:9), followed by renewal of the mind (Eph. 4:22–24) and correction of the life (Eph. 4:25–32). Confession can be accomplished in a moment, correction of life can take time!

5. Reorient to God: *“Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy into gloom”* (NKJV). This can easily be seen in the return journey of the prodigal son (Luke 15). Imagine, as he was returning to his father, seeing all the places where he had partied along the way—laughing in his self-delusion. Now, the sight of those inns fills him with grief and tears. So is the path of spiritual recovery. This is the “godly sorrow that brings repentance” (2 Cor. 7:9–10).
6. Be humbled: *“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord ...”* The verb here is a passive imperative, “be humbled!” This is not something we do to ourselves, but what we allow God to work within us. *“In the presence of the Lord”* implies that we now see ourselves—not through our eyes—but as God sees us, as revealed in His Word. *“It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes”* (Psalm 119:71). See 1 Pet. 5:5–6.
7. Be uplifted: *“He will exalt you.” “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time”* (1 Pet. 5:6). Consider the publican in Luke 18:14, and again, the response of the father to the prodigal son (Luke 15:22–24). When God restores an erring child, His grace and mercy are absolutely extravagant!

There is no better ending to this study than Romans 8:35, 37:

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? ... But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”

also, Jude 24–25:

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

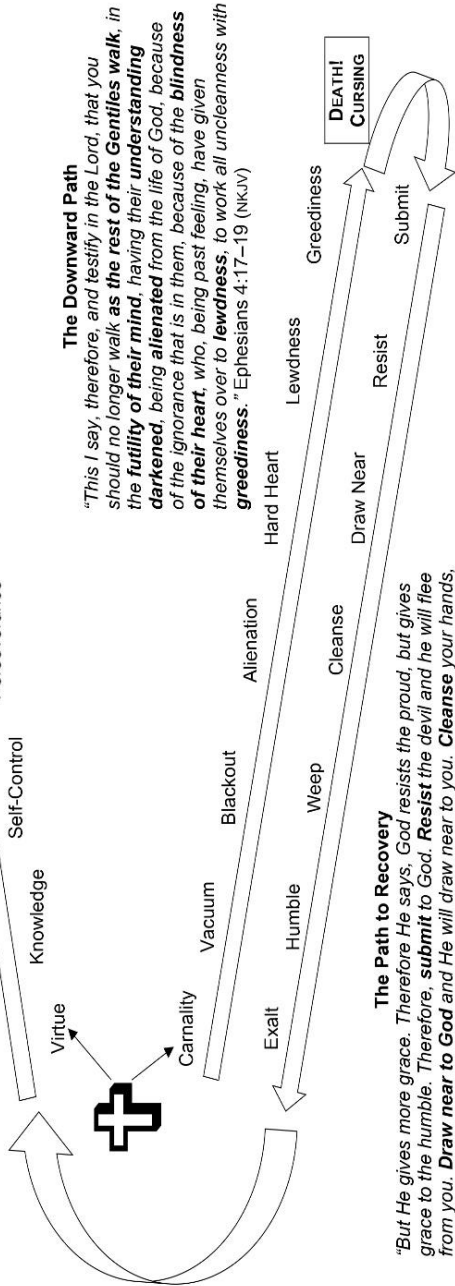
WHICH PATH WILL YOU CHOOSE?

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days ..." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20a (NKJV))



The Upward Path

"But also for this very reason also, giving all diligence, add to your faith **virtue**, to **virtue knowledge**, to **knowledge self-control**, to **self-control perseverance**, to **perseverance godliness**, to **godliness brotherly love**, and to **brotherly love**." (2 Peter 1:5-7 (NKJV))



The Downward Path

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the **futility of their mind**, having their **understanding darkened**, being **alienated** from the life of God, because of the **ignorance that is in them**, because of the **blindness of their heart**, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to **lewdness**, to work all uncleanness with **greediness**." (Ephesians 4:17-19 (NKJV))

The Path to Recovery

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, **submit to God**. **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you. **Draw near to God** and He will draw near to you. **Cleanse your hands**, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **Lament and mourn and weep!** Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord**, and **He will lift you up**." (James 4:6-10 (NKJV))



Lesson 3–3:

The Promise—*Spirituality*

Jeremiah 17:5–10

John 7:3–39

The only way any Christian can run his race and expect to win is by plugging in to the energizing power of God the Holy Spirit. There is a great deal of confusion concerning the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. This mostly comes from the English translation of Ephesians 5:18, which reads “*be filled with the Spirit.*” This gives the impression that we are being filled with more of the Spirit, as if He is the **content** of the filling. A much better translation is that we are “filled by” or “by means of the Holy Spirit.” This correctly shows the Spirit to be the agent by whom we are filled. When we are filled by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit leads us into conformity to Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 3:17–18).

Earlier in Ephesians 3:14–19, Paul prays that we might be strengthened by the indwelling Spirit “*to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that [this is a purpose clause] you may be filled [with] all the fullness of God.*” This “*fullness*” is nothing less than the life of Christ Himself (Col. 1:19). When we are filled by means of the Holy Spirit, we are energized with the new, resurrection life of Christ (Rom. 5:10; 6:4; 7:6; 8:11). When we allow the Spirit to infuse us with the life of Christ, our sin nature is rendered inoperable (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:16; 1 John 3:6), and we are able to run toward the goal.

The evidence of the filling of the Spirit will be the fruit of the Spirit in the believer’s life (Gal. 5:22–23). When we are not filled by the Spirit, our flesh is in control, and we are 100% out of commission as far as God is concerned. Apart from the filling of

the Holy Spirit, there is no growth, no service, no blessing, no reward. Satan's cosmic system opposes spirituality—the filling of the Holy Spirit—at every turn. The enemy does not want us to understand the simplicity of God's promise of power!

*“Thus says the LORD,
‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.
For he will be like a bush in the desert
And will not see when prosperity comes,
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,
A land of salt without inhabitant.’”* (Jer. 17:5–6)

Jeremiah vividly describes the curse that comes with confidence in human strength. Trying to solve the problems of life by relying on human good, human intellect, human technology, human strength, is stepping outside the power sphere of God. If we think we can fight the spiritual battle in human strength, we are dead wrong.

When we discount God and turn our backs on the source of all goodness, all truth, all knowledge, all peace, we guarantee misery for ourselves. Any person or any nation who places faith in human strength will be cursed, and no one can blame God, because the curse is self-induced.

The result of reliance on human strength is isolation and spiritual dryness. Life will be unbearably harsh and utterly fruitless. The one who chooses this path will not see prosperity, the blessings of God. When we are where God wants us to be, we receive maximum blessing, because that is the place where God determined from eternity past to drop our supplies. If we are not receiving blessings, it is because the blessings are being dropped for us from the grace of God, but we are somewhere else. We have been distracted, misplaced, and are at the wrong place at the wrong time. God has promised to do everything necessary to make us great in His plan. If we want to do things our way, His prosperity will be there, but we will never see it.

*“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD
And whose trust is the LORD.
For he will be like a tree planted by the water,
That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes;*

*But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought
Nor cease to yield fruit." (Jer. 17:7–8)*

On the other hand, if we realize that we are powerless and that only in divine strength can we stand, then God declares us blessed. “Trust” is *batach*, the Hebrew word for wrestling faith. To trust in the Lord is to fight our battles relying on divine power. We humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and cast our cares on Him,

Synonymous Terms

When Jesus told Nicodemus “*that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6), He was drawing a line and saying that everything on one side is death and everything on the other side is life. On every page of the Word of God, we are shown the contrast between the two—between darkness and light, hate and love, the cosmic and the divine, the visible and the invisible, the sinking sand and the solid rock. The following are only a few of the biblical terms synonymous with spirituality and carnality and their effects:

1. Filled by means of the Spirit versus controlled by the old sin nature (Eph. 5:18)
2. In the Spirit versus in the flesh (Gal. 5:16–17)
3. The energy (or works) of the Spirit versus the energy of the flesh (Eph. 3:20)
(The Greek *energeia*, translated “works” in this passage, is the source of the English words “energy” and “energize.”)
4. Being in (or having) fellowship versus being out of fellowship (1 John 1:3–7)
5. Godliness versus ungodliness
(In 1 Tim. 3:15, Paul speaks of how you “ought to conduct yourself,” etc. The next verse is an explanation, just as “God was manifested in the flesh,” by means of the Spirit, Christ is to be manifest in us, 1 Tim. 3:16, NKJV.)
6. Spiritual versus carnal, “according to the flesh” (1 Cor. 3:1)
7. The spiritual man versus the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14)
8. Walking in the light versus walking in the darkness (1 John 1:6–7)
9. Walking by faith versus walking by sight (2 Cor. 5:7)
10. Divine good, divine production versus human good, human production (1 Cor. 3:11–15; Eph. 2:10)
(“Good works” in this passage is from *agathos*, which refers to absolute or intrinsic good, and *ergon*, “work, enterprise, production.”)

because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). We take our problems, our pressures, our adversities and body slam them on the Lord, remembering that the battle is His (1 Sam. 17:47).

To illustrate the blessing of trust in the Lord, Jeremiah describes a desert where the river is the only source of life. The river is a picture of God the Holy Spirit. Everything outside the bounds of the river is nonproductive. But by the river a glorious tree is planted; this fruit tree is a picture of the believer living by faith. The roots of the tree reach toward the river, illustrating the supply system that comes through spiritual growth. As the invisible root system grows, so does the tree, but the root system is always greater than the tree—there is more underground than there is aboveground. The supply system is invisible; the production is visible. For the Christian, inner character and greatness will always be more than that which is visible to other people.

The heat in Jeremiah 17:8 is a picture of testing, crisis, temptation; the year of drought refers to extended times of pressure. The green leaves are proof of the strength and health of the tree. The maturing believer will be spiritually strong, healthy, and vibrant in spite of testing. He will not only **not** be anxious or worried, but will also **not** cease to yield fruit.

Anxiety—worry—and divine production cannot coexist. Divine production requires the filling of the Holy Spirit. We are either controlled by the Spirit—spiritual—or controlled by the flesh—carnal—at any point of time. Worry is a mental attitude sin. Sin takes us out of the divine power sphere. Therefore, it is impossible to be worried and at the same time to be the channel of divine production.

The fruit that the believer will not cease to yield as he draws power from the stream is the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22–23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. “*The fruit of the Spirit*” in this passage is singular; it is one fruit, produced like grapes on a cluster.

In the physical realm, fruit-bearing takes time. We see signs of fruit on a young tree, but full, ripe fruit is found only on a mature tree. In the spiritual realm, as young believers, when we are filled by the Spirit, we will show signs of fruit. If we continue choosing to walk in the Spirit, we will grow, and the maturing fruit will be an evidence of our growth. At no time can we produce the fruit of the Spirit in our own energy. Jeremiah explains why we so desperately need the divine system of power.

Spirituality

What makes a person spiritual? Some people would look to externals for the answer—they would say a person is spiritual because of the pious way he dresses or talks, the things he does or does not do, the places he goes or refuses to go. Others would say a person is spiritual simply because he believes in and seeks to tap into some sort of higher power in the universe. *Webster's Dictionary* vaguely defines spirituality as “*sensitivity or attachment to religious values.*”

God's definition is anything but vague. According to the Bible, a person is spiritual when—and only when—he is filled by means of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality is an absolute—at any moment of time we are either one hundred percent filled by the Spirit and therefore spiritual, or we are not filled by the Spirit at all and are therefore carnal (1 Cor. 3:1–4; Gal. 5:16–17; 6:1).

At the moment of salvation, every believer is indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. Indwelling is a once-for-all thing; it cannot be changed or lost. The Spirit indwells every believer all the time (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19–20; Gal. 3:2; 4:6). But with the indwelling, an inner conflict begins between the Holy Spirit and our old sin nature. Our volition—our freedom to choose—is the arbiter in the conflict. We decide moment-by-moment who will be in control of our soul.

So, the filling of the Spirit is a matter of choice. We are commanded to be filled (Eph. 5:18), and we choose every day whether to obey that command or not. The command in Ephesians 5:18 is in the passive voice, indicating that the filling of the Holy Spirit is a gift which we can receive or reject, but cannot earn. Like everything else in the Christian life, the filling of the Holy Spirit comes one way: by grace through faith. We lose the filling of the Spirit by choosing to grieve or quench the Spirit through sin or apathy (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). We regain it by choosing to confess, which results in our being cleansed from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9; Prov. 1:23).

Being filled by the Spirit is not an end in the Christian life; it is the means to an end. The Holy Spirit is not given to us for nothing; He is given to us to provide power for life. Our goal is to bear fruit (John 15:4–5); the fruit described in Galatians 5:22–23 is the character of Jesus Christ. Spirituality—the life that is produced by the consistent filling of the Holy Spirit—is the life of Christ in us.

*“The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?
I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give to each man according to his ways,
According to the results of his deeds.”* (Jer. 17:9–10)

The heart—referring here to the inner man, the place where thinking takes place—is said to be “*deceitful*,” which is the Hebrew word *aqob*, meaning “deceitful, fraudulent, polluted.” The mind without faith is under the dictates of the sin nature and absolutely cannot be trusted.

Not only is it more deceitful than anything else, it is *anash*, “incurable, malignant.” Who can understand the heart of man? No one but God. Only God knows our real inner workings, and without God we could never understand ourselves. Without the convicting, teaching, and illuminating ministries of God the Holy Spirit in our lives, we could never understand who we are and why we do the things we do. (See also 1 Cor. 2:9–11.)

“*Search*” means “to look for content.” “*Test*” means “to diligently examine with the intent of finding function.” God, of course, always knows what is in our hearts, but He wants us to know. He wants us to understand what is on the inside and who is in control there. We will never know what is going on in our souls until God brings it out. So, He tests us by sometimes putting us in adverse situations and sometimes in prosperous situations—giving us the chance to apply what we know (1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:2–3). And all the while, God evaluates our thoughts and motives (Heb. 4:13).

The ultimate purpose of God’s searching and testing is to give to each of us according to our ways, according to the results of our deeds. “*Ways*” refers to content. “*Deeds*” refers to function. God is not only concerned with what we do, but much more with how we do it. The Lord Jesus Christ told Nicodemus that there are two kinds of life: physical and spiritual. “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh,*” He said, “*and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6). Nothing that we do in the power of the flesh is acceptable to God (Isa. 64:6). Only what is produced by the Spirit of God through us is worth anything.

“Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37–39)

The thirst Jesus is talking about is spiritual. The Lord phrases His invitation in a conditional sentence. *“If anyone is thirsty”* is a third-class condition that means “maybe you are thirsty and maybe not.” The verb *dipsao*, “thirst,” is a present, active, subjunctive. The subjunctive mood indicates potential. The active voice indicates that this is a matter of personal choice. We decide whether to be spiritually thirsty or not.

If we decide that we will be thirsty, then we decide whether we will quench our thirst or not. The solution to thirst is to take a drink. The phrase, *“let him come to Me,”* reminds us that there is only one place where our thirst will be quenched—in Christ. In the imperative mood, it is the Lord’s command to us. *Pino*, “drink,” is a present, active, indicative. Again, the active voice indicates that we make the choice of whether or not to drink. In verse 38, Jesus makes it clear that to drink means to believe. Faith is analogous to the drinking that quenches our thirst.

Every one of these verbs—*“thirst,” “come,” “drink,” “believe”*—is in the present tense, indicating continuous action. We choose whether we will keep on being thirsty; we choose whether we will keep on coming to Christ and drinking; we choose whether we will keep on believing. Only through moment-by-moment faith in Christ can we quench the moment-by-moment thirst of the soul.

John makes it clear that the Holy Spirit, who would be sent to indwell every believer after Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, is the source of the *“rivers of living water.”* Only faith can open the floodgates in our souls and release the power of the Spirit of God to flow through us.

Water and the Spirit

Water in Scripture is sometimes a picture of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28–32).

1. Water is an absolute necessity of physical life; the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity of spiritual life. There is no spiritual life apart from the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit and no spiritual production apart from the filling of God the Holy Spirit.
2. Water quenches physical thirst; the Spirit satisfies the soul.
3. Water washes; the Spirit sanctifies. Just as we need the daily application of soap and water to cleanse the body, we need the constant application of confession through which the Holy Spirit cleanses our souls.
4. Water refreshes the body; the Spirit renews the soul. If we will allow Him to do what He was sent to do, God the Holy Spirit will renew our soul when it is aching under the blows of life.
5. Water is a source of power; the Spirit is the source of power for living. We can harness the power of a river and produce enough electricity to light up a city. We can harness the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and light up the world around us.

Harnessing the Power

1. Be filled by means of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). “*Be filled*” is the present, passive, imperative of *pleroo*, a word that means “to fill a deficiency, to fill with quality, to fully influence, to fully possess.”

The present tense tells us to keep on being filled. The passive voice means that we do not produce the filling, we receive it. The imperative mood means that this is a command from God. We are commanded to keep on being fully controlled by God the Holy Spirit.

2. Grieve not the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). “*Grieve*” is *lupeo* and refers to the kind of grief and sorrow someone feels when he loses a loved one. This is how the Spirit of God responds to us when we are in carnality. By using a negative with a present imperative, Paul is ordering the Ephesians to stop doing something they are doing. “Stop grieving the Holy Spirit!” The context tells us that grieving the Spirit has to do with sin.

3. Quench not the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). *Sbennumi* means “to extinguish,” as one would douse a fire. “Do not douse the fire of God the Holy Spirit.” Again, the present imperative with the negative is a command to stop doing something. Some in the Thessalonian church were apparently making a habit of quenching the Spirit. The context of the verse tells us that “quenching” has to do with indifference toward the Word of God. We cannot get lax in

Water and the Spirit ... cont.

our dedication to the Word because only the Word can maintain the steam of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

4. Walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). *Peripateo*, “walk,” is a present, active, imperative. The active voice tells us this has to be a personal, volitional decision. The present tense tells us to keep on choosing to walk this way, to make this a way of life. The imperative is a command from God. To walk in the Spirit means to live every day in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we grieve God the Spirit, when we quench His power in our lives, then we are not filled by the Spirit; we are out of fellowship. The solution to being out of fellowship is simply confession, which always brings restoration (1 John 1:9). When we live in fellowship, filled by the Spirit of God and obedient to the Word of God (1 John 2:3), our sin nature is rendered inoperable (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:16; 1 John 3:6).

“Grieve not,” “quench not,” “walk in” the Spirit—all in the active voice—are personal decisions that will result in our consistently being “filled”—passive voice—by means of the Holy Spirit.



Lesson 3–4:

The Climb—*Spiritual Growth*

Psalm 27:1–14
2 Peter 1:2–7

The climb of the Christian life is growth from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. Spiritual growth, just like physical growth, does not happen overnight; it is a gradual process. But, unlike physical growth, spiritual growth is a matter of choice. We choose whether to be hungry for the Word; we choose whether to be motivated; we choose whether to advance in the Christian life.

In Psalm 27, David illustrates progression in spiritual growth through the seven stages of faith.

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?” (Psalm 27:1)

Stage 1: Salvation. The foundation for all spiritual growth is salvation (1 Cor. 3:11). “*The LORD*,” in Hebrew, is *Yehovah*; “*salvation*” is from *Yeshuah*, the Hebrew word for “Jesus.” A thousand years after David wrote this psalm, Joseph was told by the angel, “*You shall call his name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21). The person who has believed in Jesus Christ for salvation begins to see that faith, which lays basic assurance in the plan and on the Person of God, can conquer fear.

“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate in His temple.” (Psalm 27:4)

Stage 2: Study. After salvation, growth can only come from study. We have to diligently seek the Lord through His Word. *Baqash*, “*seek*,” means “to diligently study.” It is similar to the Greek *spoudazo* found in 2 Timothy 2:15, implying strong inner motivation. It is impossible to study so that we grow unless we have made a personal decision to be spiritually motivated. “*To dwell in the house of the LORD*” is analogous to living in the Word of God, learning to let the Word be the priority—more real and absolute than anything else in life. The house of the Lord in David’s time was the Tabernacle—the place of teaching. The New Testament equivalent would be the local church, as we gather with fellow believers, and the Word of God is taught.

“For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.” (Psalm 27:5)

Stage 3: Faith-rest. The “*secret place*” David spoke of was not the “holy of holies” in the Tabernacle but, rather, the place of fellowship and obedience to the Word and will of God (see Psalm 91:1 with John 15:4–5). David is saying that he knows that if he commits himself to live in fellowship with God, to meditate, to study, to be strong in his motivation for growth, then in the day of trouble, God will spread His tent over him and he will receive divine protection from whatever may threaten him. Every time we hear the Word taught, we choose whether to believe it or not. The only safe place in the universe is the place of faith, where we rest in the power of the Word. In this secret place, we have an encapsulated environment that we carry with us. When we dedicate ourselves to living in the Word, then the Word of God will surround us wherever we go and we will have stability in life.

“And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me; and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.” (Psalm 27:6)

Stage 4: Spirituality. In Hebrews 13:15, we are exhorted to “*continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*” The sacrifices of expressing joy, which is gratitude to God, and of singing and praise, which declare the faithfulness of God, are expressions of the function of our priesthood in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, and be gracious to me and answer me.” (Psalm 27:7)

Stage 5: Suffering. The Hebrew *qara* means “to call out loudly.” Here, it indicates intensive pressure, which wrenches from the soul a cry for deliverance. Suffering is necessary for spiritual growth. When we meet suffering with effective prayer, the process of growth is accelerated.

“When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.’” (Psalm 27:8)

Stage 6: Occupation with Christ. The most extended part of this Psalm deals with the sixth stage of faith because it is the most essential to the attaining of spiritual maturity. It is persevering through our sufferings to the point of occupation with Jesus Christ. David was able to persevere because when God said, “*Seek Me,*” David said, “I will.” He was motivated to know the Word of God and to understand the will of God. It is impossible to reach spiritual maturity unless we become occupied with the Person of Christ. Christianity is not a religion—it is a relationship. The purpose of all our study is to go from the written Word to the Living Word, to seek from the page the Person of Jesus Christ.

“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD.” (Psalm 27:13–14)

Stage 7: Waiting. David knew despair, discouragement, depression. He faced it all, but he came through it all because he knew that God would bring blessing if he persisted in spiritual advance. *Qawah* is the strongest Hebrew word for faith. To advance from the cross to the crown, each of us must master the degrees of faith: *amen*, leaning faith; *batach*, wrestling faith; *chasah*, refuge faith; *yachal*, healing faith; and *qawah* waiting faith. Isaiah tells us that “*those who wait for the Lord*” will exchange their human strength for His divine strength (Isa. 40:31). Not until we reach the waiting stage will we have that overwhelming strength of God; and not until we have that, will we have true courage in the spiritual realm.

There is no way in our own strength that we can either reach or imitate spiritual maturity. It is a gift from God, a gift that is given in increments and can be received only by faith. We have to follow God's plan and do it God's way—a principle, a promise, a doctrine at a time. To reach maturity, we have to pass through each of the seven stages of faith. It takes tremendous spiritual motivation. We have to be motivated to attain spiritual maturity more than anything on Earth. If we have any other priority in life, we will not reach it.

God has so designed the system that we either do it His way or we don't do it at all. His way is centered on the Church. Apart from involvement in a local church and apart from the exercise of our spiritual gifts, we cannot reach maturity.

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ ...” (Eph. 4:11–12)

Two of these—apostleship and prophecy—were temporary gifts. When the Apostle John finished writing the last books of the Bible and died, both apostleship and prophecy passed from the scene. The other teaching gifts are given for the purpose of equipping believers for service.

The Greek word *katartizo*, “equip,” was used three ways in the ancient world: medically, it meant to set a broken bone; militarily, it meant to get supplies to an army on the front line; economically, it meant to provide needed funds. The word means “to equip according to the need.” In the spiritual sense, it means for the believer to find his spiritual gift and to function in it.

After we have sat in Bible class and received the Word, the next step is to go out into the world and act on what we have heard. If we have no service, no function, no operation in the supernatural exercise of our spiritual gift, we will have no spiritual maturity.

The purpose of service is for the building up of the Body of Christ. *“Building up”* is *oikodomeo*, from *oikos*, “house,” and *domeo*, “to build.” The word means “edification.” The pastor teaches the congregation; the members of the congregation, having been equipped by the pastor, now all function in their spiritual gifts. Because the spiritual gifts are all functioning, the believers are edifying each other and strengthening each other so they can do

what the Church is supposed to do: evangelize—tell the world about Jesus Christ. This is what makes for a dynamic local church.

“... until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:13)

The ultimate objective is expressed in four pictures of what we want to attain:

1. The unity of the faith. *“Faith”* here is not subjective but objective, referring to that which we believe. *“The unity of the faith”* means that because the Word of God is taught in its entirety, we have a systematic development of our understanding of the Word of God.

