
The Pursuit of Piety

“... in quietness and in trust shall be your strength” – Isaiah 30:15



“Be ye Holy as He is Holy”

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THE PURSUIT OF PIETY 2.0



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August 2023; March 2025

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2 Preface

Piety refers to holiness – but few seem to be in the chase. When the Lord’s white sheep are dirty grey, black sheep feel more comfortable.

This is **not** a 12 step program to piety. Rather, this work is a collection of devotions on the power of holiness --a resource on the principles of becoming more and more like Christ -- the supreme need of Christians today. It is not meant to be read as a novel, but for meditation over time.

Because men are more interested in money, business success, and health, this E-book will not make the NY Times Best Seller List.

The world cannot hate you (the unsanctified), but it hates me, because I testify to it that its works are evil” – John 7:7)

This book is not for preachers trying to build big churches, but for individuals in pursuit of God. For men and women who want to know Christ and be more like Him . . . for those struggling with holiness . . . for those fighting the nervous energy of our times.

My own pursuit of holiness began immediately after I became a Christian. After receiving Christ as my Savior my life changed for the better, but as I read the New Testament, I struggled to achieve its noble ideals. The battle between faith and doubt, flesh and spirit, His will and my will was real. Fortunately, the Lord gave me great mentors. Thus, this work is a collection of talks, studies, and articles I’ve written over years of ministry on the subject of piety -- thus, the reason for different styles and formats in this work.

One might ask, “Are you pious?”

The answer is “Yes” and “No.” Yes, this book is the result of a lifetime of walking with God and what I have learned about godliness; No, I have not attained the high calling of God. For this reason this book is called, “In Pursuit of Piety.”

During my pilgrimage on this earth I met a few people who claimed to have achieved a state of sinless perfection, but mostly I was surrounded by believers pretending to be holy but who were secretly living a life of defeat; that is, defeat had become normal. The statement that launched my ship into the sea of holiness was the following:

If we regard the claim that one can achieve sinless perfection a great heresy, we regard satisfaction with sinful imperfection a greater heresy. Selah.

Thus, this work is my attempt to battle sanctification heresies so prevalent among us.

It is not meant to be read in one sitting, but to be studied over time as one faces adversities in his Christian life and the struggle to be godly. Need is the basis of growth.

“Be careful for what you hunger for, for you will become the sum total of your desires.”

If you are looking for a quick answer on how to be holy between cell phone calls, you will not find it in this book. But, there is power to be gained for those who will be still and seek Him.

Brooky R Stockton, ret. Minister of the Gospel

3 Dedication

Dedicated to my lovely wife, Jo Ann H. Stockton who has stood with me during those dark hours that tested our faith and who has been a model to all those around her of humility, godliness, and faith – a genuine Proverbs 31 woman.

Part I

4 Principles of Piety

Exodus 3:5

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* **holy** ground.



4.1 Where Have All the Godly Gone?

Psalm 12

◆ In her book by Kingley Press the daughter of Harold St. John said that where ever her father went, he carried with him ten cubic feet of holiness.

Harold St. John we find the example of a man who seemed unhurried and at the same time accomplished much. He was a scholar, a teacher, a witness. All these things, along with the fact he was able to influence his family toward godliness, caused me to enjoy the book. I will recommend it highly to both laymen and preachers – Rev. Rollin Mitchell.

As David looked around at the degradation in his day, he asked, "Where have all the godly gone?" Likewise, the God-fearing people of our time are often bewildered by the shrinking population of pious (holy) men.

This psalm is a canticle about the frustration David felt about being surrounded by charlatans and hypocrites, and the hope he had of being delivered from their schemes.

It is a psalm for people who can't see God's "little flock" and feel like they are surrounded by miscreants. If you are sick and tired of the promotion of depravity by government officials, the media, and political organizations, this psalm is for you.

Psalm 12:1 (To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.)

Sheminith - an eight string guitar, a possible reference to an octave.

"A Psalm of David:"

Either David wrote this psalm or another added it to his library of songs. There are no historical references in this chorale to any events in David's life where we can say with certainty that David penned these lyrics, but the tenor of the psalm definitely chimes with other songs that David composed. Like all psalms, this lyric addresses a conflict in the heart of the psalmist -- an eclipse in the psalmist's life where he loses sight of the remnant.

Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

The word "**help**" (yasha) is an intransitive Hithpael verb with no object. It means "save." In the emphatic position, David looks around and burst into a prayer because of his grief: "Save, LORD. I am surrounded by profane men!"

Feeling like the last sheep in God's green pastures, David bleats out: "**the godly man ceaseth**" and "**the faithful**" (pious) have vanished -- probably because wolves eat lambs, and surviving sheep are in hiding.

This statement is a poetic hyperbole -- an expression of David's loneliness . . . of his longing for spiritual companionship. This is not a fact, but it felt like one. Like sheep, David preferred the company of other sheep. Apparently, David experienced an eclipse in his life where he could not see or feel the warmth of Divine life *ad rem* to children of light. Rather, David feels crowded by impious, zeta-males oozing with depravity and debauchery.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

The "**they**" refers to the wicked (*rasha'im*) void of purity and piety. There are three marks of godless men in this text; that is, they are easily recognized by their talk and tantrums: swaggering speech, smooth discourse, and double-talk.

First, they speak "**vanity**" (*shawv*) which refers "to deceitfulness, to overly proud, to emptiness or to nothingness."

The *rasha'im* are narcissistic. They sermonize only about themselves and what advances their agenda. Vain people seem to have the capacity to talk for ever about trivia in their personal lives and zero capacity to dialogue about important matters. Shakespeare wrote a play titled, "Much ado about nothing" -- a mark of boorish people.

Second, they speak with "**flattering**" words; that is, their tones and inflections were smoother than butter.

Third, they speak with a double heart. The word "**double**" is not in the text, but the word heart (*leb*) is used twice: i.e., they speak with *leb leb* or a double heart. Deceivers say one thing and mean another. They have one glossary for church, and another for the cantina; one kind of speech at work and another kind of speech for home. In 1614, Thomas Adams observed, "*A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster.*"

David was surrounded by monsters.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

The pious psalmist has no patience with these double-minded, doubled-tongued, sweet-talkin' drivellers (James 1:8). His theology taught him these tricksters will be severed from society by the sword of the LORD.

4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

The noun "**our tongues**" is in the emphatic position; that is, the main weapon of deceivers is their tongue. These people have a way of twisting the language to sell their enslavement programs. Captions like "Social Security Insurance," "Federal Reserve," "Patriot Act," and "Affordable Care Act" come to mind.

"Our lips are our own" means our mouth; our choice; absolute freedom of speech; at our disposal to say what we please when we please.

"Who is lord over us?" Who has any right to control us; or to call us to "shut up"? These people acknowledge no authority over them but their own passions.

These schmoozers make ugly look pretty, and bitter taste sweeter. These deceivers have the skills to market arsenic soup as magical-cures; the ability to sell sawdust as oatmeal; the talent to make stinkhead salmon smell like fried shrimp; the means to cook ten day old bread and make it taste like fresh baked pancakes.

In our time, the airwaves are filled with pretense and monkeyshines. Having mastered the art of newspeak and propaganda, the depraved media puts a spin on everything. Sport heroes are covered criminals; news anchors are paid CIA agents; and, entertainment is colored with antichrist prostitution.

5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

The LORD speaks this ancient oracle affirming the theology of the psalmist. Seeing the exploitation of oppressors and the sighing of the poor, the LORD arises from his silence to rescue the oppressed.

The word **"needy"** refers to the poor man with few resources to recover from fraudulent promotions of charlatans. There is no mention of formal prayer here. The needy sigh in secret. But, God hears the pain and inner groaning of the poor (Hagar; Moses at the Red Sea).

"will arise" is a moment of military-like action. The voice is first person -- the voice of the LORD. Our God is a God of War who promises the sons of Abraham they will possess the gates of their enemies (Genesis 22:17).

"Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel" – Numbers 10:35-36

The construction **"I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him"** is a figure of speech that can be construed to mean, "I will set him in safety for the one who pants for it:" "in safety for which he yearns (breathes)," or "I will set him safely from the one who blows upon him." Ellicott promotes the former, Barnes and Benson advocates the latter.

When promises are broken by smooth talkers, the poor are the ones most likely to suffer. The rich, having many resources, are less likely to feel the pain of broken promises or malice aforethought. "In like manner, the poor would be most likely to "be taken in by the acts of unprincipled men, and to be deceived in their small dealings with them." (Barnes)

Both positions are true. God delivers those who thirst for salvation, and he sends the north wind against defrauders who huff and puff at the poor.

6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Unlike the promises of shysters, **God's Word** can be relied upon. The words of double-minded politicians and government officials are worthless, but the words of the Lord are like refined silver that have been smelted seven times. The doubled-hearted (leb, leb) are filled with deceit, but there is no falsehood with the LORD. His Word is infallible.

Silver addresses the value of God's Word. Profane men consider the Bible as worthless; nominal Christians measure its value in pennies; but holy men consider it their greatest treasure.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

"**Them**" refers to the "godly" in verse one and the poor and needy in verse five.

"**Thou shalt keep them**" is a direct promise of the LORD -- a reference to "I will set them in safety" in verse five. What God promises, He shall perform! Thou shalt keep them from corrupt politicians; from the palm-greasing salesman; from double dealers; from degenerate and depraved schemers with covetousness in their hearts. Thou shalt keep them and guard (preserve) them in this generation and in generations to follow.

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

This verse must be linked to verse seven, "**Thou shall preserve them**" even though "the wicked walk on every side, "**when the vilest** (zuwleth = worthless) **men are exalted**" to positions of power.

The wicked (rasha'im) are everywhere filling every branch of government, every corporation where money can be made, and every political office where power can be obtained. No wonder David complained about the "foundations" being destroyed in Psalm 11:5 – a reference the breaking down of the front lines in the infantry.

This psalm ends with a promise of protection for the humble. God's lambs will be kept and guarded even though surrounded by wolves. The promise is not that God will purge the wicked from the earth, but that He will preserve the Godly man who looks to the Lord as his Protector. The season of separating the chaff from the wheat awaits the end of history.