2. The knowledge of the Son of God. This is functional, experiential knowledge. We know Jesus Christ not because we have heard or studied about Him, but because we have experienced Him. We see His power in our lives, His confidence, His boldness,

Seven Steps of Spiritual Advance

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

“For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence [virtue], and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.” (2 Pet. 1:2–7)

The goal that God sets before every one of His children is conformity to Jesus Christ. The godliness that Peter refers to in verse 3 is the function of spirituality; it is Christ living in and through us (Col. 1:27). It is the most awesome potential in the

His courage, His humility. We see these things in the lives of others in the local church, and we come to a practical, experiential knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ. He is not someone who is absent; He is someone who is present. He is not someone who is weak; He is someone who is powerful. He is someone who lives and breathes within individuals and within a local church.

How will we ever come to the experiential knowledge of the Son of God? Only one way. We have to come to systematic unity in our understanding of Bible doctrine. If we do not accept the full counsel of God, we will never see the full glory Christ.

3. A mature man. “*Mature*,” from *teleios*, can also be translated “complete.” This means that we have put all the pieces of the puzzle together. We have a clear understanding of the full scope of doctrine and have applied it to life. We have been taught and, because we have the unity of the faith and because we have the experiential knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ, we are mature.

4. The fulness of Christ. To reach this point means that we are filled with quality, controlled by our occupation with Christ and influenced by Him in everything we do. We start out in the Christian life just working toward Christ and, in time, begin to be occupied with Him. But then what happens? As we develop a systematic understanding of the written Word, Jesus Christ, the

Seven Steps of Spiritual Advance ... cont.

universe, and yet we can either be hungry for it or apathetic and indifferent to it.

Before spiritual growth can become a reality, there has to be inner motivation. We have to want to grow, and that is a choice each of us has to make for ourselves. Once we have made the decision to grow, we have to stick to it; we have to, as Peter says, apply every ounce of diligence we have.

Pareisphero, “apply,” is a word that means “to bring in beside, to contribute, to bring something in on your own.” *Spoude*, translated “*diligence*,” means “earnestness, zeal.” *Pareisphero* is an aorist, active, participle here. The aorist participle in Greek always precedes the action of the main verb, and the active voice always implies personal choice. The main verb, “*supply*,” relates to each of seven steps of growth. Peter is saying here that until we choose to bring in our own motivation, until we decide we want to get with God’s plan, we will not grow. But, if we will decide to get

Living Word, becomes alive to us. He becomes real—more real than anything else. He becomes important to us. As He does, we begin to have *epignosis*, experiential knowledge of the Son of God. We reach spiritual maturity and then He fills our life, controls our thinking, and influences our actions. Jesus Christ has become the most important thing in life.

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.” (Eph. 4:14–15)

If we persist in the teaching and application of the Word, we will not have to be children all our lives. The Greek *meketi*, “no longer,” says, “It is time to move on.” The writer of Hebrews admonishes his readers by telling them that by now they ought to be teaching others, they ought to be functioning in their spiritual gifts, but they are not. Why? Because they have become dull of hearing, and are in spiritual retreat, rather than advancing (Heb. 5:11–14).

The word Paul uses here for “*children*” is *nepios*. The word refers to an adult who is childish. In the spiritual realm, this is someone who has been a believer for a long time, but who is still

Seven Steps of Spiritual Advance ... cont.

and stay motivated, we can expect to move through seven steps of spiritual advance:

1. Excellence. The word “*moral*” used in the New American Standard translation does not occur in the Greek. The word *arete*, which can be translated “virtue,” refers to the demonstration of power, in this case to the filling of the Holy Spirit. This is the same word used in verse 3 for the function of divine excellence. To the faith with which we begin the Christian life, we have to supply the power of the Spirit of God, that means we have to know how to be—and stay—filled by means of the Holy Spirit.

2. Knowledge. Once we understand how to be filled by the Spirit, then we have to study; we have to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 3:18). It will take diligence, spiritual hunger, and a humility that is willing to admit we do not know everything there is to know. Only the filling of the Spirit makes the perception of the Word of God possible (1 Cor. 2:12–14).

trying to make Christianity an outward thing instead of an inward thing. He still doesn't understand that Christianity is supernatural and invisible. He is still trying to make an issue of human production, human effort, and human good, instead of the invisible, divine production.

"Tossed" and *"carried about"* are both in the present tense, indicating persistent action. This is the childish believer's lifestyle—constantly shifting, constantly unstable, constantly affected by external shifts in the wind, living a life built on circumstances. No believer can attain maturity if his life is built on the conditions around him.

But instead of remaining children, we may grow. *"Speaking the truth in love"* means that we speak the Word of God in the love of the Holy Spirit. The phrase takes us back to where Paul began in verse 11 with the communication of the Word by gifted teachers who teach in the power of the Holy Spirit. When doctrine is taught this way, we will grow up in all aspects. *Auxano* refers to natural, normal growth. This is the normal Christian life—spiritual advance from the cross to the crown.

Seven Steps of Spiritual Advance ... cont.

3. Self-control. This is from *en*, "in," and *kratos*, "authority." The filling of the Holy Spirit plus the continued perception of the Word of God sets up a system of inner authority in the soul. We begin to control ourselves not just because some other person is watching, but because we are servants of God. We know how to act under the authority of the Word in our souls, and so we can be confident in life.

4. Perseverance. This is from *hupo*, "under," and *meno*, "abide." It beautifully illustrates the faith-rest life. It is persistence, stamina, the ability to abide under pressure, to stand no matter how much we are suffering. If we are filled by means of the Spirit, if we are dedicated to the study of the Word of God, and if we have a system of inner authority that gives us confidence, then we will exercise persistence and stamina in the faith-rest life. We will endure; we will stick with the plan. We know that every advance in knowledge and self-control will be tested to prove its genuineness (James 1:2–3, 12; 1 Pet. 1:6–8; 2 Pet. 1:6), so we will need perseverance.

5. Godliness. Conformity to Christ is godliness. In 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul talks about "the great mystery of godliness," *"God was manifest in the flesh"* (KJV). If God manifest in the flesh is the mystery of godliness, then godliness in the Christian life means conformity to the Person of Christ.

Seven Steps of Spiritual Advance ... cont.

6. Brotherly kindness (love). This is *philadelphia*, “the love of brothers.” It is royal family love, and we will never love the Royal Family of God until we have really begun to be conformed to Christ. When we have, we will be able to look at every other believer and say, “That person’s life and growth are important to me.” And we will begin to go out of our way for other believers because we see the eternal significance of their lives.

7. Love. This is *agape*—the love that only God can produce. It is not an emotion or a feeling; it is a passion for man’s ultimate good. It is never casual; it is always sacrificial (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). *Agape* is not based on anything inherently lovable in the object, and it does not demand to be loved in return. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:5 that the goal of all our instruction—the *telos*, the objective, the end of the race, the destination of the life of faith—is *agape*. Not just to receive, but to manifest, the love of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. Love is the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37–40; Rom. 13:9–10), the greatest motivator (2 Cor. 5:14–15), and the most enduring power in the universe—everything else in life will fail, but love never will (1 Cor. 13:8).



Lesson 3–5:

The Goal—*Spiritual Maturity*

Romans 12:1–2
Philippians 2:3–11

Spiritual maturity is the point at which we begin to live the normal Christian life. By the time we reach maturity, we are able to maintain the filling of the Spirit for prolonged periods of time. Because of this, we are ready to start using—to the full—the resources that God makes available to us. At maturity, we recognize how awesome are the responsibilities and opportunities God has given us, and the question we face is this: “Am I going to be faithful in using what God has provided to accomplish the task He has given me to do?” If we say yes, we will begin to see what sacrifice is really all about.

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” (Rom. 12:1)

With the word “*therefore*,” Paul brings everything he has taught so far in this epistle to the point of practical application. He wants us to put shoes on our theology. He is saying that somewhere along the line, our theology has to relate to our lives.

Oiktirmos means more than “mercy.” While it does refer to the compassion that arises from a recognition of someone’s need, it also always implies a provision to satisfy the need. God has compassion on us because He recognizes our need, and He holds out to us resources, provision, wealth—the riches of His grace.

“*Present*,” is *paristemi*, from *histemi*, meaning “to stand or set,” and *para*, “beside.” It means to make something available. The word is used in Luke 2:22 for the presentation of the baby Jesus at the Temple. Joseph and Mary were, in effect, making Him available to God. In Romans 6:13, we are urged to make the members of our bodies available to God as weapons of righteousness.

The issue in the Christian life is never our ability; God has resources to take care of that. The issue is our availability. God has chosen to give us free will. As unbelievers, we had the right to believe in Jesus Christ or to reject Him. As believers, we have the right to utilize the provisions of God’s grace or to squander them.

Paul is telling his readers that it is the purpose of God that we present our physical bodies as a living sacrifice or offering. This would have been shocking to the people to whom this was written in A.D. 65. To the Greco-Roman mind, the body was something to be despised; only the mind mattered. But Paul wants them to understand that the body is important because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), and He wants it to be an instrument God can use in accomplishing His plan.

According to Hebrews 10:5–10, at the time of His physical birth, Jesus said essentially this to the Father, “You would not accept animal sacrifice and offerings as a cleansing of sin for the human race, but a body You have prepared for Me ... I have come to do Your will.” The second Person of the Trinity entered the human race to offer His body as a sacrifice for sin. In the Person of Jesus Christ, undiminished deity and perfect, sinless humanity were welded together forever. Now, God carries on—through the spiritual body of Christ—the work He began in the incarnation. We are instruments to accomplish the will of God on Earth.

In the Old Testament, all sacrifices had to be killed. But Paul says our sacrifice is to be “*living and holy*.” The plan of God is that every believer be in full-time, 24-hour-a-day, Christian service. “*Holy*” means “set apart” or “sanctified” and refers to the filling of the Holy Spirit. When we have no unconfessed sins in our life and are filled by means of the Spirit, we are acceptable to God. As believers, we are positionally righteous and sanctified always. We are practically righteous and sanctified only when we are walking in the Spirit.

This is our “*spiritual service of worship*.” “*Spiritual service*” comes from two words, *logikos*, meaning “logical, reasonable, sensible,” and *latreia*, a word used for priestly service, but referring in ancient Greek to the work of a common day-laborer. It is logical and reasonable that God would require 24-hour-a-day service from His servants. Christianity is a full-time job, and working at it full time is our act of worship.

Think about what this means. When you pull on your grubbies to go to work in the morning, you ought to be going to worship. If you work in an office, you ought to say, “I have to go to the office from nine to five to worship.” If you are a carpenter, the logical place for you to worship is out there where you are every day sawing boards and slamming nails. If you slop hogs for a living, you ought to have an attitude that says, “I carry in my physical body the Spirit of God. I am the sanctuary and because I carry Him with me, every single thing I do is important to Him, and I will make it an act of worship.”

The first indication that we are arriving at spiritual maturity is that we worship every day, wherever we are. What does it take to have that attitude? It takes focus. We have to be able to concentrate, to fix our minds on reality, and not be sucked in to the lies all around us.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom. 12:1–2)

“*Be conformed to*” is *suschematizo*. *Schema* is outward appearance. Paul uses a present, passive, imperative here. The imperative is a command; the present tense tells us not to keep on being conformed. The passive voice tells us that we receive this action because we live here in this world. The world is constantly putting pressure on us, and the pressures cause us to conform. Paul says do not allow yourself to be pressed into a mold. Outward conformity is the problem here.

The word translated “*world*” is not “world” at all. It is the Greek *aion*, “age.” It refers to the trends of human history. Paul is saying, “Do not allow yourself to be molded by the trends of society. Do not allow yourself outwardly to take on the appearance of the world—the age in which you live.”

Instead, we are to be transformed, *metamorphoo*. *Meta* means “to change;” *morphoo* means “form.” It refers to a transformation or a change that is inner and involves essence. Paul is telling us to be changed on the inside. As we are transformed, the changes that begin on the inside will work their way out and will affect what we look like on the outside. This passage is calling for a little bit of spiritual non-conformity. It is a challenge to us as believers to go against the tide, to stand on our own, based on our own understanding and knowledge of the Word of God.

This is exactly what Paul means when he tells us in Philippians 2:12 to “work out our own salvation.” The principle is this: Everything of the world—the cosmic system—works from the outside in, trying to change the inner man by making the outer man look or talk or act in certain “acceptable” ways. But God’s plan is different. It works from the center to the outside. Everything God does in our lives starts inside with our attitude, our thinking, and works its way outward. The change God wants will take place first in the hidden recesses of our essence, our spirit and our soul, and then will transform what is on the outside. Christian growth will be seen last of all in what we do.

Just how is it that we are to be transformed? “*By the renewing of your mind.*” “*Renewing*” is *anakainoo*. *Ana* means “again and again.” *Kainos* means “new in quality.” The renewing of the mind means the constant improvement of the quality of our minds through the repetition of the teaching of the Word of God. Isaiah 28:10 tells us that God’s plan is “*order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there.*” We put promise upon promise, precept upon precept, and we advance step-by-step by the renewing of our minds.

God’s plan is not to change people by requiring them to wear certain clothes or talk certain ways. The plan is to have the Word taught, and wherever the Word is received, it will change the recipient from the inside out. When someone changes his activity by his own free will, as a response to the Word of God, there is genuine growth. That is the only kind of growth that counts. God’s plan starts at salvation when we become new creatures by regeneration because of union with Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Then we move to Romans 12:2, to the “renewing of the mind.” The result

will be that we will eventually fulfill Romans 6:4, walking in newness of life. If we renew the mind through consistent, long-term study of the Word of God, we will find experiential “*newness of life*.” Our life will have quality because our thinking has quality.

The purpose of this growth, Paul says in Romans 12:2, is to “*prove*” something. *Dokimazo* is an athletic word that means “to prove through testing.” God has tests—trials, pressures, adversity, and even prosperity—planned for every life. When are we going to present our body a living sacrifice? Every time we face a test. And what are we going to prove? What is called here the “*good and acceptable and perfect*” will of God. “*Perfect*,” *teleios*, is a word that is used in the Bible for maturity. It means “to be complete, to be without lack.” Every time we are tested, we have the chance to prove, by facing pressure and overcoming, that the will of God works in life.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus ...” (Phil. 2:5)

“*Have this attitude*” is the present, active, imperative of the verb *phroneo*, which means “to think.” This is a command to keep on thinking like Jesus Christ thought. The active voice tells us that we choose whether to do this or not. First Corinthians 2:16 says that the Bible is “*the mind of Christ*.” If we ever hope to think like Christ, we have to know and understand how He thought. This only comes through consistent study and application of the Word in conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit. Being conformed to Christ begins with thinking.

Apart from study of the Word, we cannot know how or what to think, because the mind of Christ is totally opposed to all human perception and human logic. Paul illustrates this in the verses just before and just after his command to have the mind of Christ.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”
(Phil. 2:3–4)

The Lord Jesus Christ treated every member of the human race as more important than Himself, and He was God in the flesh. He

made people know that they were valuable by the way He treated them. His whole life was spent looking out for the interests of others. Mark tells us that Jesus “*did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45), and all the Gospel accounts bear witness to the fact that He served every day of His life on Earth.

What a radical change it would make in society if we thought that way. Think what it would mean in your life and mine if 24 hours a day we were offering our bodies as a living sacrifice to God in this way. What if we offered the encouragement, the consolation, the affection, the compassion of Christ to everyone we came in contact with today? What if we put other people and their needs before ourselves? What if our attitude was that other people’s concerns are just as important as ours; their problems are just as pressing; their feelings matter as much?

If we had that attitude, then every day would be a day of true worship because we would be living every hour as a sacrifice to God, experiencing the very life of the Person of Jesus Christ. But it can only happen one way: The mind has to gorge on the Word of God, the soul has to be saturated with the Word of God. As we feast on the Word day-after-day, the transformation slowly takes place, and it causes us to think and act like Jesus Christ thought and acted.

“Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:6–11)

The Cross to the Crown

Salvation is only the beginning of God's plan for man. After salvation, the believer's objective is to advance through the stages of spiritual growth on the path from the cross to the crown. At each stage, the believer faces increasingly intense tests that can only be passed through faith. Paul, in Romans 1:17, says that believers progress "from faith to faith." The five Hebrew words for faith outlined on pages 44–46 illustrate the five stages of growth described in the New Testament.

- 1. The Babe** (1 Pet. 2:2). All believers enter the family of God as infants when they exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. After the tremendous stress of birth, of being cast from the realm of darkness to the light, every infant's first impulse is to nurse. The objective is nourishment, but the baby receives great comfort in feeding. God's objective for the spiritual infant is growth, but He begins the process with comfort. Not much is expected of the child in his first years. Babies eat, sleep, cry, and mess, and parents do not get upset about the fact that their babies cannot change their own diapers or fix their own meals. Spiritual infants are just as helpless and need a great deal of nurturing, encouragement, and patient instruction. Spiritual infancy is illustrated by *amen*, the leaning faith of Genesis 15:6.
- 2. The Adolescent** (1 John 2:13–14). The Apostle John describes adolescent believers as the young, the strong, the eager. These are believers who have grown to the point at which they understand some principles of truth and are beginning to apply them to life. But, like most adolescents, they have the growing pains of arrogance and rebellion against authority. They are sometimes too eager to act on their own, and this often gets them into trouble. They have knowledge, which they mistake for wisdom, but they lack experience. Their tendency is to want to apply the truth to other people's lives. Adolescents may be troublesome, but they are at least not apathetic. They must be patiently trained and encouraged to channel their energies. No one makes it to maturity without passing through adolescence. Spiritual adolescence is illustrated by *batach*, the wrestling faith of Psalm 37:3.
- 3. The Mature** (Heb. 5:14; 6:1). The mature believer is able to take meat, the advanced doctrine of the Word. A Christian who has arrived at spiritual maturity knows enough about the Bible to take responsibility for his own life. He understands that God has a plan for his life, and he becomes occupied with

The Cross to the Crown ... cont.

fulfilling that plan. He gives himself to training and discipline, exercising himself and building spiritual muscle. Spiritual maturity is illustrated by *chasah*, the confident faith of Psalm 57:1 that takes refuge in the Lord.

4. **The Hero of Faith** (Isa 53:12; Hebrews 11). Heroes of faith are men and women who have gone beyond maturity and have learned to fight the good fight. They have advanced beyond simply taking responsibility for their own lives to becoming responsible for the lives of other people. They are always ready to pick up fallen comrades, to treat their wounds, to encourage them, and to supply their needs. Heroes of faith still make mistakes and they still fail, but they always stand back up and go back into battle. Hero-of-faith status is illustrated by *yachal*, the healing faith of Job 13:15.
5. **The Friend of God** (James 2:23–25). The highest of all possible achievements in life is to become a friend of God. Every believer has the potential and the assets necessary to reach this point, but very few Christians do. It takes persistence and tenacity. The only people who make it this far are the people who absolutely refuse to quit. Friend-of-God status is illustrated by *qawah*, the enduring faith of Isaiah 40:31.

Unit 3 Review

Lesson 3–1

1. To what does the writer of Hebrews compare the Christian life?
2. What does he mean by “the race set before us”?
3. Are believers who have died aware of what is happening on Earth? How do we know?
4. What are the encumbrances and the entanglements that believers are to watch out for?
5. Describe the three phases of an endurance race and compare them to the Christian life.
6. On what are we to focus as we run our race? What happens if we focus on anything else?
7. What is the “old sin nature”? Describe it.
8. What are the three aspects of the will of God for our lives?
9. Name at least five things that you know absolutely are the will of God for your life and give biblical references for your answers.
10. How would you describe to a friend the way the Christian life resembles a race? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Hebrews 12:1–3

Lesson 3–2

1. What is spiritual retreat/reversion?
2. What are the seven steps of reversion?
3. What are the seven steps from spiritual retreat to recovery?
4. Describe the sin of Ahithophel and its results.
5. Were the adultery and murder committed by David any less serious than the sins of Ahithophel? Why did God’s treatment of the two men differ?
6. How could Hushai remain loyal to David? Where did he learn this kind of loyalty?
7. What are the five strengths and kinks of the soul of man?

8. What is the purpose of God's discipline?
9. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?
10. What are the three stages of God's discipline?
11. How would you explain spiritual retreat/reversion to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Ephesians 4:17–19

Lesson 3–3

1. What is the only source of power for living the Christian life?
2. Based on the illustration of Jeremiah 17, describe the life of the person who relies on human power. Describe the life of the person who relies on God's power.
3. What does the river in Jeremiah 17 illustrate? In what New Testament passage does Jesus talk about this same river?
4. What is the fruit that the believer living by the river will produce?
5. What is the biblical definition of the "heart"?
6. What produces spiritual thirst in a believer?
7. How is water a picture of the Holy Spirit?
8. What four commands must we obey in order to harness the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
9. What is the difference between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit?
10. Describe a "spiritual" person. How does one become spiritual?
11. Name at least five biblical terms that are synonymous with spirituality.
12. How would you explain spirituality to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Jeremiah 17:5–10

John 7:38

Lesson 3–4

1. What are the seven stages of faith described in Psalm 27?
2. What does the local church have to do with the individual believer's spiritual growth?
3. What does Paul mean in Ephesians 4:13 by "the unity of the faith"?
4. What does he mean by "the knowledge of the Son of God"?
5. What does he mean by "a mature man"?
6. What does he mean by "the fulness of Christ"?
7. What qualities will characterize the lives of people who choose to remain spiritual infants?
8. What is God's goal for every believer?
9. According to 2 Peter 1, what is the first prerequisite for growth?
10. What are the seven steps of spiritual advance outlined in 2 Peter 1?
11. How would you explain spiritual growth to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Psalm 27:1

Ephesians 4:11–13

2 Peter 1:2–7

Lesson 3–5

1. In what sense is the achievement of spiritual maturity the beginning of the normal Christian life?
2. What is the only thing of ours that God can use?
3. What does it mean to be a "living and holy sacrifice"?
4. Where are Christians to worship?
5. What is the difference between being conformed and being transformed?
6. How are we to be transformed?
7. What is the purpose of the transformation process?
8. What does it mean to have the attitude, the mind, of Christ?

9. Based on Philippians 2:1–11, describe the attitude of Jesus Christ toward people, toward Himself, and toward His mission in life.
10. Describe the five stages of spiritual growth. Relate each stage to one of the five Hebrew words for faith.
11. How would you explain spiritual maturity to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Romans 12:1–2

Philippians 2:5–11



Lesson 4–1: Perspective—Grace

Romans 5:1–2
Luke 18:9–14
1 Corinthians 15:10

Spiritual growth should do something to our self-image. It did something to Paul's. When he wrote to the Corinthians in about A.D. 59, Paul called himself "*the least of the apostles*" (1 Cor. 15:9). Four years later, he had grown to the point that he saw himself as "*the very least of all saints*" (Eph. 3:8). A few years—and many tribulations—later, writing his last letters to the young pastor Timothy, Paul declared himself to be "the worst sinner in the world" (1 Tim. 1:15).

As he matured and his intimacy with Jesus Christ deepened, Paul saw both God and himself more clearly. Instead of causing him to feel better about himself, growth opened Paul's eyes to the fact that his sin nature was worse than he had ever imagined—it was incorrigible. He saw with greater clarity every day the depth of his need for grace from God. And that was the secret of his greatness.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand ..." (Rom. 5:1–2)

We stand in grace or we do not stand at all. Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ. It is a resource that can never be earned or deserved, but only received as a gift. We are saved by grace through faith; we grow in the Christian life by grace through faith.

Because grace can be initiated and sustained only by God, anything we try to do other than respond is worthless. Anything we try to do on our own takes us out of the sphere of grace and puts us into the sphere of “works” or “law.” Paul explained this to the Romans when he said, “*If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace*” (Rom. 11:6).

No one can work his way to God or earn God’s approval through human effort. Paul, the former Pharisee who had been found “*blameless*” by the strictest standard of righteousness that had ever been devised (Phil. 3:4–7), knew about trying to work his way to God. He understood how the legalistic mind sets itself against grace, refusing to accept the fact that in man there dwells no good thing (Rom. 7:18).

Most people can see that sin is a violation of the righteousness of God, so they understand why it had to be judged on the cross. But not very many people are reconciled to the fact that the good things man does on his own are abhorrent and are absolutely unacceptable to God.

Isaiah 64:6 is graphic in its description of the good that man can produce. “*All our righteous deeds,*” it says, “*are like a filthy garment.*” In the Hebrew it says, “the rags of a menstruous woman.” Why would the Holy Spirit inspire Isaiah to use this particular analogy? Because the flow of blood in the menstrual cycle is evidence that there has been no conception. No conception means there will be no birth, and no birth means no life. Isaiah is saying that all human good is dead in God’s sight.

That is exactly why human good is referred to as “*dead works*” in Hebrews 6:1–2. The author is not talking about sins here. Sins are never called “*dead works*” in the Bible. “*Dead works*” is a reference to man’s attempts to work his way to God, to earn His approval. But he cannot do it. All our good is relative good; all our righteousness is relative righteousness. Compared to other men, we may appear good, righteous. But compared to the absolute goodness and righteousness of God, we are less than nothing.

At every moment we have two choices: we can trust in ourselves—relying on our intellect, our strength, and our goodness—or we can take a realistic look at ourselves and see that our only hope is to trust in God and rely on the riches of His grace.

In Luke 18, the Lord has a story to tell about two men and who they chose to trust.

“And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt.” (Luke 18:9)

The most natural thing in the world is for men to use one standard to measure themselves and another to judge everyone else. The men to whom Jesus directs this parable look at themselves from the standpoint of all their virtues. They are preoccupied with all the wonderful things they do. But when they look at others, they minimize anything that might be worthwhile and magnify the flaws they see. They measure themselves by comparing their strengths to other men’s weaknesses. By this kind of comparison they tower above others. So, of course, they look at others with contempt.

Exoutheneo means “to make of no account, to despise utterly.” This is the mental attitude sin of scornfulness—the basis of hatred, hostility, enmity. The word translated “others” is *loipos*. It means “the rest.” As far as these men were concerned, everyone who was outside of their little sect was not worth spitting on.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-gatherer.” (Luke 18:10)

The Pharisees were pillars of the community. They were respected and honored. The name “Pharisee” means “the separated ones.” The Pharisees were, first of all, separatists. They stood apart, aloof. They wore special clothing to make sure that everyone would be properly impressed with who they were. They were legalists, preoccupied with keeping not just the Mosaic Law but the thousands of regulations that had been added to it throughout the years. Especially, they liked to concern themselves with the externals, like tithing and ritual purity. The Pharisees thought they could meet God’s standards by keeping all the outward rules. Like all legalists, they were very proud of themselves, of their association, of their own righteousness. They expected to be looked up to.

Tax collectors, on the other hand, expected nothing but contempt. They did, after all, work for the hated Roman conquerors. The Romans did not pay the tax collectors, but gave

them total freedom in collecting taxes from their fellow Jews. Everything they could weasel out of people above what was owed to the Romans was theirs. So they became very adept at chiseling people out of their money. It was a lucrative business. They were considered traitors and were despised by almost everyone. The Pharisees especially look down on these “sinners,” classing them with harlots and Gentiles.

“The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’” (Luke 18:11–12)

Notice that Jesus says that the Pharisee was “*praying ... to himself.*” It is no wonder, because in his mind he really was god. He was convinced that God was made in his image; he was convinced God held his standard.

The Pharisee said “*thank You,*” but there was no thanksgiving here. He was thankful that he was not like other people, which of course was a bold-faced lie. He was exactly like other people.

He made no request of God. Why would he ask God for anything when he was unconscious of any need? He did not feel that he needed anything. He was very content with himself.

He had no praise for God. In the place of praise was self-exaltation. He congratulated himself first for all the things he did not do and for being such a fine individual. As he prayed, he looked around, because he had to look around at other people to remind himself of how wonderful he was. As his eyes fell on the tax collector, he reminded himself how much better he was than all the others. Of course, he measured himself and others by the human standard of relative righteousness. He built himself up by beating others down. By zeroing in on the failures of others, he could make himself look pretty good. But not to God. Relative righteousness is despicable in God’s sight.

Finally, he began to list his good deeds, and everything he had to say was an expression of the Law and the externals. Jesus cuts the account of the Pharisee’s prayer at this point, but you can bet that his prayer went on and on, into all the details of how many good things he did and how wonderful he was.

This man had a system based on two things: what he did and what he did not do. But nowhere was there a place in his system for what he was. Everything he was concerned with was external: There was nothing inside—no relationship with God, no fellowship, no faith.

“But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’”
(Luke 18:13)

The tax-gatherer—hated, rejected, an outcast in his own nation—stood in the Temple and uttered seven words. The fact that he felt he must stand apart from God, as well as from the Pharisee, indicates that he knew he was an outcast. He did not have any inflated ideas about being good enough for God.

The Pharisee acted as if he and God were old buddies. The tax collector had a reverent fear of God. It shows in his posture and in his refusal even to look up.

Beating his breast, he cried for mercy. Everything about this man said that he was defeated, ashamed, grieved. He saw how great his need was, and he knew that nothing but God’s mercy could sustain him.

Whereas the Pharisee chose to magnify his good points, this man focused on his flaws. The Pharisee saw himself as better than everyone else. The tax-gatherer saw himself as worse than everyone. He was so concerned about his sinfulness that he did not even have time to think about the Pharisee’s flaws. He considered himself the sinner of sinners—the worst of all—and all he asked for was mercy.

God’s mercy withholds from us what we deserve. Because God judged Jesus Christ on the cross for all our sins, He can offer us mercy. He can also offer us grace. God’s grace gives us what we do not deserve—the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the riches of His glory, inheritance, power, and much more. But the only people who can lay hold of grace are those who realize their need for mercy.

What was Jesus’ evaluation of these two men and their prayers?

The Character of Grace

God set a regulation at the beginning of human history for how He would be worshipped (Exod. 20:24–25). Altars to Him were to be made of earth or uncut stones only. They were not to be improved or embellished in any way. There were to be no steps up to the altar.

The Lord wanted to make it absolutely clear to any who would approach Him that nothing man does or makes on his own can be pleasing to Him and that man cannot meet Him halfway. Human altars are always beautiful. But God does not want human beauty—He wants humility.

Grace is God's policy in dealing with the human race. In grace, God does all the work; there is no room for human works.

1. Grace and works are as mutually exclusive as light and dark.
2. Grace plus works is not grace.
3. Works involve many things, such as motive, intent, purpose.
4. The attitude behind works is always pride.
5. The attitude that accepts grace is always humility.
6. Grace plus humility equals power.

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”
(Luke 18:14)

The word “*justified*,” from *dikaioo*, means “declared righteous.” No matter how proud and righteous the Pharisee felt when he walked out of that Temple, he was not justified before God. “*The sacrifices of God*,” David wrote in Psalm 51:17, “*are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*”

We are not told how the tax collector felt when he left the Temple; we only know how God saw him. A part of maturity is being able to see ourselves as God sees us—knowing absolutely when we are out of fellowship and displeasing to Him and, just as absolutely, when we are functioning in His grace and causing Him pleasure.

“But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” (1 Cor. 15:10)

Grace is a resource that we choose whether or not to use. Every believer stands in the sphere of grace, in an encapsulated environment where all the riches of God are available to us. The same power, the same wisdom, the same historical impact that was available to Paul, is available to each of us.

Why then do some believers **seem** to be blessed and prospered while others are not? Maybe, as Paul expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:10, it is because some “labor” harder. Paul took the resources of God’s grace and he worked, sweat, did without sleep, and went without all kinds of comforts in order to accomplish the plan of God for his life. He labored past physical and mental exhaustion, because he knew that he would never understand divine power until he had pushed past his own strengths and abilities. God honored that—it was all grace. On Paul’s part, it was all faith.

A German proverb says, *“God gave us nuts, but He didn’t crack them.”* O.A. Baptiste said, *“God gave us wheat, but we must bake the bread. He gives us cotton, but we must make the clothes; He gives us trees, but we must make our homes. He provides raw materials, we must make the finished product.”* This is the principle of grace at work.

The Royal Code

As members of the Royal Family of God, we are called to live by a royal code of conduct, a code that sets a divine standard. We will never be able to attain the standard unless we choose to put grace to work every day of our lives.

1. The Law of Life

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”
(Rom. 8:1–2)

As believers, we have been set free from death, from sin, and from Satan. We have passed out of death into life (John 5:24). In Christ, we have been made incredibly rich—endowed with everything we need to live the abundant life (John 10:10; Ephesians 1). As we learn to walk according to the Spirit and to conduct ourselves as those who are alive to God (Rom. 6:11–13; 8:1–4), we will begin to experience that abundance.

The Royal Code ... cont.

2. The Law of Liberty

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." (Gal. 5:1)

Jesus Christ wants us to enjoy the freedom He died for. He has given us the right and the responsibility to choose how we will live our lives. He loves for us to make decisions, and He loves for us to be different from each other. Anything the Bible does not forbid is spiritually neutral and is, therefore, an area in which we individually must choose what we will and will not do. There are many uncertain things in the Christian life, and we need discernment every step we take. We also need to remember that God intends for each of us to be free, that each of us will answer directly to God for how we use our freedom, and that it is never acceptable to try to force another believer to make the choices we think he should make or to judge and malign him for the choices he has made. The judgmental believer is always a weak believer. Our freedom in Christ can never be taken from us, but it can be forfeited.

3. The Law of Love

"Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves." (Rom. 15:1)

The law of love is higher than the law of liberty. Liberty justifiably says, "I have the right to do anything that is not forbidden in the Word." But love says, "Though I may do anything, there are certain allowable things I will not do if they will cause others to stumble." The law of love recognizes that while we have freedom, we are bound in its exercise by the weakness of others; we are our brother's keeper (1 Corinthians 8). So, for the sake of weak believers, we restrain certain activities that are good and proper in themselves, lest we become a stumbling block. Again, we have to remember how precious is our individual freedom in the sight of God: He will not force us to live by the law of love, and He does not look with pleasure on our trying to force anyone else to live by it.

4. The Law of Self-denial

"All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor ... just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor. 10:23–24, 33)

The Royal Code ... cont.

Under the law of self-denial, we restrict ourselves for the sake of unbelievers. We remember that we are ambassadors of Christ and that how we live may be a more forceful declaration of the Gospel than what we say (2 Cor. 3:2–3). We are willing to deny ourselves for the sake of being an effective witness in the place where God has put us. Every believer's sphere of influence is different; therefore, every believer's self-imposed restrictions will be different. All of us have to decide for ourselves where we will draw lines in our lives—what we will do and not do for the sake of manifesting Christ to our world.

5. The Law of Supreme Sacrifice

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”
(2 Cor. 8:9)

This is a law that only heroes live by. The law of supreme sacrifice best illustrates the passion of the love of Jesus Christ. He who is the center of the universe considered others as more important than Himself and humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:3–8) so that we might have life. He is the personification of self-sacrifice and self-denial. To live under the law of supreme sacrifice means that we are willing to become selfless, to admit that we are not the center of the universe, to consider the plan of God as more important than ourselves, and to consider the weak believer and the unbeliever as more important than ourselves. Those who give up everything to enter into this love of Christ find that all they sacrifice is no sacrifice at all compared to the joy of the fellowship of His sufferings (see also Phil. 3:10).



Lesson 4–2:

Perception—Discernment

Romans 12:32
Hebrews 5:23–24
Philippians 1:9–11

Most of the pain in our lives is self-induced. Every day we by-pass wonderful things that God wants to give us for our pleasure and for our good. Every day, we take hold of horrible things that Satan wants to give us to cause us pain, and for our destruction. The main reason we make stupid decisions, to spurn what God offers and to grab what Satan offers, is that we lack discernment.

The enemy is a master of illusion; he knows how to make evil things look beautiful. We fall for his enticements because we have not cultivated the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Without discernment—the ability to make wise distinctions and decisions—our spiritual defeat is inevitable.

“Do not be overcome by evil ...” (Rom. 12:21)

“Do not be overcome” is a present, passive, imperative of the verb *nikao* with the negative *me*. In Greek, when a negative is used with a present imperative, it is a command to stop doing something that you are doing. These believers in Rome were being conquered by evil.

The preposition *hupo*, translated here “by,” means “under the control of.” There are several words for “evil,” but the word used here, *kakos*, refers to something rotten to the core, harmful, malignant, but something which may look very, very good. The Romans were being deceived by appearances. They were thinking of some evil things as good. But Paul orders them, by the authority

Evil

1. Believers are expected to recognize evil and know how to deal with it (Rom. 12:21; Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Thess. 5:15).
2. Evil is the policy of Satan; it originated with him (Isa. 14:12–15; Ezek. 28:11–16). While sins are generated from man's sin nature (James 1:14–15), evil is always from Satan (John 8:44; 1 John 3:12).
3. It is the policy of Satan as god of this world to capture, bind, and enslave the souls of men (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26).
4. Satan's primary strategy is deception. He is a liar who can disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He distorts the truth and promotes the idea that good can come from evil (Rom. 3:8; 6:1, 15; 13:1–4). This is what he did in the Garden when he deceived Eve into thinking that life could be made better by doing something that God prohibited. The fruit looked good to her; the promised result of eating it seemed good. Satan makes evil look just as beautiful and seem just as noble today.
5. Satan uses human religion as a cloak for evil. He has his own churches, his own communion table, his own pastors (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Cor. 10:14–21). They all look so good, and yet are so evil because they are distorting truth and substituting human good for the righteousness of God (Isa. 64:6; 2 Cor. 11:4, 13–15; Gal. 3:1–7; Col. 2:21–23).
6. It is impossible to discern good from evil apart from the Word of God (Rom. 16:19; Heb 5:14).
7. Sin was judged at the cross (2 Cor. 5:14–21; Heb. 10:10, 12, 14, 17); evil is yet to be judged. The human good of believers will be judged at the Bema Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–11). Judgment of unbelievers and of Satan and his angels will be executed after the Second Advent of Christ at the Great White Throne (Jude 14–15; 1 Thess. 5:2–3; 2 Thess. 1:6–10; Rev. 14:17–20; 19:11–21; 20:11–15).

of the Lord Jesus Christ, to stop being conquered by this rotten cancer.

The prophet, Isaiah, issued an even harsher injunction to the people of his day: *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those*

who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight!" (Isa. 5:20–21).

Perhaps the greatest test in our lives as believers is the test of evil, yet most believers do not even know what evil is. Evil is the policy of Satan. As such, it is anything that opposes God's creative intent. The essence of evil is independence of God. Anything that man does on his own is evil, because man was never intended to function independently of God.

Christianity is weak today because most Christians think that evil is simply sin, and because they think that, they are waging a war that has already been won and totally ignoring the war that is still in progress. Sin is only one manifestation of evil. The war against sin was won at the cross, where judgment for every sin that had ever been or would ever be committed was poured out on Jesus Christ. No one will ever be judged for their sins!

But evil has other manifestations, the most often ignored of which is human good. The human good produced by believers is the wood, hay, and stubble that will be burned up at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10). The human good produced by unbelievers is the deeds judged at the Great White Throne. Apart from faith in Christ, none will measure up to the righteousness of God and, therefore, their deeds will condemn them (Jude 14–15; Rev. 20:11–15).

"... but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12:21)

Paul had a solution for the evil in these defeated believers' lives. Instead of being conquered, Paul says, "*overcome*." He uses *alla*, the strongest conjunction of contrast in the Greek language, with the present, active, imperative of *nikao*. He is saying, "In total and complete contrast to your being conquered, you should choose to stand up and keep on conquering evil."

How are they going to do that? There is only one way evil can ever be conquered—with good. The phrase translated "*with good*" is *en to agatho*, "in the good" or "in the sphere of good." *Agathos* is one of two Greek words for "*good*." It means "absolute good, intrinsic good." Paul is talking about divine good—that which can be produced only by God.

Divine good is produced through believers by the working of the Spirit of God together with the Word of God. The Spirit works through us only when He is in control, when we have no

unconfessed sins in our lives, and so are filled by means of the Spirit. But if we do not have truth stored in our souls, we have made the Holy Spirit a workman without tools. The work He wants to do in and through us He will do only with the Word. That is why we feed on the Word every day. The more we store in our souls, the more the Holy Spirit has to work with and the more He will accomplish through our lives.

Active discernment is a product of this balance of the Word and the Spirit in our souls. Wisdom, which comes only from the Word, is insight into the true nature of things and the ability to know what action to take. But knowing what to do is never enough—we need courage, and the kind of courage we need comes only from the Holy Spirit—the *Paraklete*, the Encourager.

“For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (Heb. 5:13–14)

The word “*partakes*” here is the present, active, participle of *metecho*. It refers to someone who is constantly feeding only on the “*milk*” of the Word—the basic doctrines. The author calls that person “unskilled.” *Apeiros* is a Greek word that was used for an unskilled workman, someone lacking in experience, someone who was unable to make practical application of a certain tool or a certain amount of information.

He who partakes of milk is unskilled; he lacks experience in the Word of righteousness. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 2:15 to study to show ourselves “*approved [un]to God.*” The only way we can be “*approved*” is through our study and application of the Word, but if we are lacking, unskilled, or unable to apply the Word, then we are what the author here calls “infants” (babes), *nepios*.

Nepios does not refer to physical infants. Homer used the word to describe grown men who were childish and infantile in their thinking—heroes who came home from battle and then could not handle life. The *nepios* in Homer’s writings were military heroes who had the inspirational courage to stand firm on the field of battle, but who lacked the moral courage to stand in the day-to-day grind of normal life. The author is saying here that the believer who has had time to get to spiritual maturity, yet who is still feeding on

The Value of Wisdom

*“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom,
And the man who gains understanding.
For her profit is better than the profit of silver,
And her gain than fine gold.
She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.
Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are pleasant ways,
And all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.”* (Prov. 3:13–18)

*“Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!
Do not forget nor turn away from the word of my mouth.
Do not forsake her, and she will guard you,
Love her, and she will watch over you.
The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom,
And with all your acquiring, get understanding.”* (Prov. 4:5–7)

*“For wisdom is better than jewels;
And all desirable things cannot compare with her.”* (Prov. 8:11)

*“How much better it is to get wisdom than gold!
And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.”*
(Prov. 16:16)

*“Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner
destroys much good.”* (Eccl. 9:18)

*“If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he
must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving
success.”* (Eccl. 10:10)

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do His
commandments ...”* (Psalm 111:10)

milk, is childish, infantile, lacking in the perseverance that is the hallmark of moral courage.

In contrast to the *nepios* are the *teleios*, the people who have arrived at the goal or objective, in this case spiritual maturity. The solid food of the Word—the advanced doctrine—is for the mature believer. These people have discernment, but not by accident—they have sweat it out in the gymnasium of the soul.

Divine Wisdom

1. Divine wisdom abides forever (1 Pet. 1:25); earthly wisdom is passing away (1 Cor. 2:6).
2. The world rejects divine wisdom by rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ—the personification of wisdom (John 1:14, 17; 1 Cor. 2:8; Col. 2:2–3).
3. Divine wisdom could never have been found by man; it had to be revealed by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:7, 10–11; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).
4. Divine wisdom cannot be perceived through human senses (1 Cor. 2:9) but only through divine revelation and spiritual perception (Eph. 3:18–19; 2 Tim. 3:16).
5. Since divine wisdom is a gift of God (James 1:5; 3:17–18), it can be received only by faith (1 Cor. 2:12; Rom. 10:17).
6. The faith that can appropriate divine wisdom must come through instruction (Rom. 10:14–17; 1 Cor. 2:13; Eph. 4:11–16).
7. It is impossible to be spiritual and at the same time be negative to spiritual truth or Bible study (Heb. 5:11).
8. Divine wisdom is a characteristic of spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 1:27–30; Heb. 5:11–6:2).

“*Practice*” is the Greek *hexis*, which means “a habit resulting from consistent, perpetual discipline.” Discipline produces habits. Good habits are just as easy to establish as bad habits. They come the same way; they come through repetition of decisions. Bad decisions, repeated over and over, lead to bad practice. Bad practice leads to bad habits. Bad habits lead to bad character.

But the mature have practiced making good decisions; they have established a pattern of personal self-discipline. They have their senses—their perceptive faculties—“*trained*.” This is the Greek word *gumnazo*, from which we get “gymnasium.” Mature Christians have good habits because they live their lives in the “gym.” Every day they work with the Word; every day they function in the energy of the Spirit. Every day they strive for higher achievement in the spiritual realm. And because they work out in the Word, they have their senses trained every single day—they have learned discernment.

“Discern” is *diakrino*. *Krino* means “to judge,” *dia* means “between.” They have the ability to judge between good and evil.

“*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment ...*” (Phil. 1:9)

Paul’s prayer for the Philippian believers begins with *hina*, “that,” which introduces a purpose clause. His prayer has a purpose, “*that your love may abound.*” The love here is *agape*, the unconditional love that can be produced by no one but God. Every reference to *agape* in the Scriptures is a reference to the power, the dynamic, of the Spirit of God.

Agape is not human love. Human love cannot begin to match the love produced by the Spirit of God (Rom. 5:5; 1 Corinthians 13; Gal. 5:22). *Agape* is the foundation of the Christian’s orientation to reality. If we want to orient to the way that God sees things in this world, we have to start with love. There are two paths we can take in life: the path of love, light, and truth or the path of hate, darkness, and deception.

Agape in Scripture always has a two-fold connotation for man. In Matthew 22:37–39, we are given two commandments: to love God and to love others as ourselves. Our love for God is personal love, love based on the virtue of the one loved. God is worthy of our love. Love for others is unconditional love, based on the virtue of the one loving. The highest expression of the love of God operating in our lives is when we love those who are absolutely unlovable. But it is impossible to love others if we do not love God and if we have not learned to love and accept ourselves based on God’s love for us.

This love, Paul tells the Philippians, is to abound, to overflow. The “*real knowledge*” he wants them to have is *epignosis*, “experiential knowledge.” “*Discernment*” is from *aisthesis*, a word that means “insight, perception, skillful application.” It was originally used of common sense and the ability to make distinctions. Paul’s prayer is that their love will overflow in two areas: practical application of the Word to life and the ability to make common-sense distinctions in life. This is the beginning of discernment.

“so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” (Phil. 1:10–11)

When the ability to make common-sense distinctions leads to making common-sense decisions, we have “approved,” *dokimazo*, “to prove by putting to the test.” We have put something to the test with a view toward approval. We need to develop, through experiential knowledge and discernment, the ability to put things to the test. Discernment is proof by testing.

“Things that are excellent” refers to things that are of value, worthwhile, as opposed to things that are worthless. We put things to the test, we identify the things that are excellent in order to be *“sincere and blameless.”* *“Sincere”* is from *eilikrines* and means “to be judged by the sun, to be open to the light, to be unmingled with darkness.” *Aproskopos*, *“blameless,”* means “without stumbling.” When we approve the things that are proper, excellent, and fitting in God’s plan, we can stand in the light because we have nothing to hide and we can walk in the light without stumbling. Paul wants these believers to be open to the light and without stumbling until *“the day of Christ,”* a technical New Testament term for the Rapture of the Church.

“The fruit of righteousness” in verse 11 is a reference back to the love of God. *“Having been filled”* comes from the Greek verb *pleroo*, a word with four shades of meaning: “to fill a deficiency, to fill with quality, to fully influence, and to fully possess.”

We all have deficiencies in our lives. But they are filled when we allow the Word of God, in the function of the love of the Holy Spirit, to become practical and experiential, to work in our lives. Only then do we begin to orient to God’s reality instead of our subjective emotions. We begin to understand where we stand with God, that we are forever *“accepted in the beloved”* (Eph. 1:6, NKJV).

Once we really understand what that means, we are able to take the rejection of other people and do what no one is able to do apart from the Spirit of God—to love unconditionally—to love others not because of anything attractive in them, but because God loves us and pours that love through us. Unconditional love is a wonderful thing to be able to give. When we can love unconditionally, we have been filled with the fruit of righteousness.

That love gives us the ability to have discernment and to make good decisions. It gives us the ability to adjust to whatever conditions we face in life. Because we are filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes through Jesus Christ, God receives the glory and the praise.



Lesson 4–3:

Testing—*Temptation*

1 Corinthians 10:13

James 1:2–4

1 Peter 1:6–7

The Lord repeatedly reminded His disciples that temptation is a very real and a very great danger. He did not see temptation as a minor interruption or—as we sometimes do—as something enjoyable. He saw it as a threat to spiritual well-being. He warned in Luke 8:13 of the tremendous danger of temptation and challenged his disciples to be constantly alert to the things by which they were tempted.

Because of the great danger, Jesus saw temptation as a cause for disciplined prayer. His position was that the first step in facing and overcoming temptation is to anticipate temptation by constant prayer. In praying for deliverance from temptation, we are acknowledging that in our flesh we are powerless to resist, but that God is able and willing to deliver us (Matt. 6:13; 26:41; 2 Pet. 2:9).

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” (1 Cor. 10:13)

The Greek here literally says that all our temptations are “of the human kind.” Any temptation we have is a human type of temptation. There are temptations that are beyond the human kind, but we are not going to be faced with them. The Lord Jesus Christ not only faced every human kind of temptation, but He also faced the superhuman kind (Heb. 4:15; Matt. 4:1–11).

However difficult our particular temptations may seem, they are no more difficult than anyone else's. We all have a tendency to think that no one has ever been tempted as greatly as we have or that no one has ever sinned as terribly as we have. But that is simply not true. All our temptations are typical, human temptations.