4.2 The Power of Piety

Separation Unto God

Judges 13:5

For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

◆ The strength of Christians is not in their wealth, education, or social status, but their devotion to Christ.

Before us is the background of Samson's birth and the instructions the Angel of the LORD gave to his mother, Hazlelponi or Zelelponi (1 Chronicles 4:3).

Samson lived in the 11th century B.C. during the Late Period of the Judges. He was one of three known Nazarites in the Bible: Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

A Nazarite was a person separated unto God by a vow (Numbers 6). During the period of his separation he was wholly obligated to the rules of separation. He could not drink wine, eat grapes, raisins, or unclean foods (Leviticus 13), touch dead bodies, or cut his hair.

In Samson's case, his mother shared his Nazarite Vow: "She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe" (Judges 13:14).

From this account, we learn the following:

(1) When God delivers his people from servitude, he begins with a Nazarite . . . with a pious man . . . with a man under law. In this case, He began delivering Israel from debt-slavery (taxation) to the Philistines by preparing a champion decades before their liberation. God placed the family under Nazarite law (the law of holiness) and used Samson mightily to rescue Israel from political oppression of the Philistines – a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would possess "the gates of their enemies" (Genesis 22:17). If God could do such mighty things through one Nazarite, what could God do through a nation of pious men?

(2) That great movements like revival and freedom from oppression begin with a man devoted to God . . . with a man devoted to law . . . to holiness. Holiness is the strength of Christian people. Moreover, both males and females could be Nazarites (Numbers 6:2).

(3) That pollution of children takes place through mothers; that is, God ordered Zelelponi to be holy and separate herself ceremonially from the sins of the age unto God; i.e. she was under duty to share her son's devotion. What parents allow in moderation will become an excuse for children to do in excess. When purity is normal childhood training, power is normal adulthood living.

(4) That dedication must be taken serious. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Zelelponi twice to give her instruction on how to raise her child for God. Each time He commanded her to refrain from wine and eating unclean things per Nazarite Rules in Numbers 6.

Manoah inquired about their duty as parents. And, in so doing he was not driven by doubts, but by energetic faith.

“Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more, and you should expect no less” – Robert E. Lee to his son.

“Good men are more careful and desirous to know the duty to be done by them, than to know the events concerning them: duty is ours, events are God’s . . . Pious parents, especially, will beg Divine assistance ” (Matthew Henry).

(5) Men need strength to obey the light they have. Manoah inquired about his duty to the child and as to the “Name” of the Angel. The Angel granted his first request and informed him of his duties; but the Angel denied Manoah further knowledge into his name. His need was knowledge of his duty; not light into the character of the Angel. Sometimes we just need to obey the light we have instead of seeking more light without the capacity or pious power to obey.

The Rules of a Nazarite in Numbers 6 include the following:

(1) He abstained from wine of the vine. From the kernel to the husks, he had to avoid intoxicating beverages (Numbers 6:4).

He could not permit himself to be under any influence other than the Spirit of God. What was true for Samson was true for his mother. The holy son came from a holy mother . . . and a supportive father — a lesson on the importance of holiness as a marker of the family.

(2) He had to separate himself from unclean foods — anything forbidden by law (Poole) – a lesson on separating from unclean books, entertainment, and social activities that defile the soul.

(3) He had to separate himself from dead bodies unto the living God– a lesson on avoiding sins that extinguish the man . . . on avoiding depraved acts (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 18).

(4) He had to don a full beard and uncut hair. No razor could come upon his head; i.e., long hair and a beard was a sign of one’s sanctification to God. Moreover, his commitment was public inferring that friends and neighbors were under duty to assist the man in the fulfillment of his vow.

Samson’s parents, grateful to the Angel of the LORD, were permitted to offer a “burnt offering” as an expression of thankfulness. (13:15). As the burnt offering went up in flames the Angel of the LORD added Himself to it — a lesson that every prayer must ascend to God through Christ with the sweet incense of the Savior. Pray more; praise much.

“Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God. But without Christ in the heart by faith, our services are offensive smoke; in him, acceptable flame” – Matthew Henry.

So, amazing was the wonder of the Angel adding Himself to the flames of the burnt offering, Manoah felt the danger of personal judgment. Having seen the Angel of the LORD. He blurted out his fear to Zelelponi that they might die.

13:23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

“God would not have done what he has done for my soul, if he had designed to forsake me, and leave me to perish at last; for his work is perfect. Learn to reason as Manoah’s wife; If God designed me to perish under his wrath, he would not give me tokens of his favour” (Matthew Henry).

God uses pious men who separate themselves unto God and His commission to win souls and feed His lambs. As proof of claim consider Robert Evans and the Welch Revival.

Notes:

1. Devotion to God is the strength of the saints, but devotion to God does NOT permit abandonment of marital duties, family responsibilities, house chores or obligations of work.

2. There is nothing in the Word of God that supports the prominent Roman Catholic Orders (RCOs) unless it be the law of the Nazarite.