In any case, no matter how difficult our temptations, God is faithful. This faithful God, who is perfect, designed a perfect plan for imperfect people. In eternity past, He anticipated every problem that would ever be and designed the solutions before the problems existed. And, He set a limit on every temptation that we would ever face.

At this point, the sovereignty of God enters the equation. While we are here on this Earth, we are tempted from many directions—from the world, the flesh, the devil. But God, who is sovereign, still controls human history. He is able to keep all our temptation within the limit He set in eternity past. And that limit is given here: He will never allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able.

Our temptations will be limited to things that we can handle. As we grow and gain strength, the temptations will become stronger and more intense. But they will never be beyond our level of growth or our ability to discern.

“Able” is *dunamai*, the Greek word for inherent power. Every believer has the inherent power necessary to overcome the temptations he faces. “Temptation” is *peirasmos*, a word that

Three Sources of Temptation

Source:	The World
Tactic:	Do not conform to it (Rom. 12:2); CONQUER its thinking (Rom. 12:21; 1 John 3:7–8).
Source:	The Flesh
Tactic:	Consider yourself dead to it (Rom. 6:11; Col. 3:5); FLEE its enticement (James 1:14–15).
Source:	The Devil
Tactic:	Give him no place to work (Eph. 4:27); RESIST him (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:6–9).

indicates solicitation to evil—something that can never come from God. He will test faith, but He will never solicit to evil.

In our temptations, He will provide a way of escape—never away from, but always through, the problem. He provides the way of escape so that we will be able to endure, from *hupophero*, which means “to bear by being under, bear up; to bear patiently.” Endurance is the key in temptation and trial.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2–4)

Why does God allow us to be tempted at all? James tells us. The word that dominates these three verses is the word “*consider*.” The Greek *hegeomai* has a number of meanings including “to consider; to lead the way; to go before.” Originally a mathematical term, it means to add up the facts, and to weigh and compare the information at hand.

James says that when we find ourselves in testing situations, we need to take into consideration all the facts about that testing and then let joy lead the way through that temptation. What are the facts we need to weigh? That God is faithful to limit testing to our spiritual and physical abilities. That while not all things are good, God works everything together for good for those who love Him. That temptation is a trial of our faith, allowed with a view toward reward. That in times of adversity and opposition, we have the opportunity to advance more rapidly in the faith. If under testing we will stop and add up the facts that we know about who God is and why this is happening to us, then joy will lead the way through.

Jesus had to add up the facts as He faced the cross. Hebrews 12:1–3 says He considered the purpose of the cross and the results of the cross and, when He did, He was able to endure the humiliation and the pain and even the judgment of the Father for the joy that He saw before Him.

We have the opportunity to add up the facts in a variety of trials. “*Various*” is *poikilos*, a word that means “multicolored.” Satan offers temptations in colors that we like. He studies and analyzes us and brings just the things that are beautiful to our particular area of weakness in the sin nature.

When we face these different temptations in their lovely hues, we have to keep something in mind: there is a reason for it all. God is limiting this temptation, and it does have a divine purpose. The secret of letting joy lead the way is knowing what is happening. “*Knowing*” is the perfect form of *oida*, and it means that we have complete information on which to act. *Oida* is used for mature, complete understanding. We know that the testing of our faith produces endurance.

“Produce” is *katergazomai*. *Ergazomai* means “to work,” *kata* means “according to a norm and standard.” The testing of our faith is working, according to a norm and standard, to produce endurance in us. The word translated “*endurance*” here is not the same word used in 1 Corinthians 10:13. In that passage, the word is *hupophero*, “to bear patiently.” Here the word is *hupomeno*, “to abide under, to persevere.” It carries the idea of refusing to flee or recede, of enduring bravely and calmly. *Hupomeno* is persistence, tenacity, the ability to endure, to last. The only thing that will produce this in us is the testing of our faith.

When James talks in the first part of the verse about “*various trials*,” the word he uses for “*trials*” is from *peirasmos*, which is almost always translated “*temptation*” (as in 1 Corinthians 10:13). The word he uses for “*testing*,” *dokimazo*, means “to put to the test for the purpose of approval.” Both words refer to the same situation. When we are in a tempting situation, the temptation is coming from the source of our old sin nature, backed by Satan and

The Faith-Rest Technique

“Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest ...” (Heb. 4:1–3)

The Exodus generation was not able to enter the Promised Land because of unbelief (Heb. 3:19). Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey where the children of Israel were to face and conquer many enemies. God had proven Himself to the people in the Passover and in the Exodus; they had been required to do nothing but stand still and see His salvation.

the cosmic system. But the test is coming from the Lord. The temptation is to sin, but the test is to exercise faith.

Because it is the testing of our faith that produces endurance, God permits us to be tempted. So we should “*let endurance have its perfect result.*” The “*perfect*” result is from *teleios*, which means “brought to its end, finished; full-grown, adult.” James is not talking about sinless perfection; he is talking about spiritual maturity.

This is how it works: As believers, we start moving forward in the Christian way of life, functioning in the realm of faith. Faith will run into testing. When we pass a test, we take a step upward to stronger faith. That faith will meet with a stronger form of testing. When we pass the next test, we come to a stronger form of faith. And that form is going to have a stronger and more subtle form of testing, and on and on. That is the rest of the Christian way of life. It is the testing of faith.

How does God test the faith? With our knowledge of doctrine, of His Word. The test proves not what we have written down in our notebooks, nor how great is our intellect or our academic prowess. The test proves what we really know and understand and believe of the Word of God.

God is a good teacher. He gives us exactly the information we need. He lets us know that we are accountable for that information, and then He tests us on that information. He gives us the information in the Word, and that is why Bible class is so important, because the

The Faith-Rest Technique ... cont.

He intended for them to take these lessons to heart and to conquer Canaan by resting on His power, but—except for Joshua and Caleb—they all failed because they did not believe His word to them. They did not rest in the promise by faith; they did not have “faith-rest.”

Hebrews 4:3–8 tells us that this life of rest is still available. The promised land in Scripture is not a picture of Heaven, but of spiritual maturity. The rest that God wants His people to enter is a rest of maximum production and blessing. We cannot enter that rest until we learn to have faith in the promises of God. But because faith is a learned response, we need a technique for learning it. The faith-rest technique is simply the process of claiming biblical promises. As we do this day after day, we are pumping spiritual iron and our faith is growing stronger.

class we skip may be the one where God is giving the information we are going to need for a big test that week.

It is not unfair for God to allow the test to come to us on information that was covered in the class we skipped. If we did not show up, we did not get the information, but that is not God's fault. It is just like cutting class in school. We cannot blame the teacher when we fail a test because we cut class. The teacher can say with all honesty, "I gave the information, and you chose not to be there, or you were there but you were thinking about other things while the class was being taught." God can say the same thing. God makes teaching available; we will be tested. Whether we pass or fail is based on our ability to use the information that was available to us.

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:6–7)

Peter, like James, reminds us that we will face multicolored tests and trials in life. The purpose for the tests is, as in James 1, related to the *dokimazo*—the testing or proof of our faith. God wants us to know how strong our faith is, so He is going to allow us to be tested

The Faith-Rest Technique ... cont.

So, for example, tomorrow morning we might start the day by saying something like this: "God has promised to supply my needs (Phil. 4:19) and I know He is able to do so (2 Cor. 9:8). After all, if He gave His own Son for me, He will not withhold from me other things (Rom. 8:32). Therefore, I should not be anxious, but instead, I should allow His peace to guard my thinking (Phil. 4:6–7) and cast my cares on Him (1 Pet. 5:7), as I wait on the Lord (Isa. 40:31), for He is faithful (1 Cor. 1:9), and I know that if I seek first His kingdom and righteousness, all other things will be provided (Matt. 6:33)."

Promises for fellowship and spirituality: John 15:7–8; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6; Col. 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:15, 21–22; 3:16–17; Heb. 10:23–25

to the limit so we can find out how we will respond.

In the ancient world, a goldsmith would put gold in a vat. Underneath was a fire, and as the heat from the fire melted the gold, it became molten metal. With the heat, the impurities would come to the top. The goldsmith would skim off and throw away all the alloy and the impurities, and he would turn up the heat.

When we start out in the Christian life, we are given baby heat. Impurities rise to the top, and they are skimmed off and thrown to the side. As we advance, our faith increases, and the heat is turned up. The hotter it gets, the more impurities will rise to the top.

What does this process do? It keeps us from thinking that we have “arrived,” that we are as good as we can possibly be. God makes sure that things get hotter and hotter in our lives, because if they did not, then our impurities, our flaws, would not rise to the top to be cast off. And we might start thinking we are perfect believers. God does not want anyone thinking he has attained perfection. Paul makes that clear in Philippians 3:12–14.

When things get so hot in our lives that we snap under the pressure and ugly comes out of us, this is exactly what is supposed to happen. We should be encouraged—the whole purpose of the pressure is to show us our flaws so we can deal with them.

The Faith-Rest Technique ... cont.

Promises for trial: Exod. 14:13–14; 1 Sam. 17:47; Psalm 4:8; 56:3; Isa. 41:10; Rom. 8:28, 31; 1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:2–3, 12; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:7

Promises for needs: Matt. 6:33; Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 9:8; Phil. 4:6–7, 19; 1 Tim. 6:6–8

Promises when discouraged: Isa. 40:31; Phil. 1:6; 3:13–14; 4:6–7, 13; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 4:15–16; 13:5

Prayer promises: Matt. 21:22; John 15:7; 1 Thess. 5:18; James 1:5–6; 1 John 3:22; 5:14–15

Promises regarding unbelievers: Rom. 1:16–17; 1 Tim. 2:3–4; 1 Pet. 3:1–2; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2

Promises for the future: John 10:28–29; 14:1–3; Eph. 3:20–21; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 5:9–10; 1 Pet. 1:3–5; 1 John 3:1–2; Rev. 20:6; 21:3–4

When the goldsmith could look down into the molten metal and see his face reflected, he knew that he had the pure gold he was working to produce. In God's plan, the goal is that we be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. What will it take to work that in our lives? Heat! A lot of fire! We will have to pass a lot of tests and get rid of a lot of flaws and impurities. They all have to come to the surface and be dealt with one at a time. The Lord's desire—His purpose in the tests—is to one day be able to look down into our lives and see the reflection of His own face. With every test that we pass, the reflection grows clearer.

Daily Disciplines

1. **Begin each day filled with the Holy Spirit** (Eph. 5:18, the command; 1 John 1:9, the method; 1 Cor. 11:28–31, the promise) and keep current through the day in confession sins—mental sins, verbal sins, overt sins.
2. **Meet the day with study and prayer** (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 3:18, the command to study; Prov. 8:33–35, the promise; 1 Thess. 5:17; Phil. 4:6, the command to pray; James 5:16; 1 John 5:14–15, the promise).
3. **Be alert to apply the faith-rest technique daily** (Prov. 3:5–6, the command; Psalm 37:4–7, the promise).
4. **Be alert to open doors of service** (1 Pet. 3:15; Col. 4:17).
5. **Make family the base of operations in applying doctrines** (Col. 3:17–21).



Lesson 4–4: **Proving—*Faith-Rest***

Hebrews 4:1–3
Philippians 4:6–7
Daniel 6:16–23

We live in a world designed to rob us of inner peace, to drive us crazy with frustration, turmoil, and fear. What we need is the ability to rest. It just so happens that what we need is exactly what God wants us to have. And so, He holds out to each of us the possibility of finding true rest—that inner peace and tranquility, through which alone we will be able to become heroes in the fray.

The only “problem” with His offer is that we can take Him up on it only by faith. Every one of us will choose whether to accept or reject His rest. If we accept it, we will be equipped to move on to spiritual greatness. If we reject it, we will waste our lives in bitterness in the wilderness.

“Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.” (Heb. 4:1)

The author of Hebrews is writing to warn the Jewish believers in Jerusalem that God’s judgment is coming on the nation. He wants these people, who have turned away from the reality of fellowship with Jesus Christ to dead ritual, to have a healthy fear of one thing: failing to enter the faith-rest life. To teach this lesson, he points—beginning in Hebrews 3—to Moses and the Exodus generation.

One year after their exodus from Egypt, the Jews reached Kadesh-Barnea, near the border of Canaan—the Promised Land.

God had given His Word that in that land He would give them rest. He told Moses to send 12 men to spy out the land (Numbers 13). When the twelve came back, they brought a report of a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, yet a land with fortified cities and strong inhabitants. Two of the men—Joshua and Caleb—were all for going in and taking the land. They knew, because God had promised, that they could conquer it. But the other ten convinced the people that they were not able, that the enemies were too strong, that the land would devour them. Joshua and Caleb had faith-rest. The others did not.

So God took the Exodus generation on a circuit through the wilderness for 39 more years, and every test that came their way was a test of their ability to rest in faith. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul describes what took place during those years. Every time God tested them, they failed. He pulled them miraculously out of one difficulty after another, testing them over and over again, looking for a spark of faith. He never found one. And so, every adult in that generation—with the exception of Joshua and Caleb—died in the wilderness.

The land of Canaan is not a picture of Heaven; it is a picture of the faith-rest life. In the Promised Land, there were giants; there were enemies to fight. But the Jews were not expected to go in alone. With them was the God who had proved He is able to deliver them. The younger generation went in and did what their parents could have done. They claimed the land by faith, by constantly obeying in faith-rest.

When the author of Hebrews says, “*Let us fear,*” he is urging his generation to learn the lesson from the Exodus generation. He is saying, “They failed; you can too. Their children succeeded; you can too. And this is one place where you ought to be terrified of failure.”

None of us knows how many years of life on Earth God has allotted to us. Whatever our individual allotment, it is just enough for us to fulfill the destiny God has set before us. There is no time to waste. As believers, we ought to be afraid of living out our lives in a wilderness experience: test ... failure; test ... failure; test ... failure. We should not fear death; we should not fear our enemies; we should not even fear sin. But we ought to fear failing to take God at His Word, failing to enter the Promised Land!

God has the same kind of experience waiting for us—the same promise of blessing, victory, and joy that he had for the people in

Strange Tests

Sometimes, God's commands make no apparent sense at all; when that is the case, it is because He does not want them to make sense to us. God does not do anything without a reason, and He can always be trusted absolutely to be devising good. Sometimes, He just wants us to show that we understand that, so He gives us strange tests:

"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 seek Him." (Heb. 11:6)

1. To Abraham, the test was God's command to sacrifice his "only son," the son through whom God had promised to make of him a great nation (Gen. 22:1–2).
2. To the widow of Zarephath, who told Elijah she was about to cook her very last handful of flour and her last drops of oil and then lay down and die, the command was to **first** prepare bread for the prophet (1 Kings 17:13).
3. To the widow whose creditors were about to take her children, the command was to borrow jars from her neighbors (2 Kings 4:3).
4. To Naaman the leper, the command was to wash seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:10).
5. To the blind man, who had no doubt heard that Jesus could heal with a touch, the command was to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7, 11).
6. To Peter, who was being hassled about whether his Teacher paid the temple tax, the command was to go fishing (Matt. 17:27).

What would have happened if these commands had been disobeyed? Nothing would have happened. If there had been no obedience, there would have been no miracles. If we really believe the Word of God, we are going to have to do something about it, no matter how contrary to reason its commands may seem.

the Exodus generation. The author does not want these people to "come short," from *hustereo*. The word means "to fall down on the track and fail to finish."

God planned for every believer to progress from salvation, pictured in the Passover and the Exodus, through testing and

spiritual growth, pictured in the trek through the wilderness, to maturity, pictured in the Canaan experience. And what is waiting in the land of spiritual maturity? Great blessings and giants.

What the Exodus generation had faced in the wilderness looked small compared to what they saw ahead in the Promised Land. So they let their fears stop them at the border. But their children did not. They said, “We can take it.” And so at Jericho they faced their first big test. All God wanted to find out was how well they could take orders. He told them He did not want them to do a thing except march around this fortified city once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day. Do those instructions sound at all strange?

If we want to enter the faith-rest life, we should study those instructions, because someday we will be given orders just as strange. When, in our spiritual growth, we come to the point of cracking the maturity barrier and entering the promised land, we will face a “fortified city,” and it will probably be one inside us. God will likely give us instructions that sound totally illogical. It is His way of asking, “Do you trust Me? How well can you do nothing? How well can you rest?” Jericho was a test of the Jews’ ability to rest. Every one of us will face a Jericho somewhere in our lives.

“For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest ...” (Heb. 4:2–3a)

God made provision for the Exodus generation, but they failed because they did not believe. They had one of the greatest Bible teachers in all of history and yet all they could do was criticize. They knew all of Moses’ faults. They could always find things that Moses did that he should not do and things he did not do that he should have done. But their problem was not the communicator. Their problem was that they never mingled the message with faith. Moses constantly challenged them to believe God and His promises, but they would not.

Now the first-century author of Hebrews is saying, “We have had the same message preached to us. Are we going to believe or to doubt? If we believe, we will enter the promised land. If we fail,

we will live in the wilderness.”

Until we learn the principle of doing nothing in our faith, of standing still and simply believing that the battle is the Lord’s, we will not see victory. God does not deliver through strength or power or speed—He delivers through His Spirit.

This is not to say we will not be afraid of the giants. In fact, it is our fears that should constantly drive us to fellowship, to occupation with the Person of Jesus Christ. As we keep on believing, we enter a new realm of life, the realm of faith. The consistency of passing tests in fellowship will bring us to the place of rest.

This place of rest is not in the world; it is not outside us. The refuge God designed for us—the place where we can be refreshed and strengthened for the battles of life—is in our souls, and its door only opens to faith.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6–7)

“Be anxious for nothing” is the verb *merimnao*, a present, active, imperative, with the negative *medeis*, “nothing.” *Merimnao* means “to be anxious, troubled, fretful; to worry.” The phrase literally means, “Stop worrying!” By using this particular construction, Paul is urging the Philippians to stop doing something they are habitually doing: “Stop being anxious!”

“In everything” is simply the positive of “nothing.” The “nothing” says, “Don’t worry.” The “everything” says, “Give thanks.” They are two sides of the same coin.

Paul uses four different words for prayer to explain the alternative to anxiety. “Prayer” is *proseuchomai*, meaning “to approach face-to-face.” This is a word used only of prayer to God. By praying to Him, we admit that He is able to take care of our needs.

“Supplication,” deesis, means “to ask for something, to make a petition.” *Deesis* is used for prayer that recognizes great personal need. The giants in the promised land are there to make us realize that we cannot do anything on our own. We need God.

“Thanksgiving” is *eucharistia*. The root of this word is *charis*, “grace.” When we give thanks, we acknowledge that everything comes to us from the grace of God. “Request” is from *aiteo*, a word used for petitions made to someone who is superior to the petitioner.

When we find ourselves tempted to be anxious, if we will simply go face-to-face to God, communicate our needs and desires, and give Him thanks for the situation and for the solutions He has already provided, then we will have peace.

This is not just any peace, but the peace of God. The definite article indicates that this is specifically God’s peace—the peace that He has all the time. God is never ruffled, never upset, never anxious. The perfect peace of God reflects His control over all circumstances. This peace is above and beyond all comprehension, above all human reason, and beyond all human ability to grasp.

This is not a peace man can produce. It is the peace that only God has, but that we can share. *Eirene* is peace that results from reconciliation (Rom. 5:1). It is the birthright of every believer. Jesus warned that in the world we will have tribulation (John 16:33). But with the warning, He gave a promise of His peace—the only power that can see us through the tribulation (John 14:27; 16:33).

The peace Jesus Christ gives will guard our hearts and minds. The word “guard” is *phoureo*. It refers to a garrison, to the posting of warriors on guard. When the guard has been mounted, the city is safe. When the peace of God becomes the garrison of our souls, we have an absolutely secure place to rest and find refreshment, even in the heat of battle.

“Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions’ den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, ‘Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.’

“And a stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

“Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

Faith-Rest

1. True rest in soul and spirit is found only in the presence of God (Exod. 33:14; Psalm 116:7).
2. Rest cannot be found in escaping from our problems. Even David would have liked to have flown away (Psalm 55:6), but there comes a time when we must face our problems and stand on our own—a time when we cannot lean on anyone else but God.
3. Outside of faith, there will always be chaos. Spiritual rest is unattainable to those who will not believe (Isa. 28:12; 30:15; 57:20–21; Matt. 11:28–29).
4. God has provided in His Word a solution for every problem we will ever face. We enter His rest when we believe His Word (Heb. 4:1, 3).
5. Jesus invites the world to find rest in Him—the rest of salvation (Matt. 11:28) and the rest of spiritual growth (Matt. 11:29).
6. The rest God gives is eternal in nature (Rev. 14:12–13).
7. For all who reject Jesus Christ, there is eternal unrest (Rev. 14:11).

“Then the king arose with the dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions’ den.

When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?’

“Then Daniel spoke to the king, ‘O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.’

“Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.” (Dan. 6:16–23)

In this wonderful illustration of faith-rest at work, we see a king pacing in a palace and Daniel resting in a pit. King Darius, who had been tricked into signing an injunction that would condemn this

faithful commissioner to death, was deeply distressed at the prospect of feeding Daniel to the lions. But there was nothing he could do—except entrust Daniel to God.

Darius, surrounded by luxury and abundance, spent a miserable, sleepless night. Because he did not know how to rest, the king had to rush out in the morning to see if what he feared would happen had happened. The believer, by the way, who is waiting on God never has to hurry. God is never in a hurry and neither are those who rest in Him.

When the king heard from Daniel's lips that God had been able to deliver him, he was delighted. This is the life of those who live in the wilderness—up and down, up and down—their emotions always swinging wildly back and forth. They are very happy, and then suddenly they are very miserable, and then just as suddenly, they are very happy again.

But Daniel knew how to trust his God. He did not need anything changed. He was not living under his circumstances, and so no matter how hungry the lions looked, Daniel was able to relax. He got a good night's rest. Nothing puts the enemy to shame like faith-rest in the believer!

Eight Sabbaths

The word "sabbath" is from the Hebrew *shabath*, which means "to repose, to desist from exertion." Eight sabbaths are described in the Bible. All are designed to be times for men to cease from toil and to celebrate God's abundant provisions.

1. The Sabbath of God (Gen. 2:1–3; Heb. 4:4)

The sabbath of God sets the tone for all other sabbaths. God is omnipotent; He never gets tired. Yet on the seventh day, He rested. God did not need rest—He was declaring that His work was accomplished. He wanted His people to know that everything they would ever need had already been provided.

2. The Weekly Sabbath (Exod. 20:8–11; Deut. 5:12–15)

The weekly sabbath was a reminder to the Jews that everything they had, they had by the grace of God. Every Saturday, they would remember that they could not work for or earn God's grace, that everything they had and everything they would ever need had already been provided.

Eight Sabbaths ... cont.**3. The Sabbatical Year** (Exod. 23:10–11; Lev. 25:3–4, 18–22)

The weekly sabbath was a test for the Jews, to teach them faith-rest. The sabbatical year was just a bigger test of their ability to enjoy fellowship with God and rest in His perfect provision. For the believers who were spiritually mature, every sabbatical was a great year, because all their needs were supplied, and they had a whole year to play. But for a lot of people, the sabbatical was a miserable time of poverty. They struggled, they scraped, they agonized through the sabbatical year. Why? Because they were not advanced in their faith. God gave them six years of weekly sabbaths to learn that He could be trusted to provide for them in the seventh year. For those who had not taken advantage of grace and learned to rest week-by-week, that seventh year was a bitter time.

4. The Canaan Rest (Heb. 3:7–19)

The Canaan rest was life in the Promised Land. The land of Canaan was not trouble-free. There were giants that had to be defeated, wars that had to be fought. But every test had to be won the same way—through the faith-rest life. The Promised Land is a picture of spiritual maturity and entrance into the full enjoyment of divine blessing. This is a life of enjoyment in the plan of God. This is learning to love the battle. Those who went into the land of Canaan had to fight, but they loved the battle. And even in the Promised Land, when they tried to conquer in their own energy, they got whipped, like they did at Ai (Joshua 7).

5. The Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25, 27)

God kept laying sabbath, after sabbath on these people. The year of Jubilee was the year when all debts were forgiven, all slaves were set free, and all land that had been lost through indebtedness went back to its original owner. It was a time when everyone got back everything he had lost. Jubilee came every fiftieth year. But the people who were uptight would never make it to the Jubilee. They had to be relaxed, they had to live at peace with themselves, and with God and their environment.