But, even here the difference is astonishing. RCOs require abstinence from marriage, but no such requirement was laid on Nazarites. RCOs prohibit members from eating certain meats, but Nazarites were permitted to eat what every other Israelite was permitted to eat. RCOs indulge in all kinds of alcoholic beverages, but Nazarites were prohibited from drinking alcohol of any kind. RCOs require a lifetime of devotion to the rules of the order, but Nazarite vows were limited in time and scope . . . and, in some cases Nazarite vows required approval of parents and husbands.

In relation to marriage, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, David, Isaiah, Hosea, and Samuel (a Nazarite) were married. John the Baptist (a Nazarite) was not.

3. The mirth of a Christian is not in his successes as a follower of the cross, but in the victory and accomplishment of Christ. Believers fail, but Christ never failed. Believers want victory, but their joy is in the Savior who wholly pleased God in all that he did and said.

4. The word “Nazarite” (naziyr) in Hebrew means “separated one.” The lesson on Nazarites is not one on avoiding wine . . . but that of renouncing worldly pleasures, abstaining from fleshy lusts, being separate from sinners, making an open profession of our faith, moderating natural affections, being spiritually-minded, being devoted to God’s service, and being desirous to be an example all around us (Matthew Henry).

See the **rules of holiness for priests** (Ezekiel 44:9, 15-31) who wore (1) a linen turban on their heads as a symbol of holy service, (2) official linen robes which were a sign of the professional calling – worn only in the temple in their official role of service (3) a full beard as a sign of their sanctification, (4) and a full head of hair — not too short and not too long.

Just as the priests had rules for dress, the gospel lays on men the duty to be holy -- to dress modestly, to take off their hats in church, and for women to wear a headcovering (1 Timothy 2:8-9, 1 Corinthians 11:1-16).

When the Bible says, “Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 96:6), the ordinance requires worship in holy vestments (Psalm 96:6); that is, with decency, order, excellence in manners, customs, and clean clothing.

4.3 The Definition of Piety

Isaiah 6:3

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” -

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.””- 1 Peter 1:15-16

◆ A book on piety will never make the best seller list nor does a child say, “When I grow up, I want to be holy.”

The subject is so unpopular that you can’t find a “Christian” definition of piety in the first ten pages of a Google Search.

Various Definitions on Piety

Good men would rather be pious than know how to define it, but here are some definitions to consider:

Let us begin by describing what piety is not. It does not involve being prudish, prissy, moralistic, overnice, overmodest, overly religious, reclusivity, introvertedness, goody-goody, passive, carping judgmentalism, being overly modest, and having more sugar than the fairy godmother. Piety is not cream-puff spirituality.

Cambridge Dictionary defines piety as “believing in religion (Christianity), and living in a way that shows that belief” . . . as *strongly believing in the “Christian” religion, and living in a way that shows this belief* but it seems to be a pejorative term associated with prudishness or anti-wokeness in the minds of these word smiths. Because all the great men in Scripture were pious, piety is a virtue, not a vice. And, if men want to be great in the eyes of God, they must possess a measure of holiness!

Merriam-Webster defines piety as “the quality or state of being pious . . . fidelity . . . dutifulness in religion.”

Dictionary.com defines pious as “having or showing a dutiful spirit of reverence for God or an earnest wish to fulfill religious obligations.”

Pious is an adjective meaning: “marked by or showing reverence for deity and devotion to divine worship.”

Piety, of course, has little to do with man’s shallow commitment to religious forms. True piety is the taking up the cross and pursuing “Christ-likeness” when only God can see and judge. The pious heart walks in the light conscious of the presence of God in the tabernacle of his heart.

Generally speaking, piety is being holy, living righteously and courageously, being like Christ in his holiness, devotion, purity, and singleness of purpose. It is concerned with walking with God and pleasing Him. It involves rigorous manliness (or womanliness), separation from sin, soldier-like bravery, morals, prayer, private godly habits, and a pursuit of devotion to Christ.

A definition of holiness

2 Corinthians 7: 1 encourages believers to perfect holiness in the fear of God. But, what is holiness? The answer is found 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:1.

Holiness refers to the total reconciliation of the total man to God; that is, the process of surrendering to the grace of God so it can have its intended effects on the mind, soul, emotions, speech, will and body.

The opposite of holiness is waking up in the morning feeling like one has a choice whether to do good or evil. A holy man has no choice. Knowing that Jesus Christ gave His precious all to save sinners, the redeemed lives the remainder of his life willfully and joyfully surrendered to the will of God.

The Biblical term for piety is the **fear of God.**” A study on piety is like applying a scrub brush to the soul. As one grows in Christ-likeness he will be tough and tender, patient and productive, holy and happy, salt and pepper, full of love for people and hate for sin.

*Proverbs 9:10 **The fear of the LORD** is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

The theological term for piety is “sanctification.” Justification declares a man just before the throne of God (Romans 5:1); sanctification is the process of becoming just in the tabernacle of one’s heart (1 Peter 1:15).

The motivation for piety is the cross -- the supreme fact that God reconciled us to Himself through the gift of His Son.

The Reason to Study Piety

It is not long into the Christian life that one discovers that he has an enemy within that shadows him like an evil twin robbing him of dignity and power. This experience, common to all believers, drives Christians to understand themselves, the gospel, and what it means “to be filled with the Spirit.”