6. The Moment-by-Moment Sabbath (Heb. 4:1–9)

This is the sabbath of the faith-rest life—the rest that God wants us to enjoy every moment of our lives. It is a sabbath when things are going badly; it is a sabbath when things are going well. It is a sabbath when we are under pressure; it is a sabbath when things are peaceful. We enter the moment-by-moment sabbath by

Eight Sabbaths ... cont.

believing what Jesus said on the cross: *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30). God has promised to *"supply all [our] needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:19). He wants us to live every moment in that peace that surpasses all human comprehension (Phil. 4:7), but we can only enter by choosing faith.

7. The Millennium (Revelation 20)

The thousand-year reign of Christ on this Earth will be humanity's greatest test. In the Millennium, there will be 1,000 years of sabbath. It will put to rest forever the human claim that environment is the issue. For a thousand years, there will be perfect environment, perfect government, and absolute, complete justice. There will be no violence, no warfare. There will be plenty for all; the Earth will be bursting with divine provision. All this time, the devil will be bound from Earth. After a thousand years, God will turn the devil loose and he will lead in revolt multitudes, who lived through this perfect sabbath. Even when Jesus Christ rules on Earth, people are not going to be happy. There will be complainers, whiners, people who despise His government, His authority, His leadership, His provision. The Millennium is going to be an unhappy time for some.

8. Eternity (Rev. 14:13)

Eternity is the final and everlasting sabbath rest for man. *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ... that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."*



Lesson 4–5: **Empowering—*The Spirit***

Zechariah 4:6

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

2 Corinthians 4:7–10

In 538 B.C., the people of Israel began to return to the Promised Land after 70 years of captivity in Babylon. As they set their focus on rebuilding the temple, re-establishing worship in Jerusalem, and fulfilling God’s plan for the nation, the Lord reminded their leader, Zerubbabel, that there is only one source of power for spiritual life.

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD of hosts.” (Zech. 4:6)

Growth in our ability to tap that power is always preceded by a deepened awareness of our own inadequacy. It is part of God’s plan to show us just how weak we are on our own, because not until we are overwhelmed by our weakness will we take hold of grace. And not until we learn to take hold of grace with every breath will we become a serious threat to the enemy.

“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with

weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:7–10)

The entire book of 2 Corinthians is a defense of the ministry. It was written by Paul to defend not just himself, but every pastor-teacher who would ever teach the Word of God. Paul was under tremendous attack by the carnal, critical, judgmental Christians in Corinth, who were letting the things they did not find attractive about the apostle distract them from the message he carried. The theme running all the way through the book is that it is always the message—and never the man who delivers the message—that is the issue, that God has devised a way to use imperfect people as vehicles for a perfect message.

So important is this that Paul states it twice in verse seven with the phrase *"to keep me from exalting myself."* God knew that when He poured the power of His Word through Paul there would be a very great danger that Paul would be tempted to magnify his importance. After all, Paul had a tendency toward self-righteousness, which he had exploited to the full as an unbelieving Pharisee.

So God allowed what was apparently a high-ranking demon to be assigned to the apostle to inflict bodily pain and damage on him. He calls it *"a thorn in the flesh,"* but identifies it as an *aggelos*,

Five Techniques

Just as God gives grace only to the undeserving, He gives strength only to the weak. Until we understand our own weakness, we will not be able to appropriate the power of God that resides in us with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That appropriation is a process that should continue for the rest of our lives, but it will not just happen. We need a way to make it happen; we need techniques. The five techniques that follow are progressive—they have to be learned in order.

1. Confession. God wants us to come boldly to the throne of grace when we sin, in full assurance that all our sins were paid for at the cross (Heb. 4:14–16). He is not honored when we come crawling and cringing into His presence, begging for something that He has promised to give. When we confess, we are immediately cleansed and can walk away confident that we are restored to fellowship, filled by the Holy Spirit, and empowered for His work

a word usually translated “angel,” of Satan. The Greek word translated “*buffet*” means “to beat to a pulp.”

Under this intense pressure, Paul asked the Lord three times to take it away, and finally the Lord explained to Paul why He would not: “*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.*” Grace is sufficient. Grace—not human ability, not human talents, not human intellect. God’s grace plus our weakness equals power in ministry!

Paul’s reaction to this news was to begin rejoicing because he had so many weaknesses. Once he oriented to the fact that grace works through weakness, he found that he always had something to celebrate. He wanted the Corinthians to understand that he agreed with their assessment that he was not perfect and it was this very fact that made him eligible for grace and a fit carrier for God’s message.

Being able to celebrate our weaknesses is a key to contentment in the Christian life. Paul wrote in Philippians 4 that he had learned the secret of being content. How do we do that? We have to learn to accept ourselves as we are—weaknesses, cracks, flaws, and all. God does. God takes us as we are. When we learn to be thankful for our weaknesses and our adversities and for the things we are

Five Techniques ... cont.

(Psalms 32; 38; 51; 1 Cor. 11:28–31; 1 John 1:7–10). Confession is the first habit we need to learn in the Christian life because, without confession, we cannot be filled by means of the Spirit, and apart from the filling of the Spirit, we do not have the power to live the Christian life.

2. Spirituality. After we master the technique of confessing and **being** filled by the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), we have to master the technique of **staying** filled—of walking by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). The mechanics are spelled out in Ephesians 1:23; 3:16–20; and 4:1–16. Basically, it requires obedience to two commands: Do not grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30), which we do by sinning, and do not quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19), which we do by being apathetic to the Word. Dependence on the filling of the Holy Spirit leads to disciplined study, prayer, and application.

3. Faith-Rest. Once we confess our sins and have entered into the supply system of the filling of the Holy Spirit, then we begin to take hold of the Word of God. We learn to rely on the promises, the principles, and the doctrines of the Word, and that reliance

not strong enough to control, then we never run out of reasons to give thanks and to celebrate grace.

When Paul talks about the power of Christ dwelling in him, he uses a word that means “to tabernacle.” In doing so, he conjures up images of the rough tent the children of Israel carted around in the wilderness, in which dwelt the Shekinah Glory. Just as the tabernacle housed the Shekinah Glory then, we—frail and ragged tents that we are—house the power of God today.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.” (2 Cor. 4:7)

The treasure Paul is talking about here is *“the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”* (2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus Christ is the reflection of divine glory. He, the only visibly revealed member of the Trinity, was the Shekinah Glory that illuminated the tabernacle. He was the glory of the presence of God in the midst of the nation of Israel.

Paul says that we carry this light in *“earthen vessels,”* physical bodies as fragile as clay pots. And why does the glory of God rest in us? So that the source of the power in our lives will be evident to the world.

Five Techniques ... cont.

produces inner rest, peace, and tranquility (Matt. 11:29). Apart from grace (which comes from the Holy Spirit) and truth (which comes from the Word) in balance in the soul, there is no power in life. When we learn to apply the Word to our lives daily, then we enter into the function of the Daniel-in-the-lions'-den kind of power—the power that brings inner rest into the midst of outer turmoil (Phil. 4:6–7; Hebrews 4).

4. Living in the Word. “Living in the Word” means that we have come to the realization that everything in life but the Word of God is a detail (Matt. 4:4). We understand that we can live without money, without health, without friends, but we cannot live without the Word, and so we make the Word our priority (Psalm 119:103, 105; 138:2). We make a decision to saturate our soul with the Word. This involves personal study above and beyond anything we do in church. Study and application of the Word bring spiritual growth (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 3:18); spiritual growth brings conformity to Christ (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:16). The only way to

I am convinced that what Paul had in mind at this point was the story of Gideon from the book of Judges. Gideon is a great illustration of grace made perfect through weakness. He was a coward living in a time of warfare. But God needed someone He could turn into a hero, and Gideon was His man.

The story of Gideon begins in Judges 6 with a description of how *“Israel was brought very low”* because of raiding bands of Midianites who would regularly sweep over the land like locusts, destroying Israel’s crops and livestock, and devastating the land.

In Judges 6:11, young Gideon, who is so terrified of the enemy that he is hiding in a pit stomping out Wheaties for his breakfast, looks up and sees Jesus Christ in His preincarnate state. And the Lord does to Gideon what He does to each one of us—He looks at Gideon not as what he is at this moment, but as what He is going to make of him. Jesus Christ sees us from the standpoint of what we will become in His plan.

And the Lord looks down on Gideon and says, *“The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior,”* and Gideon is at this point probably wondering, “Who in the world is He talking to? Can’t be me. I’m scared to death.” But Gideon is chosen anyway.

Five Techniques ... cont.

be conformed to the Living Word is to feed on the written Word.

5. Occupation with Christ. When we reach the point at which we are occupied with the Person of Jesus Christ, we are fulfilling the command to *“LOVE THE LORD OUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH”* (Mark 12:30). If we are occupied with things, with people, or with ourselves, then we have not yet learned this technique. In Hebrews 3:1, we are urged to *“consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”* *“Consider,”* *katanoeo*, means “to bear down with the mind, to concentrate.” Hebrews 12:1–3 tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus and to keep on concentrating on Him. We are commanded to study and imitate His life (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21). The only way to avoid growing weary and losing heart, the only way to finish the race set before us is by coming to an intimate, personal knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:10).

In Judges 7:2, after Gideon has gathered a force of 32,000 Israelites to attack a force of 135,000 Midianites, God says an amazing thing: *“The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’”* The Lord is saying, “You are too strong, Gideon. My power only works in weakness.”

Gideon is told to release any soldiers who are afraid and want to go home. Immediately, he loses 22,000 men. Gideon was just as afraid as the 22,000 who left. The only difference between his fear and theirs is that their fear caused them to quit and his did not. That is the difference between heroes and cowards. They are all afraid, but heroes do not quit—they never give up.

But the Lord says the troops are still too many, so He has Gideon conduct a test of the men’s alertness and eliminates all but 300. Now He has a team He can work with.

When Gideon’s men heard their leader’s battle plan, they must have wondered whether they shouldn’t have turned back when the others did. With the Midianites and the Amalekites *“lying in the valley as numerous as locusts ... their camels ... without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore”* (Judg. 7:12), Gideon divides his men into three companies and gives each man a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch. These are the weapons that the 300 will use against the 135,000.

Judges 7:21–22 tells us what happened when the three companies came to the outskirts of the enemy camp in the darkness and, at Gideon’s word, blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands: *“Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled. When they blew 300 trumpets, the LORD set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled ...”*

When the Apostle Paul talks about *“treasure in earthen vessels,”* he is talking about torches and clay pots. We are the clay pots—the common, everyday vessels. The glory of Jesus Christ is the torch—the Light of the world. We put the light inside the clay vessel and then blow the trumpet, which is the message of the Gospel. And what happens? When the vessel is broken, the light shines through. And that is exactly what God is trying to do in our lives every day—break the vessel, so the Light can shine out.

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” (2 Cor. 4:8–10)

Why do Christians have to suffer? It is the only way God’s glory will be seen through us. If we are going to blow the trumpet, God is going to break the vessel. If we are not prepared to be broken, we had better just set our trumpets down and go home because we are not ready for the battle.

The battle that we face cannot be fought and won by our power or our strength. It has to be fought in weakness. That is how God displays His power—through the weakness of the missionaries, of the pastors, of the believers on the job every day who keep blowing the trumpet. Every time we blow the trumpet, the vessel is broken, and God routs the enemy.

Small Things

Shamgar had an ox goad
 David had a sling
 Dorcas had a needle
 Rahab had some string
 Mary had some ointment
 Moses had a rod
 What small thing do you have
 That you’ll dedicate to God?

What can God use to accomplish His purpose? Anything we will give Him, but He especially delights in using small things (Zech. 4:10):

A shepherd’s rod	Exod. 4:2
The jawbone of an ass	Judges 15:15
Five smooth stones	1 Sam. 17:40
A handful of meal	1 Kings 17:12
A little jar of oil	2 Kings 4:2
A small cloud	1 Kings 18:44
A little man	Luke 19:1–10
A mustard seed	Matt. 13:31–32
Five loaves and two fishes	John 6:9

Faith

1. Faith is contrary to human reason and logic (Rom. 4:18; Matt. 11:25).
2. Faith does not depend on sight (Rom. 4:18; 2 Cor. 4:18).
3. Faith is simply trusting God's Word (Rom. 4:18; Gal. 3:16; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 4:2).
4. Faith looks impossibility in the face, yet requires no proof (Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:11).
5. Faith is possible only when we consider ourselves dead (Rom. 4:19; 6:7–8, 11).
6. Faith does not waver (Rom. 4:20; James 1:6–8).
7. Faith is conviction, not profession (Rom. 4:21; 1 Cor. 4:19–20).

Unit 4 Review

Lesson 4–1

1. Describe (with biblical references) the development of Paul’s “self-image” as he matured.
2. What is God’s evaluation of the good that man can produce?
3. What is the difference between sins and dead works?
4. To whom did Jesus direct the story of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18?
5. Describe the Pharisees of Jesus’ day.
6. Describe the tax collectors of Jesus’ day.
7. Describe the prayers of the Pharisee and the publican in Jesus’ story.
8. Who was justified before God? Why?
9. If equal grace is given by God to all, why do some believers seem to be more blessed than others?
10. What is the royal code of conduct? Name and explain its five laws.
11. What is grace?
12. How would you explain grace to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Romans 5:1–2

1 Corinthians 15:10

Lesson 4–2

1. What is evil?
2. Where was sin judged?
3. Where will evil be judged?
4. With what are we to overcome evil?
5. What is divine good?
6. What is wisdom?
7. What is discernment?
8. How do we get discernment?

9. What is the relationship of love to discernment?
10. How would you explain evil and the ability to discern evil to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Romans 12:21

Hebrews 5:13–14

Philippians 1:9–11

Lesson 4–3

1. What was the Lord's view of temptation?
2. What is the first step in overcoming temptation?
3. Are some people's temptations more difficult than other people's temptations?
4. What limit does God set on our temptations?
5. What are the three sources of temptations and how are we instructed to deal with each?
6. What does James say we are to consider when we are tempted?
7. What does James mean by "various" trials?
8. What is God's purpose in allowing us to be tempted?
9. What is the difference between a temptation and a test (or trial)?
10. Using the illustration of the goldsmith, describe the process and purpose of trial.
11. Name five daily disciplines that will prepare us for facing tests and temptation.
12. Explain the meaning and derivation of the term "faith-rest."
13. Describe the faith-rest technique. Give an example of a problem you might face and promises you might claim in meeting that problem.
14. How would you explain temptation and testing to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

1 Corinthians 10:13

James 1:2–4

1 Peter 1:6–7

Lesson 4–4

1. Why did the Exodus generation have to wander in the wilderness for 40 years?
2. What is the Promised Land a picture of?
3. What is one thing every Christian should fear?
4. What were the Israelites required to do in order to take Jericho?
5. What is Paul's solution for anxiety in Philippians 4:6–7?
6. Describe how Daniel illustrates faith-rest.
7. Why does God sometimes give strange tests? Give examples of at least four strange tests from the Bible.
8. What is the sabbath? Name the eight sabbaths mentioned in the Bible.

Memory verses

Hebrews 4:1–3

Philippians 4:6–7

Lesson 4–5

1. Why did God allow a messenger of Satan to buffet Paul?
2. Why did God say no to Paul's prayer that He take away the thorn in Paul's flesh?
3. What was Paul's reaction to God's answer?
4. What was Paul's secret to contentment?
5. What does Paul mean in 2 Corinthians 4:7 when he says "we have this treasure in earthen vessels"? What are the vessels? What is the treasure?
6. What Old Testament story might Paul have had in mind when he wrote this verse? Tell the story.
7. Why does God allow suffering in the lives of Christians?

8. Explain the five techniques of the Christian life.
9. Name at least five small things related in the Bible that God used for great purposes.
10. Define and characterize faith.
11. How would you explain to a friend how the power of the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Zechariah 4:6

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

2 Corinthians 4:7–10



Lesson 5–1: The Enemy—*Satan*

Isaiah 14:12–15
1 John 5:4–5

Our enemy is known by many titles: *“the evil one”* (Matt. 6:13; 1 John 2:13); *“a murderer ... a liar ... the father of lies”* (John 8:44); *“the ruler of this world”* (John 12:31); *“the god of this world [“age,” NKJV]”* (2 Cor. 4:4); *“the prince of the power of the air”* (Eph. 2:2); *“the great dragon ... the serpent of old ... the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world”* (Rev. 12:9).

The world in which we live, the cosmic system, belongs to Satan. We—believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—are guerrilla soldiers placed by the Almighty God in the middle of the enemy’s territory as an offensive force.

Our enemy is bigger, meaner, quicker, smarter, and smoother than any mere human who ever lived. He is a master strategist who has had thousands and thousands of years to hone his evil skills. He stalks about this planet *“like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (1 Pet. 5:8). He can break a man or woman physically, mentally, and emotionally—as effortlessly as we might wad up and throw away a piece of paper. But he is no match for God—or for the believer who knows how to stand in the power of God.

Ignorance of the nature of our enemy and of his strategy is one of Satan’s greatest weapons in this war. God intends that we understand what is going on and who it is we are fighting. In the Word, He tells us all we need to know about Satan and his troops.

There are, in the Bible, more than 200 references to angels—spiritual beings created apparently long before man and superior to man in power and intelligence (Heb. 1:14; 2:7; 2 Pet. 2:11).

Biblical evidence points to the fact that these beings were placed by God in ranks and orders not unlike military ranks. The most common New Testament word for these beings is *aggelos*, which means “messenger” and is usually transliterated “angel,” but they are also referred to as *thronos*, “thrones”; *kuriotes*, “powers”; *archon*, “rulers”; *exousia*, “authorities”; and *dunamis*, also translated “powers.”

Only three angels are referred to by name in the Bible: Michael, who is the archangel and the defender of Israel (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7); Gabriel, who is a special messenger to God’s servants (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26–33); and Lucifer, the one we now know as Satan.

The word translated from Isaiah 14:12 as “*Lucifer*” in the King James Version and “*star of the morning*” in the New American Standard, is the Hebrew *helel*, “the shining one.” The name “*Lucifer*” comes through the Latin *lucere*, “to shine,” from *lux*, “light.” How did this shining angel become the ruler of a kingdom of darkness?

Ezekiel 28:11–15 tells us that Lucifer was the greatest—in power, in beauty, in rank—of all the angels God created. He “*had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God ... you were the anointed Cherub who covers [to protect/defend] ... you were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness [iniquity] was found in you.*” As “*the anointed cherub who covers [guards],*” it would appear that his responsibility related directly to the throne room of God. It is my conviction that he was the high priest, as it were, who was to lead the angelic realm in the worship and honor of God. But by his revolt, he was transformed from defender to a detractor of God. The Greek *diabolos*, from which we get “devil,” and the Hebrew *satan*, both mean “adversary, accuser, or slanderer.” As we shall see, the “iniquity” that was found in him was a willful rebellion and rejection of the revealed plan of God.

We must ask how/why did the most beautiful creature to come from the hand of God turn into a murderer, liar, and deceiver—the author of all evil? This monstrous transformation took place by an inner volitional and emotional revolt, expressed with two words: “*I will,*” and reflected his decision to act contrary to the revealed will of God.

“How you have fallen from heaven,
 O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
 You have been cut down to the earth,
 You who have weakened the nations!
 But you said in your heart,
 ‘I will ascend to heaven;
 I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
 And I will sit on the mount of assembly
 In the recesses of the north.
 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
 I will make myself like the Most High.’
 “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,
 To the recesses of the pit.” (Isa. 14:12–15)

Satan, who like the other angels had free will, rebelled against God. He became enamored with himself and, in his pride and arrogance, he decided he wanted to be independent from and equal to his Creator. The ultimate question is “Why?” What could have generated so violent a response? While we do not have all the information we might like, we do have some compelling hints.

As we consider the five “*I will*” statements, we find that what Satan sought to take by force, are precisely the privileges which have been given to Church Age believers by grace through faith:

- It is we who have been raised up and made to sit “*in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 2:6).
- We are enthroned above “*the stars of God,*” that is, the angels (1 Cor. 6:3).
- It is only we who have believed in Him, and who suffer with Him, who will reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12).
- We who have trusted in Jesus Christ are raised up together with Him (Eph. 2:6).
- And we shall one day be “conformed to His image” (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

That Lucifer, in his rebellion, expressed just these very thoughts, suggests that he had been informed of what God intended to do through a lesser creation—mankind. A number of passages suggest that God revealed His plan to grant eternal life to man, and to raise believing members of the human race to a standing far above the angels, “*before time began*” (See Tit. 1:2, NKJV; 2 Tim. 1:9, NKJV; 1 Pet. 1:20–21; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). Not only this, but also that God would reveal this “*mystery*” plan to angels through believing members of the human race (Eph. 3:9–11). It is for these

reasons that I come to the conclusion that once this plan was revealed, Lucifer, the highest created being at that time, chose to revolt against the plan of God. It was his pride (Ezek. 28:17) that defeated him, which is now called “the sin of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). He simply could not accept that he, along with all the hosts of angels, should be *“ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.”* (Heb. 1:14).

And so, we see that one of the reasons Satan hates us so much is that, in our position in Christ, we are higher than the angels (Eph. 1:3; Col. 3:1). All the things he tried to achieve through his arrogance and rebellion are given to us when we believe in Jesus Christ. If he cannot keep us from accepting eternal life, he will at least do everything he can to keep us from enjoying the riches of God’s grace while we are on Earth.

It was following his personal rebellion, and under his leading, that one-third of the entire angelic host revolted against God (Rev. 12:4). God convicted and passed sentence on Satan and the fallen angels: eternity in a “lake of fire” (Matt. 25:41). Though the sentence has been passed, it has not been carried out yet. Satan has been cast out of his original position in Heaven, but at present he holds power over this Earth (John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4). Lucifer’s decision to reject the plan of God, and to seek to exalt himself, was the beginning of a cosmic spiritual war that now rages throughout history. But what Satan through his pride could never have anticipated is that, while he refused to be a *“ministering [spirit]”* to mankind, God Himself would stoop far lower, to become not only a servant to mankind, but a sacrifice on our behalf.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many ... who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men ... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
(Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:6–8)

The resolution of this conflict centers on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Long before man was even created, God knew that he would fall to temptation, and so He provided a way of salvation for all men. In this, He simplified the angelic conflict by narrowing man’s options in every circumstance to two possible choices. Man could choose for the plan of God, which is to take the

side of grace and truth by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or he could choose against the plan of God, which is to take the side of evil and lies by relying on himself.

As all creation watches, this great spiritual conflict plays out in the souls of men on planet Earth. God will let it run just long enough to prove absolutely that His justice and grace are perfect. In *The Invisible War*, Donald Barnhouse describes it this way:

“War has been declared. The great, governing cherub had become the malignant enemy. Our God was neither surprised nor astonished, for, of course, He knew before it happened that it would happen, and He had His perfect plan ready to be put into effect. Although the Lord had the power to destroy Satan with a breath, He did not do so. It was as though an edict had been proclaimed in heaven: ‘We shall give this rebellion a thorough trial. We shall permit it to run its full course. The universe shall see what a creature, though he be the highest creature ever to spring from God’s Word, can do apart from Him. We shall watch this experiment, and permit the universe of creatures to watch it, during this brief interlude between eternity past and eternity future called time. In it the spirit of independence shall be allowed to expand to the utmost. And the wreck and ruin which shall result will demonstrate to the universe, and forever, that there is no life, no joy, no peace apart from a complete dependence upon the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth.’” (Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, p. 51)

Why then did Lucifer rebel against God? It was because God had revealed to the angels in eternity past His plan to create man, initially a lesser being but ultimately exalted above the angels (Heb. 2:7; Isa. 43:7). This man (Adam) would be created perfect (Gen. 1:26–31) but would fall away from God through sin (see Genesis 3). This plan would include redemption to provide a way for man to be restored to fellowship and have eternal life with God.

“in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began ...” (Titus 1:2, NKJV)

When he learned that an inferior being would be raised up higher than himself, Lucifer’s envy and pride would not allow him to settle for such a plan. The five “I wills” of Lucifer in Isaiah, as previously mentioned, reveal his pride and envy.

Angels were created to prepare the way for and to be ministering servants to mankind. This was too much for the greatest of the angels to accept.

“But to which of the angels has He ever said: ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” (Heb 1:13–14)

As Paul states in Ephesians 3:9–11 (NKJV), it was also God’s intent that *“the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (see also Col. 1:26–27; 2:10, 15).

*“God’s **manifold wisdom** is to be displayed to the angelic beings by the members of the church. God’s ways are not only “mysterious,” but also varied. Angels are also learning about God’s wisdom as they watch His grace working in us.”* (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W., 1997, *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Eph 3:10). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.)

Now as the enemy of God, Satan, of course, was vitally interested in what choices would be made by the first two human beings God placed under his nose. Master strategist that he is, he stayed away from Adam, but he heartily encouraged Eve to do something with her life, to develop her full potential as a human being. The fact that the first words out of his mouth were designed to destroy her confidence in the Word of God seemed to escape her notice. At any rate, she ate the forbidden fruit. And, as Satan must have believed he would, Adam followed the woman. Satan became the ruler of this world (John 14:30).

At this point Satan surely assumed he had won the conflict, but his glee was short-lived. God invaded Satan's earthly domain with the promise of the Savior who would come from the Seed of woman (Gen. 3:15) and a demonstration—by sacrificing an animal to clothe them—of His substitutionary death (Gen. 3:21). What panic this must have created in the mind of Satan. The very God he wished to be equal to was willing to condescend far beyond the submission and servitude that he himself had rejected!

From the instant God's promise was given, Satan made every effort to nullify it by preventing the birth of Christ in an attempt to prove that God could not keep His word. He tried by inciting Cain to murder his brother Abel (Genesis 4), the first man born with an old sin nature to believe in the Savior. He tried by sending fallen angels to infiltrate the human race (Genesis 6), knowing that if mankind could be totally corrupted, the Christ could not come as a man. He tried by repeated attacks on the nation of Israel, knowing that if Israel were destroyed, there could be no promised seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). But he did not succeed, and Christ was born. God had come in the flesh. Satan's attempt to have the baby Jesus killed by way of Herod's decree failed as miserably as everything else he had tried up to this point (Matthew 2; Rev. 12:1-5).

Now all of Satan's opposition, all of his attacks could be focused on one Person—the Lord Jesus Christ. Every step of the way, from the cradle to the cross, our Lord was opposed by the enemy in every conceivable way. Not only was the Lord tempted in all points as we are (Heb. 4:15), but He was also opposed in ways we will never understand. Still, Jesus accomplished His task. He fixed His face like flint and went to the cross in our place.

At the crucifixion, Satan thought for a second time that victory was his. After all, the Savior of mankind was dead. But then came the resurrection! When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and was seated at the right hand of the throne of God according to the prophecy of Psalm 110:1-4, it was clear He was the victor in the angelic conflict (Col. 2:4-5).

The statement made here by God the Father, and repeated in Hebrews 1:13, is crucial to our understanding of the work of God the Holy Spirit. The Father, fully accepting the work that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross, declared that He would be seated until His enemies were made a footstool for His feet. At the seating of Christ, a new age was introduced—the Church Age, which would become a reality at the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

With the onset of the Church Age, the most amazing plan began to unfold. It was something Satan could never have anticipated or prepared for, something he absolutely could not defeat. Before the cross, Satan had to square off with the one Person on Earth in whom was the omnipotence of God—Jesus Christ. But now, every person who placed his faith in the Savior would carry within him that same omnipotence by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Suddenly, instead of one man to contend with, Satan had 11; soon the 11 become 120, and before he knew it, there were 3,000, and then a million, and all of a sudden, everywhere all over the world, every believer in Jesus Christ is walking around with the same power that God in the flesh had, in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Within 70 years of Christ's resurrection, the written Word of God was completed. Imagine how Satan felt when he realized that the truth of the Word of God and the grace of the Spirit of God would be available, without measure, to every believer on Earth!

The Power in Us

Every believer is a threat to Satan. We may not think of ourselves as much of a threat, but when we consider that the omnipotence of God in the Person of God the Holy Spirit indwells, enables, and empowers us, then we begin to understand something of how Satan sees us.

"Greater is He who is in you," the Apostle John tells us, *"than he who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). We are walking miracles, walking weapons systems. The enemy knows that and shudders. He realizes that he cannot change the fact that God is in us. He knows that we have it all, all God's power available to us from the moment of salvation. The sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, and veracity—it is all there in the Holy Spirit.

But the enemy knows something else. He knows that there is one thing we do not have as baby believers—the Word of God in our souls. Without the Word, we cannot know or use the riches that are ours. Without the Word, which is the sword, we have no weapon for the Spirit to wield against Satan (Eph. 6:17; Heb 4:12). Satan knows that unless we grow, there will not be established in our souls the balance of residence—between the Spirit of God and the Word of God—that creates the power to defeat him.

So, the one prospect that really scares Satan is that we might grow. He is going to use all his wiles to keep us from choosing to grow because he knows that if we grow, we will begin to understand that we have available to us the same power that worked in the Apostle Paul. If we grow (2 Pet. 3:18), we will realize that God has a plan for our lives, a plan as specifically tailored to us as Paul's was to him, a plan that will turn us into heroes of faith, that will allow us to become friends of God. Whether all this will be utilized in our lives is up to us. Our free will is the one weak link between God's power and us.

This is why the Lord could say in Matthew 16, “*upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of Hades [hell] will not overpower it.*” Notice that the Lord’s idea was not that the Church would hopefully hold out a few faithful and brave souls against the onslaught of Satan. Instead, He envisioned the Church on the offensive, constantly pounding the gates of Hell. In the ancient world, the gate of the city was where all major decisions were made; it was the place of power and authority. Jesus was saying that the power and the authority of Hell would never prevail against the onslaught of the Church. That was the plan of God and it remains the plan of God to this day.

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4–5)

As finite beings with all kinds of human limitations, we are pitted against an enemy superior to us in wisdom, in strength, in power, and in number. We have to understand, that on the cross, Jesus Christ won the strategic victory. This means that the tide of war has turned. When God sent His Son into the world, He paid the penalty for our sins; He broke the back of the devil; He broke open the gates of his P.O.W. camp called the world.

But the war is not over, and we are still on the battlefield. Whether we as individuals win the tactical victory will depend on whether we can apply to our lives the things gained through Christ’s strategic victory. If we want to win day-by-day, we have to utilize the assets that God has provided for us and follow the game plan that He lays out for us in the Word. Without a clear and accurate understanding of the Word, it is impossible for any believer to stand up to the strategy of Satan.

When the Apostle John talks about those who are “*overcomers*,” he uses a military term. *Nikao* refers to peace achieved by military victory. What does it mean to “*overcome the world*” (1 John 5:5)? It means to have peace through victory. John is talking about the spiritual peace that comes through spiritual victory.

In verse 4, the apostle makes a declaration of fact. The neuter “*whatever*” states a principle: “*whatever is born of God*” is victorious over the world. Period. The realm of flesh is always conquered by the realm of the Spirit.

“Overcomes” is the present, active, indicative of *nikao*; it pictures continuous victory in an ongoing struggle. The key to this victory is “*our faith*,” which John says has overcome the world. This time, *nikao* is an aorist participle. In Greek, the aorist tense refers to something that takes place at a point of time. The aorist participle in Greek always precedes the action of the main verb.

What that means in this sentence is that the momentary victory of faith in Christ (for salvation) provides the basis for the ongoing victory in the life of faith. Salvation is the once-for-all victory; spirituality is the ongoing victory. To be overcomers means that we live in a realm of peace—not an external, but an internal realm. John’s two-fold development here is much like Christ’s invitation in Matthew 11.

When the Lord, in Matthew 11:28–30, offered peace as a birthright to the disciples and to us as believers, He was not offering a tranquil, physical environment; He was offering peace with God and personal rest of soul. In this passage, He talks about two different kinds of rest. One is the rest that Jesus gives: “*Come to Me ... and I will give you rest.*” The other is a rest that we find: “*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me ... and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.*”

The rest that He gives to all who come to Him and the rest that we find through study are two different things. One is a rest of position; the other is a rest of practice. One is a rest that is eternal; the other is a rest that is moment-by-moment.

We can overcome the enemy by sharing in Christ’s victory over Satan day-by-day and remembering His triumph. Our daily victory is grounded in our faith in the finished work of Christ (1 John 5:5). From a practical standpoint, we overcome as we “*walk by faith, not by sight*” (2 Cor. 5:7), and as we “*do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*” (Rom. 8:4).

Faith, exercised moment-by-moment, brings spiritual victory, which brings peace to the soul. But that faith must always be in the Person and work of Christ. If we lose sight today of the victory of Jesus Christ on the cross, if we do not apply today the meaning of the cross to our lives, then we will not have inner peace and the enemy will have won another round in the tactical war. All victory is found in Jesus Christ (John 16:33; Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:56–58; 2 Cor. 2:14).

Religion: The Enemy's Ace

Satan is the father of all religions. He loves religion and religious people and uses both to further his deception of men and nations.

“Religion” from the Greek *threskeia*, is used a very few times in the New Testament, always in contexts having to do with things external or ceremonial. *Threskos*, “religious,” means “careful of the externals of divine service.” But nowhere does the Bible suggest that any amount of care in the externals of divine service can make a person acceptable to God, either before or after salvation.

Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Entry into Christianity is based solely on the work of Christ on the cross, accepted by faith. Growth and production in the Christian life are based solely on the work of Christ on the cross, accepted by faith. Christianity is a total grace operation. Man can neither earn nor deserve anything from God. But in grace, God does the work, God gets the credit, and man gets the blessing. This is not a plan that man would have devised.

Christianity is not to anyone's natural liking. Because it is absolute, there is no place for dialogue in Christianity. It declares that the way to life is very narrow. “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life,*” Jesus said, “*no one comes to the Father but through Me*” (John 14:6). No man was ever more narrow-minded than Jesus.

Satan, on the other hand, is very broad-minded. He fosters an infinite variety of religions, but they all have one thing in common: they depend on man, not God. Within Christian churches, Satan works to promote the same perversion of the Word and independence from God.

The Bible tells us that the enemy has his own system of counterfeits, including a false gospel (2 Cor. 4:3–4) with a counterfeit Jesus who is not the Jesus of the Bible; false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1); false ministers who tell people what they like to hear (2 Cor. 11:13–15); a false communion (1 Cor. 10:19–21); false spirituality, not by grace but by what people do and do not do (Gal. 3:2–3; Col. 2:20–23); false definitions of good and evil, promoting social action and the neglect of divine institutions (Col. 2:8); and false power (2 Thess. 2:8–10).

Religion: The Enemy's Ace ... cont.

As the day of his destruction draws nearer, Satan steps up his deceptive activity. The Bible lists at least nine denials that he will foster in the last days:

1. The denial of God (2 Tim. 3:1, 4–5)
2. The denial of Christ (1 John 2:18–23; 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:1)
3. The denial of Christ's return (2 Pet. 3:1–4)
4. The denial of the faith (1 Tim. 4:1–2; Jude 3)
5. The denial of sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3–4)
6. The denial of biblical separation (2 Tim. 3:1–7)
7. The denial of Christian liberty (1 Tim. 4:1–4)
8. The denial of true spirituality (2 Tim. 3:1–8; Jude 18)
9. The denial of spiritual authority (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:3)



Lesson 5–2:

The Arena—The Souls of Men

Job 1:1–3
Job 1:6–12

We are in a war. The arena, in which this war is being waged, is in the souls of men. The enemy wants to torture us and has a strategy for putting us on the rack. But we are protected by God, who sets a wall of fire around every believer (Zech. 2:5). Without divine permission, Satan cannot penetrate that wall, and we have God’s word that any time He allows the enemy in, we can overcome. But we can only overcome through faith.

The book of Job is a treatise on Romans 8:28—the fact that God is in control of all circumstances, that Jesus Christ controls history, and that God causes everything to work together for good in the lives of those who love Him and are submissive to His purpose. This oldest book of the Bible tells the story of an Arab prince living near the time of Abraham. He was not a Jew, but he was a believer who, for a time, became the target of Satan himself and the central figure in the spiritual war.

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil. Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.” (Job 1:1–3)

The word “*blameless*” is from the Hebrew *tam*, which simply means “mature” or “complete.” Job was complete in his spiritual growth; he was a mature believer. “*Upright*” is *yashar*, which

means “to walk straight.” The word is related to *ashere*, which means “blessing” or “blessed.” There is a principle in these two words: The one who walks straight (*yashar*) will end up blessed (*ashere*). Job was a man who had walked straight and had been greatly blessed, and his maturity was reflected in his personal integrity and character.

Job’s “fear” of God was *yare*—reverence, respect, and honor for the Lord. The fact that Job turned away from evil indicates that he knew consistent victory in his spiritual life.

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.’ The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.’” (Job 1:6–8)

The phrase *bene ha elohim*, “sons of God,” is used four times in the Old Testament, and each time it refers to angels (Genesis 6; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). Though he has fallen, Satan still has access to Heaven. He apparently spends a good deal of time before the throne of God accusing believers, and he will continue to have this access until the middle of the Tribulation (Rev. 12:10).

Since Satan is the accuser of the brethren and since he “*prowls [about] ... seeking someone to devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8), he needs information. And he gets it through the greatest intelligence system in the universe.

God, of course, does not need an intelligence system because He is omniscient. He knows the end from the beginning. He knew billions of years ago where every particle of sand on this Earth would be resting at this moment. He knew every thought that would ever cross our minds throughout the duration of our lives. Nothing escapes God. But outside of the omniscience of God, Satan has the greatest intelligence system. He constantly gathers information, and he gathers it for no good purpose—for malice, for evil, for destruction. So, Satan struts into Heaven and God, who obviously knows exactly where everyone is all the time, asks the adversary something like this: “Where have you been, big shot?” And Satan says he has been walking around, walking back and

forth on the Earth looking for someone to zero in on, for the believer who is giving him the most trouble.

Satan himself never bothers with any but the most advanced believers. He is not omnipresent; he can only be in one place at a time. He does, however, control his entire organization from his headquarters. Satan sends peon demons down to trouble people, but he does not have time to deal with most of us personally.

Now the Lord asks Satan whether he has noticed Job, and of course God knows that he has. He can see that Satan has a bone stuck in his throat and that bone is named "Job." When God says that there is no one like Job on Earth, He is pointing out the fact that this man is the most advanced believer alive. God knows that Satan is angry because Job is messing up his plans. In the Hebrew language, God's question is this: "Have you set your heart on My servant Job?"

"Then Satan answered the LORD, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.'" (Job 1:9–11)

Satan answers God's question with a charge against His servant. He still does this; he still insinuates that believers only believe because of what they can get out of God. "Your people's faith is mercenary," he loves to tell God. "They don't love you; they only believe because you are the big sugar daddy in the sky."

At this point, the devil lets out one of the most amazing theological secrets in the Bible: Satan himself is powerless in the face of divine protection of the believer. When he says, "*Have You not made a hedge about him?*" Satan is admitting that he cannot touch Job without permission from God. Specifically, he is complaining that God has put three hedges around His servant. The first is around his person, the second around his family, and the third around his possessions.

Satan reveals something else here too. He who began his evil career by accusing God of being unjust continues throughout history to make that accusation. Only now, he seeks to get believers to do his dirty work for him. He wants God's own family to do the accusing.

The Present Session of Christ

As Christians, we never have to face the enemy alone. We have a Defender who has promised, “*I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you*” (Heb. 13:5b). He who keeps us never sleeps (Psalm 121). He is at every moment watching over us for protection and provision.

1. Jesus Christ as our Advocate defends us (1 John 2:1; Rom. 8:1, 32–34).
2. Jesus Christ as our Intercessor prays for us (Rom. 8:34; John 17).
3. Jesus Christ as our great Shepherd supplies us (Psalm 23:1; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:20–21).
4. Jesus Christ as our Forerunner opens the path to God for us (Heb. 6:20; 10:20; Rom. 5:2)
5. Jesus Christ as our High Priest sets us apart for service to God (Heb. 5:5–10; 7:17–27; 10:5–18).

“*He will surely curse You to Your face.*” Satan makes it clear what he wants to happen, what he wants to hear. What he desires—what would thrill him more than anything else—is to hear us say “God isn’t fair” or “How could God let this happen to me?” That is all he wants—a little blasphemy. It reinforces his theory that God’s people only serve Him for the gifts, never because they love the Giver. Imagine how he swaggers into Heaven when he succeeds in getting us to complain and to rail against God.

Then the Lord said to Satan, “*Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.*” So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord. (Job 1:12)

God still calls the shots. He gives Satan permission to sift Job, but He sets the limits. He says to the devil, “Job’s family and his possessions are in your hand. But, do not touch this man. Yet.”

In a New Testament counterpart to this verse, Paul tells us that God is faithful and will not let us be tested beyond our ability to endure (1 Cor. 10:13). We are safe in His hands. We need to know that, because if we want to have an effect in our world for Jesus Christ, then we will become targets in this ancient spiritual struggle (2 Tim. 3:12).

The advancing believer who dedicates his life to the study and the application of the Word of God is a threat to the enemy. Not

because Satan is afraid of any of us; there is nothing that we could ever say or do that would cause him any concern at all. But he is afraid of the most powerful thing in the universe—the Word of God wielded in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God is Able

“Behold I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jer. 32:27)

“With God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26b)

1. God is able to save forever those who believe (Heb. 7:25).
2. God is able to supply every need (2 Cor. 9:8).
3. God is able to deliver all who are tempted (Heb. 2:18; 2 Pet. 2:9).
4. God is able to sustain the weak (Psalm 37:24; Rom. 14:4).
5. God is able to keep us from falling (Jude 24).
6. God is able to surpass all expectations and requests (Eph. 3:20).
7. God is able to raise us up in resurrection in the likeness of His Son (Heb. 11:19; Phil. 3:21).

God is Faithful

1. God is faithful to forgive sins (1 John 1:9).
2. God is faithful to keep us saved (2 Tim. 2:13).
3. God is faithful to deliver us through temptations (1 Cor. 10:13).
4. God is faithful to keep His promises (Heb. 10:23; Rom. 8:28).
5. God is faithful to us in suffering (1 Pet. 4:19).
6. God is faithful in fulfilling His plan for us (1 Thess. 5:24).
7. God is faithful to strengthen us (2 Thess. 3:3).
8. God is the faithful partner of our union with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9).
9. Christ is the faithful and merciful High Priest (Heb. 2:17).
10. Jesus Christ is synonymous with faithfulness (Rev. 19:11).



Lesson 5–3:

The Attack—Satan’s Strategy

Job 1:13–22

Job 2:1–10

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that he did not want to give Satan an opportunity to take advantage of a problem that had arisen in the church, “*for we are not ignorant of his schemes,*” he said (2 Cor. 2:11). The word translated “*schemes,*” *noema*, means “plots, plans, strategem.”

In Ephesians 6:11, Paul tells us to put on the full armor of God, that we may be able to stand firm against the “*schemes*” of the devil. Here the word is *methodeia*, which means “cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery.” We have to remember that our enemy is not only a master strategist, he is also a cheat and a liar.

In the Ephesians passage, Paul goes on to say that “*our struggle is not against flesh and blood*” but against the spiritual forces of wickedness. The word translated “*struggle*” is *pale*, a term for hand-to-hand combat.

Satan has tremendous plans for attacking all believers, especially those who are advancing, and his plans are personal. Every one of us will be singled out for attack by his fallen agents, and we can be sure that the tactics used on Job will be used on us. That is why it is so important that we understand the principle of Job 1:12: The enemy cannot touch us except when and where God permits. And if God permits it, it is because He loves us that much.

“Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.’ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.’ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you.’ While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.’” (Job 1:13–19)

Our enemy’s sense of timing is almost perfect. When did Satan decide to nail Job? At the time it would hurt him the most. Satan had studied Job. He no doubt had compiled a massive dossier on him, and in a file marked “Greatest Fear,” he found what he wanted.

Ten Principles of Warfare

1. Objective (Luke 19:10; Phil. 3:8–10). Why are we fighting and what is it that we are supposed to win? We are fighting in the cause for which Jesus Christ came to Earth—to seek and to save that which is lost. To do this, we have to know Jesus Christ and His power and share His sufferings.

2. Offensive (Phil. 3:12–14). To attain the objective, we must be constantly advancing. We must, like Paul, “*press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:14).

3. Concentration (Phil. 3:13). “Concentration” refers to the massing of forces for decisive action. All our energy, all our concentration, all our thought has to be focused on Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1). We must narrow down our lives until we can say

Job was afraid that his children would curse God. He was especially afraid on their birthdays, when they would all get together to celebrate (Job 1:4–5; 3:25). He worried that his children would forget themselves in their merrymaking, so he was always praying and offering sacrifices during these times.

So Satan, knowing that the right move at the right time is worth a thousand moves at the wrong time, waits until the birthday of Job's oldest son, his firstborn. "On that day," with precision timing, Satan opens his attack.

What would Job think when all this disaster hit him on this particular day? The most logical conclusion would have been, "My children have cursed God. That is why He has taken their lives, and it is why He has hit me with all this calamity." Maybe Job would have blamed himself for not praying enough. Satan wanted all of the disaster to bring fear and guilt on Job.

Every fear we nurse in our lives gives the enemy a place to work, a base from which to launch his assault. He knows what we are afraid of. He knows the things that cause us to question the goodness and the grace of God, and those are the very things he will use in his attacks on us.

When the enemy initiates an attack against us, we can be guaranteed it is going to be at the worst possible time and under the most adverse conditions. It will be when we are tired, run down,

Ten Principles of Warfare ... cont.

with Paul, "*one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on ...*" (Phil. 3:13).

4. Economy of forces (Zech. 4:6, 10). "Economy of forces" is the skillful and wise use of what is available. As Christians, we have to learn never to expend more in power or energy than is needed for the task. That means we learn how not to wrestle but always to rest in faith, knowing that God delights in bringing victory through small and insignificant things.

5. Mobility (Ephesians 4–5). We must be flexible, able to move with speed and ease. The Christian life is a walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), a walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) and by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), a walk in love (Eph. 5:2) and in light (1 John 1:7).

6. Cooperation (Eph. 4:3, 13). Refusal to cooperate in wartime is a crime—we call it treason. All believers are one in Christ, and we are expected to cooperate and to function as a single army in the unity of the Spirit and the unity of the faith.

weak, and most vulnerable to temptation. Why does he always attack at times like this? Because he is a strategist. If we want to resist him, we have to understand his strategy.

If our enemy's sense of timing is almost perfect, then his sense of chaos is even better. Here is a tranquil scene: Job is doing what he always did on days like this, and all of a sudden everything with which he is familiar is shaken. The peace and the tranquility that surrounded him are gone. In an instant.

Satan always seeks to disrupt conditions of peace and calm. His rebellion brought chaos into the universe. Whereas Jesus is the Prince of Peace, Satan is the king of confusion and turmoil. He hates us, and he hates for us to have inner peace because inner peace in the believer is the greatest evidence of divine power. Especially in adverse conditions, when we have peace in our souls, we drive him crazy.

The best way to have historical impact in this world is not to run around trying to make a big splash in society for God. The best way is to slow down and do the one thing that troubles Satan more than anything else—rest in the Lord. If we do not know how to maintain inner peace and calm, no amount of work we do will be effective.

Everything God does in our lives comes from rest. So of course, Satan's attacks in this area will be especially vicious. He will never

Ten Principles of Warfare ... cont.

7. Security (Jude 21). Everywhere missiles are flying, grenades are popping, bullets are whizzing past. For us, there is one—and only one—safe place: in the love of God.

8. Surprise (Job 1:21). When Job fell down and worshipped God, when David sauntered out with a slingshot to take on Goliath, when we respond to pain and trouble in faith, the enemy is caught off-guard and blasted by the power of God.

9. Communication (1 Thess. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). If we do not stay in constant touch with headquarters, how will we know where we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to be doing? We need to study the Word and to pray every day.

10. Pursuit (1 Cor. 9:22–23). If we want to win, every day we must be in active pursuit of the enemy with a view toward total defeat. Paul pursued excellence in service so that he might see men won to Jesus Christ.

Peace

- The environment of peace: Philippians 1:2
- The formula for peace: Philippians 3:13–14
- The practice of peace: Philippians 4:6–7, 11–13

Seven Disciplines Producing Peace

“For we walk by faith not by sight.” (2 Cor. 5:7)

1. By faith, learn to accept life unconditionally as God's perfect plan for you (Rom. 8:28; 1 Thess. 3:3; 5:18).
2. By faith, live in conscious fellowship with God (1 John 1:7).
3. By faith, keep short accounts with God (1 Cor. 11:23–31; 1 John 1:9).
4. By faith, seek the Word of God daily (Matt. 4:4; 5:6; 2 Pet. 3:18).
5. By faith, trust in the power of prayer (James 5:16; 1 Pet. 5:7).
6. By faith, rest in the promises of God (2 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 6:17–20).
7. By faith, see eternal purpose in life's trials (2 Cor. 4:16–18).

“The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.” (Isa. 26:3)

attack us without trying to throw something in that will destroy peace in our soul. If guilt is all he can use, he will use guilt. If fear, fear.

It takes a great deal of toughness and strength to remain poised under pressure and testing. These are qualities not natural to man. They are developed through self-discipline and hard training. We have to develop that toughness of skin and thickness of hide that allow us to absorb blow after blow without losing our focus on the Prince of Peace.

Our enemy gets as much of a kick out of violence as he does out of simple chaos, so violence is another of his favorite tactics. He knows that even the language of violence has an amazing effect on people when they are brought face-to-face with it.