Various movements have emphasized the power of piety including but not limited to the “Revival Movement,” “Higher Life Movement,” “the Keswick Movement.” The idea behind all these movements is that with the help of the Holy Spirit the Christian can live an “overcoming,” “higher,” “deeper,” holy life devoid of willful sin.

The desire for a higher life has produced such great Christians as J. Sidlow Baxter, A. W. Tower, R. A. Torrey, Andrew Murray, Ian Thomas, Miles Stanford, Alan Redpath, Stephen Olford, Watchman Nee, and Amy Carmichael. Moreover, none of these believers fell into the error of total eradication of sin, “entire sanctification,” “a second blessing,” or contentment with sinful imperfection. All struggled with sin in their lives, but each testified there was power available from the Holy Spirit for those in pursuit of piety.

Luke 1:74- 75 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear (of punishment), in holiness and righteousness BEFORE him, all the days of our life.

These are the words of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, after he understood that Mary was going to give birth to the Savior.

“Without fear” is in the emphatic position in this statement. At this moment Zechariah realized the whole purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was to free men from their enemies so they might serve the Lord without fear (of punishment) in a state of holiness.

The normal Christian life is not one of sinning and confessing, but, one where sin is squelched and love is ignited. The pious know they are imperfect, but they also know they can serve God in power without fear of punishment.

The goal of piety, therefore, is to be fully equipped to serve God without fear or regret.

When Zachariah gained insight into the Christ child, he saw the hope that “we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear” (Luke 1:74). How can we serve Him without fear (of punishment)? The answer is in 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 13:20-21).

In Hebrews we read, “**through the blood** of the everlasting covenant, **make you perfect** (katartizo) **in every good work** to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight” (13:20-21).

The word “**perfect**” (katartizo – tisai) (aorist optative – a wish) means “to equip thoroughly” and “to repair.” It is translated “perfectly joined together” in 1 Corinthians 1:10; “fully furnished” or “equipped” in 2 Timothy 3:17; “to mend” nets in Matthew 4:21; “to restore” in Galatians 6:1; and “to frame” in Hebrews 11:3. In using the optative the apostle is expressing a wish that a believer’s consideration of the blood will fully equip him to serve God.

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the power of His Risen Life unto sanctification. *The One saving us through **His death** from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through **His life** from the power of sin.*

Genesis 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk BEFORE me, and be thou perfect (complete, whole, sound, in truth).

The great Catholic orders take Zechariah’s words seriously.

Consider the Secret of the Saints – **Opus Angelorum**:

“In the Work of the Holy Angels the members are encouraged to strive to acquire seven special virtues which will help them to achieve a more intimate union with the holy angels. These are: Fidelity, Humility, Obedience, Charity, Silence, Temperance and the Imitation of Mary.”

Who can find fault with this? Mary / Zechariah signaled the call to piety for all those holding to the tenets of the early catholic church and the reformed faith that separated itself from organizational corruption and apostasy prevalent in the 16th century.

By piety we are **not** suggesting one should leap into “wretched subjectivism.” The deeper you go into the human heart without an understanding of objective justification, the darker it gets. We are **not** suggesting one needs to be “slain in the spirit” or to “speak in tongues” or eat a stack of donuts to achieve holiness. Those in pursuit of piety walk daily in the shadows of the cross and its painful application to the self-life in order to imitate Christ:

Men change, **not** by going to a psychologist to undergo an archaeological journey into one's past or taking a magnifying glass to inspect one's feelings, but by inspecting Christ and His cross. Men change for the better by looking at Christ, not by looking at self:

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Ground of Piety

Pursuit of piety MUST BE GROUNDED on the doctrine of justification and what Christ did "for us" at the cross.

Before the Throne Above, by Charitie Lees Bancroft

*Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea,
a great High Priest, whose name is Love
who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
my name is written on His heart;
I know that while in heav'n He stands
no tongue can bid me thence depart.*

*When Satan tempts me to despair
and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look, and see Him there
who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
my sinful soul is counted free,
for God the just is satisfied
to look on Him and pardon me.*

*Behold Him there! the risen Lamb!
my perfect, spotless righteousness,
the great unchangeable I AM,
the King of glory and of grace!
One with Himself, I cannot die;
my soul is purchased by His blood;
my life is hid with Christ on high,
with Christ my Savior and my God.*

Unless we understand that we are justified by faith alone and not faith plus works, we frustrate the gospel. Christ's work for our salvation is finished, but the work of the Spirit in our hearts to conform us to Christ is a steady, life-time, on-going process.

Sanctification is not an act, but a lifetime practice of holiness. It is not an instantaneous experience where one feels the electrifying work of the Spirit from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. The foundation of piety must rest on **the fact** that we have peace with God because of what Christ has done for us at Calvary . . . and not upon what is happening or not happening in our hearts at any given time during this pilgrim journey.

Piety and Public Religion

Moreover, piety is not morphing toward a “formal display of churchianity” and various forms of sectarian extremes.

Matthew 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Piety is opposed to external public performance of religion as it involves one’s private imitation of Christ.