Job is told, by probably hysterical survivors, that the Sabceans and the Chaldeans, in separate attacks, *“slew the servants with the edge of the sword.”* The word translated *“slew”* refers to a violent attack; the term *“edge of the sword”* is a fear phrase. It would especially arouse fear in people who thought as concretely and in as vivid word-pictures as the Semitic people did. Think about the sword—the edge of the sword—about how it would cut when it was used on people. Think about how these raiders hacked Job's

servants to pieces, and it would be easy to start getting scared. That, of course, is what Satan wants.

Notice the phrase repeated three times between Job 1:13 and 1:22, “*while he was still speaking.*” Satan seldom sends one piece of trouble alone; he prefers to land one punch after another after another. Why? Because he understands the shock effect of multiple blows. One of the most basic principles in self-defense is that you never fire at a target only one time. Multiple rounds increase and intensify the shock effect.

Finally, our enemy loves to send calamity that looks as if it were an act of God. Job’s servant helps create this impression when he says that “*the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them.*” Though God allowed the fire to come, this was not the fire of God. This passage indicates to us that all natural calamity is the result of creation out of balance with the Creator.

We sometimes forget that the spiritual war is fought in the physical world. All these physical calamities happened to Job in the space of about 10 minutes, and it was all part of the spiritual war.

*“Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head,
and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said,
‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the LORD.’
Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.”
(Job 1:20–22)*

Job’s sorrow and grief are beyond measure. He rises and tears his robe as a symbol of a broken heart. His soul has been ripped in two, but his response to all the sorrow is to bow before Almighty God and worship.

His pain is encompassed by his faith, and so Job does not give Satan the victory he desires. The enemy wants one of God’s own children to say, “Why me? Why did God let this happen to me? How could a loving God allow this suffering?” Satan is no different today in dealing with us. He still wants to malign the character of God through the mouths of God’s own children.

“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. The LORD said to Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth, and walking around on it.’ The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.’ Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.’ So the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.’”
(Job 2:1–6)

Again, there is an angelic convocation in Heaven and again Satan struts in, though perhaps with less lilt in the face of Job's response to his attack. Again, God asks him where he has been and again Satan tells Him, *“around.”* Then God asks the one question the enemy surely does not want to hear: *“Have you considered My servant Job?”*

When God says that Job holds fast his *“integrity,”* the Hebrew word is *tummah*. It means “simplicity, singleness of purpose, innocence.” Job's integrity is his refusal to blame God for the things that have happened to him. He holds his integrity even though, God says, *“you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.”* The phrase *“without cause”* tells us something—there was no sin involved in Job's suffering. He was not suffering because of discipline.

Satan's answer to God's question is an accusation; he charges Job with selfishness. One of the most compassionate, gracious, thoughtful men in history is accused by Satan of being selfish and self-centered.

In his response, Satan is saying to God: “Sure Job hasn't cursed You yet. You can steal his flocks, You can destroy his wealth, You can strike his servants and kill his family, and he is so selfish and so self-absorbed that it does not even touch him. He doesn't even feel any grief over his family. He just sits there and says, ‘Everything's fine.’ But You touch his body, make him hurt, and

he will curse You for sure.” This is the third of five times that we see Satan’s goal in afflicting Job (Job 1:5, 11; 2:3, 5, 10). Because he so maliciously despises God, Satan feels vindicated when he can move any believer to malign God’s character.

We are in the middle of this raging spiritual war. When God allows into our lives any pressure, difficulty, adversity—minor or major—and we accept it without complaint, acknowledging that God knows what He is doing, then He receives honor and glory.

But, when in times of testing we accuse God of being unjust or unrighteous or unloving, then we actually take the side of Satan before the throne of God. Any time we say, or think, “What is happening to me is not fair,” we become a witness for Satan. Any time we ask the question, “How can a loving God allow this?” implying of course that God is not loving, we are following the line of the devil. Satan is the author of that statement. This is why Jesus rebuked Peter and called him “Satan” in Matthew 16:23, for Peter had taken the side of the devil against the perfect plan of God, which was the cross.

God is never the source of evil. Notice in Job 2:6 that God says to Satan, “*He is in your power.*” That was not what Satan asked for. Satan asked for God to touch Job’s bone and his flesh. He wanted God personally to strip Job of his health. God would not do it. “He is in your power,” He said. “You want it done to him? You do it.”

No Truce

We must understand that there is no truce in the invisible war. There will never be a moment, from the instant we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ until we go to be with Him, that the enemy is not on the offensive. We are active participants in the battle whether we like it or not.

Every day, billions of battles are fought in this war, fought by believers on every continent of what we call the *kosmos diabolicus*—the devil’s world. Every day, each of us faces the issue of whether we will glorify God or gratify self. This is always at the heart of the struggle in the angelic conflict. Every day, we have the chance to win either eternal glory for the Lord or temporary gratification for ourselves.

Jesus said, “*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow after*” (Mark 8:34). Taking up the cross means that we identify the plan and purpose of God for

Satan may be allowed to get through our protection, but he will never get beyond God's limitation. In Job's case, God set the limit when He commanded Satan to spare his life. God is always able to say to the enemy, "This far and no further." And when God allows more trouble or persecution in our lives than we think we can stand, we have to remember that the extent of the severity of our testing is a measure of the extent of the honor and glory it can bring to Jesus Christ throughout all eternity.

"Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!' But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:7-10)

The suffering and agony of Job at this point are terrible. He is covered with boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. He is in intense pain, and there is no way to alleviate it. The itching is unbearable, and so he takes a potsherd, part of a broken clay pot, to scrape himself as he sits in the ashes. Later in Job 7:5, we are

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our life, dedicate ourselves to it, and never quit. This demands a tremendous amount of self-denial.

We have to keep in mind always that the path from the cross to the crown is an upward path. That is why Paul uses, in Philippians 3:14, the words "press on." The Greek *dioko* means "to pursue, to search for, to seek, to set as a priority." We have to set our priority and press on from the saving grace of the cross to the living grace of day-to-day life, to the "super grace" of spiritual maturity. Always we keep pressing on, always growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And as we do, we will come to understand that the provisions of grace—the assets of grace—are greater than we ever imagined. But only one thing will force us to see this, and that is greater need.

Therefore, we have to learn to live one day at a time. We have to live our lives the way a marathon runner runs his race. If the runner thinks of all the miles stretched out ahead of him, he will be inclined to give up—especially if he remembers the pain of the

told that his boils develop two by-products: worms and scabs. In Job 30:17 and 30, we learn that he has severe fever and tremendous aching in his bones.

At this point, Job's wife joins the enemy. Satan had wanted this woman left alive; he has plans for her, and she falls right in with them. She becomes cynical and bitter and vindictive, and she blames God. She tells her husband he would be better off dead, and we can imagine that she does not say this just once. She likely says it—or at least shows it on her face—every time she walks past the ash heap where Job suffers in silence.

Job's response to his wife shows what a mild man he is. In these verses, we glimpse an ancient family fight, centered around tremendous tragedy. There has been death in the family, banditry, warfare, robbery, loss of wealth, and—at least on her part—loss of perspective. When Job tells her that she speaks as a “foolish woman,” he uses the Hebrew *nebalah*, which means “to fade, to wither.” It is a word for falling away, for reversion. He is saying, “You are speaking like a reversionistic woman.”

Then he asks her a question: “*Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?*” When he asks this, he is illustrating three very important doctrinal principles:

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last race. So he starts the race thinking a mile at a time. But after a while, he stops clicking off the miles and starts thinking in terms of half-miles, then quarter-miles, then yards, until he reaches the point where all he can think about is putting one foot in front of the other.

In the Christian life, we start out in a burst of energy, running for all we are worth. Then, somewhere along the line, we realize that this is a marathon and we had better slow down and dig in for the long haul. Isaiah 40:31 talks about those who “*wait*” on the Lord. He uses *qawah*, the strongest Hebrew word for faith. The first thing they do is “*mount up with wings like eagles,*” then they run and do “*not get tired,*” and eventually they “*walk and [do] not become weary.*”

As we mature, we learn to pace ourselves. We learn to deal with our adversities a day at a time. We know that grace is sufficient moment-by-moment, and so we learn to go through

1. The believer who only wants blessing is weak and immature.
2. The believer who gripes and complains in adversity does not understand either God or His plan.
3. The believer who falls apart under pressure does not understand the angelic conflict or the power of God.

The war that Job was involved in stretched from the ashes he sat in to the throne room of God, but his battle was won in the soul. Through all his calamity and pain, "*Job did not sin with his lips.*" But what came or did not come out of his lips was only a manifestation of what had already happened in his heart. Job won the battle because of his thoughts—he chose to believe God. Faith was the victory!

All human history boils down to individual, personal decisions. This great spiritual contest is being resolved not in the heavenlies, not in the cosmic sphere, but in the souls of individual men and women. Every day, billions and billions of battles are fought in the minds of men over the plan of God. And every time any person chooses to "take his thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ," Satan loses another round in the fight (2 Cor. 10:5).

No Truce ... cont.

crisis, tragedy, and difficulty—one day at a time. We learn to deal with our areas of weakness, our frailties, and our temptations. We do not ask ourselves, "How will I deal with this the rest of my life?" We ask, "Can I make it through this day?"

At night, with success behind us, we lay ourselves down, commit that day to eternity, and rest. We have won glory for the Lord Jesus Christ. And the next day it starts all over again. We will have days when we bring honor to Christ, and we will have days when we do not. We will have times when we struggle to sustain honor and integrity for just five more minutes, and we will make it; and maybe at the end of those five minutes, we will fall flat on our face. But as Jeremiah reminds us in Lamentations 3:22–23, every time we see the sun come up, we know that God's mercy has been renewed and restored for that day. We know there will be tests and trials and difficulties, but there will also be great joys and blessings. And we keep on keeping on because we know Who it is we believe and why it is we fight.

Decisions

1. **Jesus Christ controls history.**

If Jesus Christ controls history, then there are crises in life, but there are no tragedies and no innocent victims (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; Col. 1:17; Rev. 22:12–13).

2. **Every person has an allotment of time and trouble.**

God has allotted to each of us a certain amount of time; and in that time, He has allotted a certain amount of suffering, adversity, and crisis. But He has also provided for deliverance in each and every one of our problems (Exodus 4; Job 5:7; Psalm 34:19; 37).

3. **Crisis always involves controlled testing.**

Satan may get through the barriers or the hedges God puts around us, but he never gets beyond the divine limitation (Gen. 22:1–19; Job 1–2; 1 Cor. 10:13).

4. **Every crisis forces us to make decisions.**

One of the reasons God allows pressure and crisis in our lives is to show us what we are inside. Crisis forces us to make decisions and, in every decision, we face the option of choosing good or evil.

5. **Every future decision involves elements of past decisions.**

Decisions made by David (1 Samuel 23; 2 Samuel 2; 4; 11–18) and Paul (2 Cor. 1:1–12; 2 Corinthians 4:8–15; 6; 11) illustrate this point. Every good choice we make opens the door in the future for greater choices. Every wrong choice hinders and limits future options. Today we make our decisions; tomorrow our decisions make us. If we consistently make bad decisions, we will begin to callous our souls and destroy spiritual sensitivity.

6. **There are two wills that affect every crisis.**

The sovereign will of God and the changeable will of man are at work in every crisis (Deut. 8:1–20; 11:26–28; Jer. 18:5–12; Ezek. 18:20–29). Before history began, God saw every option we would ever have and knew every choice we would ever make. Based on His omniscience, He made all His decisions before He created us—none of the decisions He has made are ever going to change. His decisions and His will are expressed to the extent that He has revealed them to us in His Word. Throughout the course of human history, in the exercise of human volition, man has often chosen—and continues to choose—contrary to the will and Word of God. Every one of

Decisions ... cont.

these choices has an effect on the course of history. Every one brings suffering. Bad decisions always bring about human suffering, because they are contrary to the plan and purpose of God.

7. We are the product of our decisions.

We are not the product of our environment and we are not the product of other people—unless we have chosen to be. Decisions are what make people. We all have a will from which we make decisions. Those decisions form a pattern, and from that pattern there develops a trend in our life. From the trend comes habits and from the habits, character. It is the trend of our lives with which God is most concerned.

Consider, for example, David. If we looked only at individual actions in David's life, we could say that he was a scoundrel, a liar, a thief, a pitiful father, an adulterer, a murderer, and unfaithful. He was. David was all these things. But these were not the habitual activities of David's life. A chart of David's life would actually look something like a graph of the stock market in a good year. He would make gains and then he would falter, then he would make gains and then he would falter. But always, the gains were getting higher and the trend was always upward. David continued to climb higher and higher in the spiritual realm.



Lesson 5–4:

The Victory—*Grace and Truth*

Job 2:11–13
Job 19:25–26

In all he poured out on his victim, Satan could not get Job out of fellowship with God. He could not budge this man—not through loss of wealth, family, or health. But the enemy always has an ace up his sleeve. As is so often the case, the enemy’s aces here were three believers.

These friends of Job came with the intention to comfort him. They came armed with truth; they knew their doctrine. But the father of lies did not have to be afraid of the truth this time because he knew these men would not wrap it in grace. Never forget that Satan uses the Word of God, taken out of context, for his own ends (Matt. 4:1–11). John reminds us that Jesus was “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). When this perfect balance is upset, grace without truth becomes subjective sentimentalism, and truth apart from grace becomes heartless legalism.

Satan hates grace. He has reason to. Truth is the absolute standard of God’s righteousness. No man could ever attain that standard if it were not for grace. Grace is all that God can do for man because of the work of Christ on the cross. Only through grace can man have any relationship with God. What is worse, from Satan’s point of view, is that grace gives all the glory to God because grace can only be received—never earned or deserved.

Jesus Christ displayed the glory of God through the fulness of grace and truth in perfect balance in His life (John 1:14). When grace, which comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit and truth (which comes from the study of the Word) are in balance in our lives, we are empowered for service, we are effective ambassadors

for Christ. When they are out of balance, we are serving someone other than Christ.

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.”
(Job 2:11–13)

These three men were princes in their own right. They were very influential men. They apparently felt some sympathy and compassion for Job, and they made an appointment together to come and comfort him. They had good motives.

It would have been customary for these men to sit and be silent until their host spoke. Job does not utter a word for seven days. The pain, the agony, the suffering, and the anxiety in him are so intense that he is afraid to open his mouth.

Suffering

There is no technique that can take the hurt out of pain. The task of faith is not to remove our pain, but to give us the strength to bear it—only in weakness can we find God’s sufficiency revealed (2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5; 12:9–10). Suffering is part of God’s plan for His children. Faith refined by fire makes Jesus Christ real to us, and until He is real to us, we cannot make Him real to anyone else. So, if we want to grow in the spiritual life, we will suffer.

There is a rough parallel between the five stages of spiritual growth (see pages 169–170) and five stages of suffering outlined in 1 Peter.

1. Trial and temptation (1 Pet. 1:6–7). The first tests we have to master as baby believers are usually the tests of everyday trial and temptation. The question is how well can we

It is a good thing for us to learn to clamp our jaws, to seal our lips, because once something is said it can never be taken back. Job is having such a phenomenal battle in his soul that he is raging inside, and he is sealing his mouth lest he open it and the flood pour out. There is a lot of anger and bitterness boiling in Job, and it will eventually come out. But at this point, he keeps silent.

At the end of seven days, Job does speak. Then his friends break their silence as well, and it becomes clear that these men who have come to encourage Job have no encouragement to give.

From this point forward, three of Job's friends start bombarding him with what they know and why they think this is happening to him. They cannot even agree among themselves, except in one thing—that they are right and Job is wrong. From chapter 3 until chapter 31, these men judge, accuse, and debate with Job. In all that time, they utter not a word of comfort, support, encouragement, sympathy, or compassion.

Misguided believers can do more damage with their truth than Satan ever does with his lies. It is very easy for good motives to be distorted into evil actions. These three friends of Job's are believers; they are brilliant men who have a deep understanding of doctrine. But they are serving the purposes of Satan. In attacking

Suffering ... cont.

face the mundane aggravations, the little things that go wrong—the daily irritations that are a natural result of living in the world and dealing with people. Any time we face a trial, we also face a temptation to respond with our emotions or human reason, to fall back on human supply, to handle what is before us with anything but faith.

2. Undeserved suffering (1 Pet. 2:19). The next test, faced at some point by every adolescent believer, is of how well we can stand up to undeserved suffering. Can we endure maligning, slander, injustice, being treated wrongfully—and do it silently, without retaliation or vindictiveness, without giving in to mental-attitude sins? In marriage, in friendships, in work relationships, we will be tested in this area over and over again. When someone less qualified gets the promotion that we deserve, when we get blamed for something we did not do,

Job, under the logic that if he is suffering it is because he has sinned, they accomplish what all the other tragedies could not accomplish. They manage to get Job out of fellowship and out of line with the plan of God.

There is a principle to be learned here: Do not assume that just because someone is suffering, he has done something wrong. That is infantile thinking. There are more reasons for suffering given in the Bible that have nothing to do with sin than there are reasons for suffering as a result of sin.

The disciples found this out in John 9. They were walking one day with the Lord when they looked down and saw a man who had been born blind. Immediately, a theological question occurred to them, so they asked Jesus whose sin it was that caused this blindness—was it the sin of the man or of his parents. To their minds, either the parents sinned—which caused their child to be born blind—or God knew that someday this man would commit some particularly terrible sin, so he was born blind as a kind of retroactive judgment.

There are people who love to preoccupy themselves with theological questions but have absolutely no concern for people. Job's friends got preoccupied with theological dispute, but they did not care much about Job. The disciples were concerned about the implications of this man's situation, but they did not care about him

Suffering ... cont.

when our reputation is compromised by someone else's lies, will we defend ourselves or will we let God defend us?

3. Suffering for the sake of righteousness (1 Pet. 3:14–15). Suffering for what we have not done is one thing, but suffering for the good we have done is quite another. In suffering for the sake of righteousness, we may pour our heart and soul into a ministry and then be accused of false motivation. We may give ourselves to a Sunday school class for years and then, because there is jealousy and resentment, be cut from the staff. This kind of suffering will eventually come to the mature believer whose service is starting to have an impact on the world. The question is this: Can we stay focused on Jesus Christ or will we let our pain make us bitter?

4. Sharing Christ's sufferings (1 Pet. 4:12–13). Why did Christ suffer? He suffered to bring us to God. He sacrificed Himself so we could have life. Sharing the sufferings of Jesus

as a person. To them the man was a detail; but the theological question, holding the right doctrine, was what mattered.

Of course, to Jesus Christ, the man was all important. He was what Jesus came to die on the cross for. So, at their question, the Lord turned around and told them that “*neither ... this man nor his parents*” had sinned to bring this on. He told them that this man’s blindness had nothing whatever to do with sin; it had everything to do with the fact that this man was ordained, chosen by God in eternity past, to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ on this day through his blindness.

Imagine being in this man’s place, having been blind all your life, having prayed just to be normal, having surely asked over and over again, “Why me?” Then one day, you hear the sound of footsteps coming toward you, and someone whispers in your ear, “The Son of David is coming!” First, you hear the arrogant question of the disciples, and you know everyone is looking at you, wondering what terrible things you must have done to be so afflicted. And then you hear His voice and the most glorious words you have ever heard: “This man was born blind to bring glory to Me. He has endured 40 years of blindness ‘*so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*’ ”

Would not those words make every pain and every indignity you ever suffered seem to be nothing at all? That is the way it was for Job.

Suffering ... cont.

Christ means that we have moved into an effective ministry where we are constantly making sacrifices and regularly receiving attack and opposition because we are fulfilling the continuing cause of Christ—evangelizing the lost and edifying believers through encouragement and Bible teaching. Because Satan is the god of this world, the prince of the power of darkness, he is going to utilize every force at his command to stop believers from promoting Jesus Christ. He does not care if we promote ourselves; but he hates it when we make Christ the issue, when the only thing that matters to us is that when people look at us, they see Jesus Christ and are motivated to grow in the grace and knowledge of Him. When this happens, Satan starts to feel threatened. When we get into the area of sharing the sufferings of Jesus Christ, we become heroes of faith.

5. Personal satanic attack (1 Pet. 5:8). If we advance far enough—and only a handful in history have—there will come a

“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God.” (Job 19:25–26)

Between chapter 3, where Job breaks his silence by cursing the day he was born, and chapter 38, where the Lord answers Job out of the whirlwind, this man of God has his ups and downs. The proverbial “patience of Job” has been greatly exaggerated. He does get his eyes off of the Lord, and he does lose his perspective.

But through everything, Job holds to his conviction that his Redeemer lives. He knows that someone must mediate between the holy God and unholy man, and he knows that whoever this is must be equal to both God and man (Job 9:32–33). He is confident that God will provide. In the meantime, he expresses his willingness to serve God no matter what. *“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him”* (Job 13:15).

When God finally breaks His silence (Job 38–41), He does not say, “Now, Job, please let Me explain why these things happened the way they did.” No. God says something like this, “Job, can you understand how the morning comes? Can you call forth the dawn? Can you separate the light and the darkness? Can you understand how the eagle flies? Can you explain the flight of a hawk? If you can, if you understand all these things, then you can take My place. Or are you just going to attack Me so you can justify yourself?”

Suffering ... cont.

time when we will face personal satanic attack. While we realize that Satan attacks all believers and tries to frustrate their growth and the plan of God in their lives, we also know that he is not omnipresent. Satan can only be in one place at a time. He has plenty of demons to assign to ordinary believers, but he saves some jobs for himself. When he walks about as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, what kind of people does he seek out? People like Job, people like Peter, like Paul. People who begin to have personal, historical impact inevitably come under satanic attack. What happens when they do? It is not a pretty sight. Job starts feeling sorry for himself under the attack of his friends; Peter denies his Lord. When the believer finds himself being sifted by Satan, he will not look too great to the world, but what the world thinks will not matter because his champion is God.

I have My reasons for what I do, and I do not have to tell you what they are. So why don't you stand up like a man and accept what I allow."

So, Job stands up, dusts himself off, and admits that he does not know everything (Job 42:1–6). He decides to let God be God. Not until long after Job died did the extent of his historical impact on the world begin to be seen. God had His reasons for allowing Job's suffering.

"The Lord God Almighty, surveying all the members of the human race ... said, 'Job will be the next battlefield in the invisible war. All of the forces of the enemy will be permitted to hurl themselves against this man. I will provide him with strength and sustain him in sorrow and disaster. It will be seen by men and angels and demons that spiritual life from the throne of heaven is sufficient to attract the soul. In a world where prosperity and luxury are the aims of utmost effort, where personal health and happiness is the object of most prayers, where the companionship of loved ones is the highest fellowship, I will permit the enemy to take away the flocks and the herds. I will allow his sons and daughters to die. I will suffer his body to be smitten by plague and racked with pain. I will let his wife turn from him and take the side of the enemy. I will send his friends to give him the counsel of despair. He will be brought to the nater of human desolation and yet he will sit intransigent, uncompromising, unhesitating with his eyes filled and fixed on eternal things and his mind aware of realities beyond the scope of human vision. He will understand that there is no will that can compete with the will of God. And as a result of this battle not only will he be vindicated in his steadfast resolution but also there will be comfort for thousands and thousands of souls throughout the coming centuries and Satan will be given a mouthful of dust.'" (Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, 141.)

The Good Fight of Faith

We fight a spiritual war. The more we understand the spiritual nature of this war, the easier it will be to take. Spiritual struggle is worse than any other kind of struggle. We must fight in the realm of thoughts and emotions. We are constantly assailed with conflicting information—nothing is as confusing as the spiritual realm—yet we are expected not just to stand, but to function. In this spiritual war, we have:

- Spiritual enemies (Eph. 6:12)
- Spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:17b)
- Spiritual armor (Eph. 6:11–17a)
- Spiritual strategy (1 Sam. 17:47)
- Spiritual victory (2 Cor. 2:14)
- Spiritual reward (2 Tim. 4:8)

Why is it the good fight?

1. It is the good fight because it is led by the most noble, honorable man who ever lived. It is the good fight because it is the cause of Jesus Christ.
2. It is the good fight because its victory is the victory of the cross, where He who is perfect laid down His life as a sacrifice for imperfect men.
3. It is the good fight because it is a battle for the souls of men.
4. It is the good fight because it is against Satan.
5. It is the good fight because it is fought with the love of God—the most noble motive in the universe.



Lesson 5–5:

The Prospect—*The Rapture*

Acts 1:6–8

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

Ephesians 5:15–17

The war in which we fight will end one day soon. It is important for us to understand that. The study of prophecy and future things is designed to give us hope for the future and perspective for the present. If we are confused about the plan of God and how it works its way out, and about His timetable for human history, then we will be disoriented in day-to-day life. We have to maintain balance, being careful not to be so focused on the future that we lose sight of today, or so distracted by today that we forget why we are here and where we are going.