*Psalm 4:3 But know that the Lord has set apart **the godly man for Himself**; The Lord hears when I call to Him.*

2 Peter 1:5-7 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

*1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers (mimetai mou = imitate me) of me, even **as I also am of Christ**.*

Piety is opposed to private religion where one worships God in the privacy of his own mind. Biblical piety begins in the closet, but it demands public applications and confrontations with pseudo-religions and political pundits.

Piety is **not** practiced in the monastery, but in the market place; it does **not** avoid the grit and grime of life, but it does avoid street vendors marketing Satan’s delights that defile the soul.

Many wishing to be pious and free from the lures of the world join religious orders. The discipline of compline is necessary for holiness. All great men including Moses, David, John the Baptist, and Christian monks learned piety in the wilderness. But, God did not keep them there alone and secluded. Like a mother bird pushes her young out of the nest, God ordered his holy ones to serve him in the market place; they had to live for God amid the lures, lusts, and lugsails on the sea of commerce. They went face-to-face with pharaohs, kings, and heads of state.

Piety is **not** passive and sweet-syrup nice. Holy men of old had praise on their lips and a double edged sword on their hips (Psalm 149:6).

Piety, or personal religion, is not a substitute for public religion. Studied holiness is the foundation on which a man can stand while he resists State corruptions.

Public religion is the appropriate application of the Holy Scriptures to communal life and politics.

Private religion (piety) is the appropriate application of the Holy Scriptures to one's personal life and private relationships. Both are necessary and neither can do without the other.

There is no doubt the great (Roman) catholic orders pursued piety: the Franciscans with their motto "**Pax et bonum**" (peace and good); Benedictines with their motto of "Ora et labora" (pray and work); and Dominicans with their motto "Laudare, benedicere, praedicare" (To praise, to bless, to preach).

All true Catholics including those in the "Protestant" camp have their concerns about piety. Early Lutherans, Puritans, Reformationists, Revivalists, and the Keswick Movement come to mind. However, many modern so called Western liberal "Protestants" have left the faith once delivered to the saints by pursuing wokeness and wealth while indulging in the lusts of the world.

Both the Greek and Russian Orthodox family honors Christian pious traditions by observing in reverence whatever Christian antiquity has entrusted to them either as instructions of Christ Himself or as practices of the Apostles, their successors, the Holy Fathers, the Martyrs and Saints of the Church.

Hatred for Piety

But, be warned: the more pure your devotion to Christ, the more you will be hated by men (John 7:7; 15:18-25).

The world hates pious men including but not limited to monks, priests, evangelists, pastors, churchmen, and Bible students. Worldly wise men can't help but show contempt for those seeking holiness.

The world cannot hate you (the unsanctified), but it hates me, because I testify to it that its works are evil" – John 7:7)

Fruits of Piety

It is in the climate of piety that revival breaks out to the blessing of all. Evan Roberts was a simple, holy coal miner who God used in the Welch Revival (1904-1905) to win thousands to Christ. A study on his life reveals a simplicity of devotion to the Savior with stunning purity, the duplicitous minds of Americans can't fully fathom or appreciate it.

"HE WHO follows Me, walks not in darkness," says the Lord (John 8:12).

The bitter waters of Jericho were healed by pouring in salt – a symbol of the saving life of Christ (2 Kings 2:18-22); that is, we are saved from the power of sin “by his life” says Paul (Romans 5:10).

Those who imitate Christ’s life and habits will escape the bondage of the world with all its lies and fictions. All will be blessed by the pious living in the sunlight of our Lord.

A study on piety is the Spirit’s scrub brush for the conscience; soup for the soul; removal of stones in the path; restoration of sight for the blind; expulsion of garbage; storing kindling for cold winters, refreshing one’s sense of touch, hearing, smell, sight, and taste.

Therefore, let us devote ourselves to the study of piety in the Life of Christ and His apostles in order to lay hold of His peace and His love.

Many hear the gospel and are saved, but there is hidden manna for those who pursue purity at the core of their being. Once we understand what Christ did “for us” in order to justify us, we can begin to discern what God wants to do “in us ” to sanctify us. For, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

When piety becomes your passion then the quiet power of God prevails in your personality.

Notes:

It was on a Sunday in February following her surrender that Florrie heard her pastor ask the assembled youth what Jesus meant to them. Looking for more than something drawn from general knowledge, the pastor emphasized personal, experiential understanding when he asked, “What does Jesus mean *to you*?” Amid the ensuing silence, the Spirit prompted a teenage girl to respond. Florrie stood to answer:

“I love the Lord Jesus with all of my heart.”

Her sincerity was unmistakable, and her expression of love touched hearts across the room. Conviction spread, and hearers would come to understand that we love Him because He first loved us. Florrie’s simple testimony of love provided the town of New Quay and Cardiganshire County with the necessary catalyst for revival. Its immediate impact sparked the beginning of a manifest moving of the Spirit that would develop into one of the mightiest revivals in history, the Welsh Revival of 1904-05. (Revival Focus)

4.4 Piety and the Divided Soul

James 1:8.

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

The Problem of Being Double-minded

◆ The opposite of a single man is a double-minded man – a divided man -- a man with two belief systems – a man that talks one way and walks another – a man with two ambitions.