“So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:6–8)

This exchange took place between the resurrection and the ascension of Christ. The imperfect tense in the phrase *“they were asking Him”* indicates that the disciples kept asking Jesus this same question over and over again.

“At this time” is literally “at this age.” The word translated “age,” *chronos*, from which we get “chronology,” is one of four Greek words for time. The disciples understand something about dispensations and they are thinking about the chronology of events. They see that the cross was followed by the burial and resurrection,

and now Christ has been with them for almost 40 days, and what they are saying is this, “In light of the fact that You have gone to the cross, paid for our sins, and provided salvation, are you now—in light of that chronology—going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

“Restore” means “to return to a former state.” The disciples are referring to the Old Testament promises declaring that Messiah will establish a kingdom that will never be shaken. They have in mind the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7:10–16 where an eternal kingdom, an eternal throne, and an eternal posterity were promised to David. They are ready for Jesus—who they obviously know is the promised Messiah—to overthrow the Romans and set up that kingdom on Earth now.

But there is a flaw in their thinking. The disciples have not picked up on the fact that for the last 40 days Jesus has been talking not about the “*kingdom of Israel*,” but about the “kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The two are not the same.

The Son of David had come and offered Himself to the Jews as Messiah, as their king, but they had rejected Him (Matt. 23:37–39). The establishment of the kingdom of Israel would now be postponed, as God initiated something totally unexpected. The prophecies of Daniel had implied that there would be some sort of break in the chronology of Israel’s history, that there would be a period of time between a first and second coming of Messiah (Dan. 9:26). That period of time is the Church Age, during which the kingdom of God is being established.

This kingdom, which Jesus had begun to introduce in the Upper Room Discourse, was what He had been trying to tell the disciples about since His resurrection. It is a spiritual kingdom, one that we enter the instant we place our faith in Jesus Christ—“*as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God*” (John 1:12). “*Therefore*,” Paul would later explain, “*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come*” (2 Cor. 5:17).

In response to the disciples’ questions about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, Jesus uses the emphatic negative to tell them that it is absolutely not for them to know “*the times or epochs which the Father has fixed*.” The word translated “*fixed*,” *tithemi*, refers to something that has been set down in concrete. God has set

down in concrete the plan of human history; He has fixed it in time by His own authority.

God has a blueprint for history, but Jesus tells His men that they do not need to concern themselves about that right now. What they need to focus on is the fact that they will soon receive the power of the Holy Spirit. From Acts 2, we know that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended and took up residence in every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. A new age had begun.

“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child; and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.” (1 Thess. 5:1–11)

In Acts 1:7, Jesus told the disciples that it was emphatically not for them to know *“the times and epochs that [God] has fixed.”* Twenty years later, Paul, writing about the same times and epochs—the *chronos* and *kairos*, the chronology and the fixed seasons—indicates that the Thessalonian believers *“know full well.”* The Greek *oida* is the word for complete, full, mature knowledge. *Akribos* means “with accuracy, precisely.”

Why did the disciples in Acts 1 not know and the people in Thessalonica *“know full well”*? Because in the intervening years, the Holy Spirit revealed to the Apostle Paul the outline of God’s plan for history. To Paul alone was given the full revelation of the “mystery” of the Church Age—the uniqueness of its place in the dispensations of God and the uniqueness of the divine provisions given to all Church Age believers.

Paul is not saying that these people know exactly when the Lord is going to return—no one knows or can know the date and time. But he is reminding them that they do know the order of things.

Notice the distinction he draws in this passage. Paul draws two important distinctions in 1 Thessalonians. One is between two very different kinds of people, “*them*” and “*us*.” The other is between two very different days, “*the day of Christ*” and “*the day of the Lord*.”

“*The day of Christ*,” described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, is the Rapture of the Church. It will happen in a split-second, “*in the twinkling of an eye*” (1 Cor. 15:52), and will be a day of blessing for all who believe. “*The day of the Lord*,” described in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:1–11 is the Tribulation. It will last seven years and will be a horrible time of wrath and judgment for those who do not believe.

The Day of the Lord

“*The day of the LORD*” is a distinctly Old Testament phrase. It is the subject of a great deal of prophecy as, for example, in passages like Isaiah 2:17; 13:6–9; Joel 3:1–2, 14; Zechariah 14:1–9; and Malachi 4:1–2.

1. The Day of the Lord was a day of mystery as to when it would occur. First Peter 1:12 tells us that Old Testament prophets did a lot of searching to try and figure out when it was going to happen.
2. The Day of the Lord was a day in the future—it still is.
3. The Day of the Lord is primarily a day of judgment. Every passage indicates that this will be a most terrible time. When the Day of the Lord comes, it will be the darkest hour in human history.
4. The events that relate to the Day of the Lord, both in the Old Testament prophecies and in the book of Revelation, identify it as the Tribulation. We know from a multitude of Scriptures that the Tribulation will last for seven years, and the entire time is called the Day of the Lord.
5. The Day of the Lord pictures Jesus Christ coming in vengeance. He came first as the Lamb of God. In the Day of the Lord, He will return as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. He will come with a sword in His hand to execute judgment.

It is in his discussion of “*the day of the Lord*” that Paul draws the distinctions between “*them*” and “*us*.” “*They*” will be saying, “*peace and safety*,” and will be caught unaware by the sudden destruction that “*will come upon them suddenly like labor pains*.”

Jesus described these “*birth pangs*” in Matthew 24 and 25. The Lord told His disciples that, while they would not know the day and the hour of the things that were about to happen, they would be able to recognize the season, and were to look up and take notice when it approached. Like birth pangs, He said the signs would increase in intensity. Wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes in many places—all these things would start out small and far apart and would get more and more intense and come closer and closer together.

The “*birth*” is the deliverance of the children of God. Jesus will come and call His family out of this world at the Rapture. That act, on the day of Christ, will initiate the day of the Lord. This is why Paul can say that what happens to them is not going to happen to us. Sudden destruction is coming on them, and they will not escape, but it will not overtake us. We do not have to worry about it because we are not of the darkness, but of the light.

Because of all that is about to happen, we are not to sleep, but to be alert and sober. When Paul talked in 1 Thessalonians 4 about

The Day of Christ

“*The day of Christ*” is a distinctly New Testament term found in such passages as Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14.

1. The Day of Christ is the day of completion for those who believe. This is the day we reach our objective.
2. The Day of Christ is a day of confirmation. We will know fully and completely, when this day comes, that we really have eternal life.
3. The Day of Christ is a day when believers become blameless in Christ. We may not be blameless now, but we will be blameless forever in His presence (Jude 24).
4. The Day of Christ is a day of salvation and rejoicing.
5. There will be no condemnation in the Day of Christ.

The Rapture

The English “rapture” comes from the Latin translation of a Greek word used only a handful of times in the New Testament. *Harpazo* means “to take by force, to snatch out of imminent danger.” In the earliest Latin translations of the Bible, this word was rendered *rapere*; it is the root of several English words, including “rapture,” which has the idea of being carried away by emotion, and “rape,” which implies being seized and carried away by force.

Harpazo is used in Acts 8:39 to describe what happened to Philip, the evangelist. He had just baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, and when they came out of the water, the Holy Spirit “*snatched Philip away.*” Instantly, Philip was gone from the desert and found himself in Azotus. That is what it will be like for believers in the Rapture of the Church.

In 2 Corinthians 12:2, Paul describes in the third person something that had happened to him fourteen years earlier. This was most likely the time when he was stoned in Lystra and dragged out of the city and left for dead (Acts 14:19–20). This man, Paul says, was “*caught up*” into “*the third heaven,*” a Jewish designation for the abode of God. In verse 4, Paul identifies this place as Paradise.

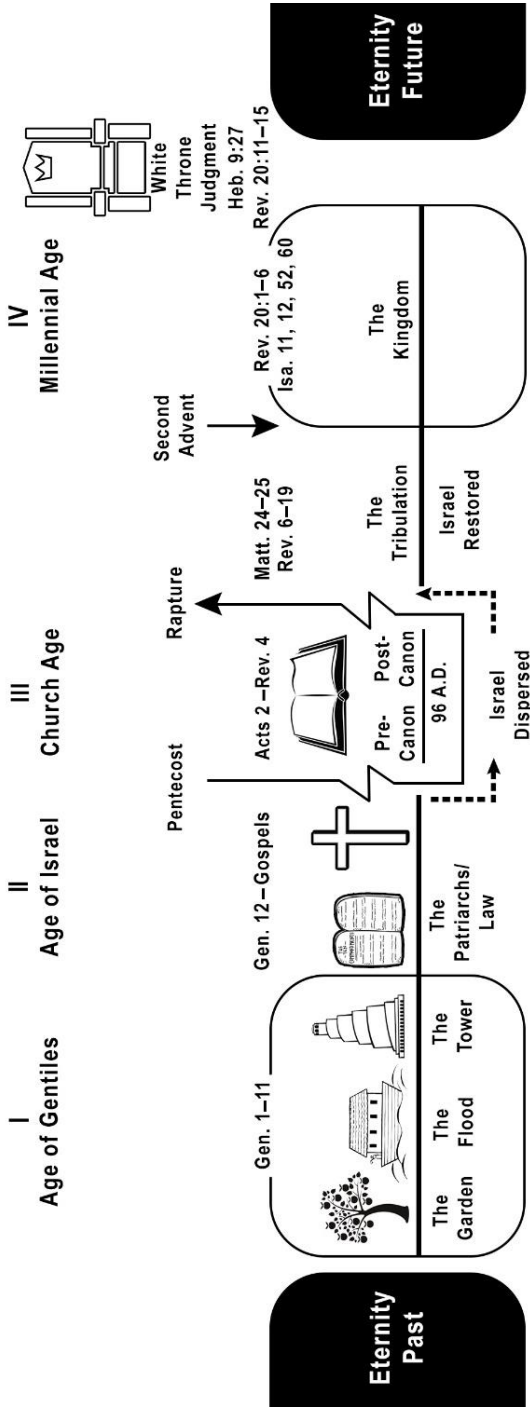
Harpazo is used again in Revelation 12:5. John’s description of a woman clothed with the sun and the moon takes us back to Genesis 37 and the vision of Joseph. This is an illustration of the Nation of Israel. The woman is about to give birth to a child, to Jesus Christ. The dragon—the enemy, Satan—is waiting to kill the child. She gives birth, and He is “*caught up*” to the throne of God. We call this the Resurrection, when Jesus Christ came out of the ground and was “*caught up,*” *harpazo*.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, Paul tells us about the resurrection of Church Age believers. He says that Jesus Christ will descend from Heaven with a shout. (The content of the shout is given in Revelation 4:1, “*Come up here!*”)

“*The dead in Christ will rise first*” (1 Thess. 4:16). We know from 2 Corinthians 5:8 that the souls and the spirits of dead believers are already with the Lord because “*to be absent from the body [is to be present] with the Lord.*” The instant a believer dies, his soul and spirit go into the presence of the Lord and are there until the resurrection of his body.

Then, “*we who are alive and remain will be caught up [harpazo] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord*” (1 Thess. 4:17).

Paul closes his description of the Rapture of the Church with an admonition to “*comfort one another with these words*” (1 Thess. 4:18). The doctrine of the Rapture is designed to give us courage for life. We can endure because we know that a magnificent time is coming in human history.



	I	II	III	IV
	Gentile Age	Jewish Age	Church Age	Millennial Age
Time	Adam to Abraham	Abraham to Pentecost/ Rapture to Second Advent	Pentecost to Rapture	1,000 years: Second Advent to White Throne Judgment
Scriptures	Genesis 1–11	Genesis 12—Gospels/ Matthew 24–25—Revelation	Acts 2—Revelation 4	Revelation 20:1–6 Isaiah 11, 12, 52, 60
Progression of the Age	The Garden The Fall to the Flood The Flood to Babel	Patriarchs: Abraham to Moses Law: Moses to Christ Tribulation: Rapture to Second Advent	Pre-Canon: Pentecost to Completion of Revelation Post-Canon: Completion of Revelation to Rapture	Return of Christ and Satan's imprisonment Perfect rule of Christ Release and final revolt of Satan and unbelievers
Responsibility for Making God's Word Known	On all families— In this age, there was one race and one language. Individual family patriarchs were charged with evangelism.	On one nation: Israel— After Babel, there were many languages. Through Abraham, God created Israel as a new race and charged the nation to evangelize.	On one Body: the Church— With creation of the Church, a new species was created. In this age, there are only two kinds of people: believers and unbelievers. Every Christian is an ambassador.	On one Person: Christ the King— Everyone will know Him. <i>"I will put My law within them, and on their hearts I will write it."</i> (Jer. 31:33)
Revelation of God's Word to Man	No written Scripture— God's Word communicated verbally through family patriarchs.	Scripture revealed to and recorded by individuals from Moses to Malachi and authors of the Gospels. Old Testament completed by 400 B.C.	New Testament revealed to and recorded by apostles and prophets. Canon of Scripture completed by A.D. 96 and will stand forever.	Full revelation in the personal presence of the Living Word— the Lord Jesus Christ.
Means of Salvation	By faith in Christ, the promised Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15; Job 19:25–27).	By faith in Christ, the promised Messiah (Gen. 15:6; Psa. 21–22; Prov. 30:4; Isaiah 53).	By faith in Christ, the risen Lord (Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8–9)	By faith in Christ, the ruling King (Heb. 8:8–13)

those who “sleep,” he used the word *koimao*, which means “to recline or to take rest,” to refer to the death of believers. In 1 Thessalonians 5, he uses *katheudo*, which means “to be unconscious, oblivious.” To sleep in this sense is to not see, or to see and not understand, what is going on all around us. This is a picture of being out of fellowship—spiritually unconscious.

Paul does not want us to be unconscious; he wants us instead to be alert and unafraid. Knowing absolutely what is going to happen, but not knowing exactly when it will happen, should bring balance in our lives.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10, Paul describes this balance in terms of serving and waiting. We should serve as if we only have today and wait as if we have a thousand years. We should learn to live one day at a time, giving ourselves wholly to what we do, as if this were our last day. But we should also be patient, realizing that the Rapture could come today or next year or in a hundred years.

We are waiting for Jesus, who will deliver us from “*the wrath to come*.” The definite article here clearly shows that Paul is talking about a particular wrath, the wrath that is described extensively in the Old Testament as the day of the Lord. This is the coming Tribulation. We do not have to fear it because we are not destined for the wrath, but for salvation (1 Thess. 5:9).

Paul is talking about our ultimate salvation. We know that salvation takes place in three phases. The first, positional salvation, takes place at the instant we believe. We are saved from the penalty of sin and seated with Christ in the heavenly places. The second, practical salvation, is spiritual growth and takes place as we are daily saved from the power of sin. The third, ultimate salvation, takes place at death or the Rapture, when we are saved from the presence of sin forever.

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Eph. 5:15–17)

To introduce this exhortation, Paul quotes what is probably a refrain from an ancient hymn, “*Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you*” (Eph. 5:14).

The present, active, imperative *egeiro* means “wake up and stay awake!” “*Sleeper*” is from the same word used in 1 Thessalonians 5:6,

katheudo, “unconsciousness, oblivion.” *Anistemi*, “awake,” means “Stand up!” Paul is urging these people to get up out of the operational death of apathy and to enter into the abundant life that Jesus intends every Christian to live (John 10:10).

As believers, we are on this Earth to be light and salt, to reveal the grace and truth of God to a lost and dying world. We only have so much time to do that. Paul does not want us to waste a second.

The phrase “*making the most of your time*” is literally “redeeming the time,” from *exagorazo*, which means “to ransom, to buy; by payment of a price to recover from the power of another.” Agora was the ancient marketplace—the street market where anything could be bought and sold. It is an illustration of the cosmos—the devil’s world. As Jesus redeemed us, now we are to redeem time. Why? For two reasons.

First, “*because the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:16). The prince of darkness is in control of this marketplace. When we fail to purchase a portion of the day, we let him win. Edmund Burke put it this way, “*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.*”

Every one of us has a responsibility to fight for right, for truth. When we purchase time, we slow the advance of evil. But there is only one way to buy time, and that is God’s way. All the human political activity in the world cannot stop evil like one believer living a day at a time in the filling of the Holy Spirit. One Elijah praying alone, one David hiding in a cave praising God, one Paul in chains writing letters to young churches—this is all it takes to change history.

The second reason we are to redeem time is because the time is short; it is running out (1 Cor. 7:29). Each of us has only a certain number of days to live. God has allotted to us exactly the number that we need to fulfill His plan and achieve spiritual greatness. God has so designed His plan that how much time we choose to redeem has a direct bearing on our lives in both time and eternity.

“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 neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19–21)

We are commanded to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven. In His last message to us, the Lord declared that He is coming quickly and that His reward is with Him, “*to render to every man according to what he has done*” (Rev. 22:12). Clearly, the Lord wants us to earn rewards—to store up treasures. How do we do that? By redeeming time.

The Bible tells us that rewards are given for faithful production, as a by-product of spiritual growth and maturity (1 Cor. 3:12–15; 9:16–27; 2 Cor. 5:9–11; Rev. 3:11). We know that the only production that counts with God is what is produced by the Holy Spirit through us. All His production comes one way: by grace. And since only faith can lay hold of grace, our rewards in Heaven will be in direct proportion to our faith on Earth. Faith is trusting what God has said, believing His Word. So, reward is based on our adjustment to God’s truth, which is just what our blessing in time is based on.

We will receive our reward soon after the Rapture, at the Bema, the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:9–11). We know, of course, that no sins will be an issue here because all sins were judged at the cross. What will be judged here is human good. Everything we have done as believers in our own strength will be consumed by fire—every thought, every word, every deed we did apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit that is not built on the true foundation of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 3:9–15).

All that will survive the fire will be what we allowed the Holy Spirit to do through us. All divine production in our lives—every thought, every word, every deed we did in the filling of the Holy Spirit—will be rewarded by Jesus Christ.

Second Peter 1:10–11 tells us that the abundance of our riches in Heaven will reflect our spiritual growth on Earth. Our recompense at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be based on how much we let God do in our lives on Earth, how much we were willing to accept His grace and to pursue His plan. Those who let Him make them spiritually great in time will bear the mark of that greatness forever; they will shine forever as a reflection of the surpassing glory of the grace of God!

When we see all our years, days, hours, and minutes pass through those flames, we will understand—with the perfect clarity that we could have today by faith—that the only greatness worth pursuing in life was the greatness of grace, that the only race worth running was the race of faith, and that the only fight worth fighting

was the good fight. Then, when it is all over, the only words worth hearing are the words of approval from the Lord Jesus Christ, *“Well done, good and faithful servant!”* (Matt. 25:23a NKJV).

“So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12)

How to Redeem Time

The only day we can redeem is today (Isa. 49:8; Matt. 6:33–34; 2 Cor. 6:2), and throughout Scripture we are continually exhorted to listen to God today (Exodus 17; Psalms 90; 95; 106; 1 Cor. 10:1–10; Hebrews 3). Every morning, God lays before each of us 24 hours, 1,440 minutes, and gives us the opportunity to buy out as much of that time as we want to for eternity. Every minute we spend in fellowship, filled by means of the Spirit, belongs to us forever. Every minute we are out of fellowship is lost.

To buy time, we have to have capital. Our capital is the Word of God. Everything comes to us from the Word (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16), and the Word is the only thing we will take with us from this realm into eternity (Psalm 90:12).

1. Be filled by means of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
2. Study (Rom. 12:2; 2 Pet. 3:18)
3. Apply the Word (Col. 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:15)
4. Endure/wait (Isa. 40:31; Rom. 8:18; James 1:2–4; 1 Pet. 1:7; 2:19–21; 3:14–18; 4:1–2)
5. Pray (Eph. 6:18; Heb. 13:15; James 5:13–18)
6. Submit (Eph. 5:21)
7. Serve (1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Corinthians 13)

Blessing and Reward

Five Categories of Blessing in Time

1. Spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10)
2. Promotion (1 Sam. 2:30)
3. Blessing by association (Psalm 23:5)
4. Historical impact (Isa. 53:12)
5. Dying grace (Psalm 116:15)

Four Categories of Reward in Eternity

1. Praise (1 Cor. 4:5)
2. Crowns (1 Cor. 9:24–27)
 - a. The crown of righteousness for faithfulness to the Lord in life (2 Tim. 4:7–8)
 - b. The crown of joy for faithfulness in witnessing (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19)
 - c. The crown of glory for faithfulness in ministry (1 Pet. 5:4)
 - d. The crown of life for faithfulness in testing (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10)
 - e. The incorruptible crown for self-discipline in the spiritual life (1 Cor. 9:24–25)
3. Rank and authority (Matt. 25:14–23; 24:45–47; Rev. 2:26)
4. Glory (Dan. 12:3; Rom. 8:17–18; Rev. 2:28)

Unit 5 Review

Lesson 5–1

1. Who are the only three angels specifically named in Scripture?
2. What would lead you to believe that there is a system of rank and authority in the angelic realm?
3. Who is Satan? Explain where he came from and how he came to be the enemy of God.
4. Give at least five names or titles by which Satan is known in Scripture.
5. Explain man's role in the spiritual war.
6. What is God's purpose in allowing the spiritual war to be played out on Earth?
7. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, how did the nature of the spiritual war change?
8. What is the difference between the strategic victory and the tactical victory in spiritual war?
9. What is the source of daily tactical victory?
10. Who are the overcomers?
11. In what sense is religion the ace up Satan's sleeve? If Christianity is not a religion, what is it?
12. Name nine denials the Bible says will characterize the end times.
13. How would you explain Satan and spiritual war to a friend? What Scripture would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

1 John 5:4–5

Matthew 11:28–30

Lesson 5–2

1. What is the arena of the spiritual war?
2. The book of Job is a treatise on what New Testament promise?
3. Who was Job and when did he live? Describe what kind of man he was.

4. Describe the exchange between God and Satan laid out in Job 1:6–8.
5. What charge does Satan bring against Job?
6. What theological “secret” does Satan reveal in his accusation of Job?
7. What does Satan want Job to do?
8. Job 1:12 is an illustration of what New Testament promise?
9. Where is Jesus Christ right now and what five activities is He involved in on behalf of every believer?
10. Name at least five things the Bible declares that God is able to do and five things He is faithful to do.
11. How would you explain the arena of spiritual war to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verse

1 Peter 5:8

Lesson 5–3

1. How can we know that the enemy operates according to a well-thought-out plan?
2. What five tactics does Satan use against Job in the attacks described in Job 1:13–19?
3. Why is it dangerous for us to harbor fears?
4. How does Job deal with his sorrow and pain after Satan’s first assault?
5. Describe the exchange between God and Satan in Job 2:1–6. What new accusation does Satan bring against Job?
6. What does Satan do to Job in his second assault?
7. What three doctrinal principles are illustrated in Job’s response to his wife?
8. What are seven disciplines for producing peace?
9. Why are even the smallest of decisions we make so important?
10. Is it possible for a Christian to take a vacation from the spiritual war? What marathon runner’s tactic can we use to enable us to last out our race?

11. What are ten principles of physical warfare that can be applied to spiritual warfare?
12. How would you explain the tactics of Satan to a friend? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Job 1:20–22

Lesson 5–4

1. What tactic of Satan finally worked on Job?
2. Describe Job’s three friends and the “comfort” they offered.
3. Describe an incident in the life of Jesus that illustrates the principle that sin in our lives is not the only explanation for suffering.
4. When God breaks His silence, how many of Job’s questions does He answer? Basically, what does He say to Job?
5. What is Job’s response to God’s words?
6. Do you think that Job today would say that his suffering was worth the pain he experienced? Give reasons for your answer.
7. What are the five stages of suffering outlined in 1 Peter? How do they relate to the five stages of growth?
8. What is “the good fight of faith”? Why is it good?
9. How would you explain to a friend the purpose behind human suffering? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Job 19:25–26

Job 13:15

Lesson 5–5

1. Why is it important for us to have some understanding of prophecy?

2. What is the difference between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of God?
3. Why was the establishment of the kingdom of Israel postponed?
4. With what are the “mystery doctrines” concerned? To whom were these doctrines revealed?
5. What is the difference between the day of the Lord and the day of Christ?
6. How can an understanding of the Rapture give balance to our lives?
7. What does it mean to redeem the time?
8. What are two reasons why we should redeem time?
9. What are seven things we can do to redeem time?
10. Draw a timeline to illustrate four dispensations of human history, giving the name of each dispensation and portions of Scripture in which each dispensation is described.
11. How do we earn eternal reward? What is the relationship between blessing in time and reward in eternity?
12. Name four categories of reward described in the Bible. Name five kinds of crowns and the reasons for which they will be given.
13. How would you explain to a friend the events that will close out human history? What Scriptures would you use to back your claims?

Memory verses

Ephesians 5:15–17

Psalm 90:12

Matthew 6:19–21

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