Psalm 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

The metaphor of “**dog**” and “**sword**” appear again as agents of death. The verb “deliver” is an imperative — the language of prayer.

The word “**darling**” refers to an only, beloved child. And, Jesus was God’s one and only child abandoned at the cross to suffer for the sins of men.

Following the rule of parallelism, the “darling” is a synonym for “my soul.”

The term “**dog**” refers to perverts.

Dogs shred and devour. The sword severs. The psalmist feared what we fear: having a soul divided by daggers of doubt, the cleaving knife of covetousness, and the paring knife of passion.

The psalmist feared having his soul devoured by the pit bulls of pride, wolves of wrath, foxes of fornication, the scavengers of strife, hounds of hatred, the rottweilers of revenge, and the like.

By way of personal application let us consider how the enemy uses its swords of disinformation to produce divided affections and double motives. Duplicity abounds in hearts and minds.

People often have a public life and a private life; a public persona and a private personality. Brian White observed “We never really grow up, we just learn how to act in public.” Our life before men and before God is often different. Secret lusts act as a clever to steal our affections and slice away at pure devotion to LORD God.

The Apostle James warns of being “**double minded**,” that is, having two masters, two souls, two personalities, two ambitions, two motives, two objects—one in heaven and the other of earth.

The good news is that God can mend the soul: In Hebrews we read, “**through the blood** of the everlasting covenant, **make you perfect** (katartizo) **in every good work** to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight” (13:20-21). The word “**perfect**” (katartizo – tisai) (aorist optative – a wish) means “to equip thoroughly” and “to repair.”

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the Power of His Risen Life unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through His life from the power of

sin; that is, we must not only appropriate Christ's work on the cross, we must appropriate the powers of His intercessory work at the right hand of God.

Lord, thank you for Christ's pure devotion to holiness. Keep my soul in tact, and may I serve you with undivided affections. May I be a whole man completely devoted to you.

4.5 The Problem of Man Explained

Jeremiah 17:9

"Heal me, O LORD"

◆ Many seek God for physical healing, and many want God to heal their nation, but how many people want to be healed of their own bitterness and rebellion? Jeremiah shows us the way.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

This text answers the question, "If a man is blessed for trusting in the Lord, and cursed for following man, why do men choose the path of cursedness?"

And the answer is found in the mystery of **self-deceit** in his "heart" or sin-nature -- a condition of man blinding his perceptions of good and evil.

"**deceitful**" (*aqob*) is in the emphatic position of the sentence. Men are easily propagandized, consumerized, and mesmerized by cultural salesmen offering circus trinkets and colored beads to the public. The wretchedness of deception is that the deceived does not know he is deceived.

The word "**desperately wicked**" (*anash*) is one word meaning "weak" or "sick" like David's child was incurably "ill" (2 Samuel 12:15).

If there is a reason not to follow Godless politicians, theoreticians, and academicians, this is it! They are the blind leading the blind, the diseased pretending to heal the sick.

10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

"**heart**" and "**reins**" (kidneys) refer to workings of the soul.

To make matters worse, NO MAN knows his own heart. But, the LORD is perfectly acquainted with it, and with all the twists and turns it is capable of: He knows all its desires and designs. All its intentions, affections, and determinations lie exposed to his inspection, His eye penetrates into the dark corners and closets of every man's soul. Because he knows the heart, He can be trusted to guide us and correct us.

11 As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

The Lord appeals to the knowledge of Jews regarding birds, particularly **the partridge** or even the cuckoo bird -- birds that abandon their nest or lay their eggs in another bird's nest abandoning them to be hatched by another (Leviticus 11:16; Deuteronomy 14:15).

The bird analogy refers to the covetous man who piles up riches through corrupt business practices that "make to themselves wings" never to be enjoyed. Using the art of deception, this slick entrepreneur collects riches only to leave them to another.

The Hope of Israel

The remedy for sin is not in psychology, anthropology, or sociology, but theology. Jeremiah does not order men to correct their own soul. The prophet does not recommend introspection of the heart, but inspection of the Throne on High. The remedy is not a change of officers within government on earth, but a change of government in one's heart from Heaven.

12 A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

The word "**is**" is **not** in the original text, and should be read without the verb.

The voice is in the vocative indicating the one being addressed. He speaks in second person. Glorious High Throne is a metonym for the LORD, the Hope of Israel. He, not government, is the place sinners find sanctuary.

Thoughts shift from the wretchedness of man to the wonders of the LORD; from one's deceitful heart to the true God. Jeremiah lifts our eyes from the human heart to Heaven; from sin to the Sanctuary; from hearts of stone to Heaven's Throne; from man's choices to God's sovereignty and authority.

Unlike pop-psychologists, Jeremiah does not send men on archaeological journeys into their past or ask them to probe their inner feelings. Rather, He points us to the One outside of the heart . . . on the throne . . . in Heaven from where He administrates the affairs of the universe. "The LORD reigns" is the gospel of the Old Testament (Psalm 97:1).

No, Christ as a Divine Person does **not** live inside the human heart. He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father as the glorified Lord-Christ. He dwells within only in the sense

men have faith. Even then, it is not faith in the heart as a virtue that makes men righteous, but faith in the accomplishments of Christ at the cross that justifies sinners (Romans 5:1).

13 O LORD, the hope of Israel. All that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

We have a dramatic shift in this address from second person ("**O LORD**") and ("**all that forsake thee**") to first person ("**they that depart from me**"), and from first person to third person ("**they** have forsaken the LORD").

The word "**forsake**" (azab) means "to leave alone," "abandon," or "neglect." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 12:3)?

The word "**ashamed**" (buwsh) refers to being found naked before God (Genesis 2:25: 3:1-16).

"**written in the earth**" suggest those that abandon the *Fountain of Living Waters* (2:13) belong to earth and not heaven. There is a "Lamb's Book of Life." Is your name in it?

The hope of Israel was not in a new government administration, a change of guards, or in some political revolution.

Like Israel our hope is not in new statutes, codes, and regulations. It is not in politicians or psychologists, but in the one, personal, infinite, triune God of Scripture - the "LORD." The remedy for sin is not political, but spiritual; not the economy, but theonomy; not in seeking the will of man, but in seeking the will of God.

If Jeremiah were preaching in New Testament times he might put it this way; "The highly-exalted, resurrected Christ full of glory sitting at the right of the Father on the Throne of Grace has defeated Satan, sin, and death. He is my Hope, your Hope, and the Hope of the World. Believe in Him."

Luke 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Hebrews 1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Revelation 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Those that forsake God shall be ashamed (discovered naked); those that seek Him shall be honored. Those that forsake the Lord shall be written in the earth; those that cling to Him shall have their names written in Heaven. Those that forsake the Lord shall wake up thirsty in hell, but those that trust Him shall be refreshed by the Fountain of Living Waters.

The Sinner's Prayer

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

Only one man responded to Jeremiah's sermon, and that was Jeremiah. As all good preachers do, this pastor followed his own advice.

"**Heal me**" (raphani) -- the imperative is the language of prayer. The "**LORD**" is called "Jehovah Rapha" - "***For I am the Lord who heals you.***" – Exodus 15: 25b-26. This title was announced to Israel at the bitter waters of Marah and where Moses threw in a tree to purify the alkaline pond -- a type of the cross.

This wilderness area exposed two problems: (1) bitterness in the waters of Marah, and (2) marah (bitterness) and complaining in the hearts of the people. God healed the waters, but the people needed to be healed of their bitterness and complaining: "So the people grumbled against Moses . . ." but they did not pray that God would heal them.

The word "***marah***" is translated "rebelled against thee" in Psalm 5:10 and "provoking (*marah*) the most High in the wilderness" in Psalm 78:17.

The object of the verb "***rapha***" is not the nation but "me." Jeremiah prayed that God would heal him.

Jeremiah contrasted himself with the deserters. In this text he focuses on his own need for healing and salvation. This is not a self-righteous, "better-than-thou" prophet. He too was a sinner that needed healing. The prophet obeyed his own message and trusted the Lord. Unlike the apostates, Jeremiah knew where to go to find a cure for his own sin -- the LORD, the Hope of Israel, the One on the Throne, the Fountain of Living Waters. Because of the Lord's wondrous grace, Jeremiah called God "His Praise." This pious man prayed, "Save me, Oh LORD, and I will be saved."

Do not be deceived. Look at the cross. Repent and seek Christ. Surrender to His authority, and you will enter his kingdom.

4.6 The Seven Downward Steps of Christ

Philippians 2:5-12

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.”

The Great Divestiture of our Lord

◆ What a lovely passage in the Crown Jewels of Sacred Literature!

It is my favorite, and the one that has impacted my life more than any other. It challenges us to think like Christ, to be swallowed up with greatness of His humility, and to adopt His humility in our mindset.

Yet, in a world grasping for health and wealth, few Christians seem to value the attitude of our Savior.

If I were to advertise a seminar on “How to Triple Your Money in the Stock Market this Year,” or “How to Develop Self-Esteem in your Child,” the auditorium would be packed. But, if I offered a seminary course on “How to Have the Attitude of Christ,” who would show up?

The problem is, we don’t esteem what God esteems. Men want to be like sports heroes, movie stars, and rich like John D. Rockefeller, but who wants to be like Christ? Nevertheless, let’s take a look at the thinking of our Lord Jesus.

Philippians 2:5-12 – Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Command: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ” (2:5) begins with a present imperative enjoining us to continually strive to cultivate the mind of Christ; that is, to think like Him.

By “**mind**” the apostle is referring to the thinking of Christ and the lack of selfish ambition in his walk through life. The command to esteem (to place first) the concerns of (2:3) and to look (scope out) out for the interest of others is an imperative. It is not a great suggestion or good choice, but a command.

The mind of Christ is illustrated with the seven downward steps of His humiliation.

STEP ONE: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6)

Selfless Attitude: “**Being in the form of God** is a direct statement regarding the deity of Christ. The word “**being**” is from the Greek verb (*huparchein*) which is not the common Greek word for “being.” This word describes the immutable essence of a man and that which cannot be changed. It describes that part of a man which, in any circumstances, remains the same.

Paul begins by saying that Jesus was essentially and unalterably Divine. It is not possible to think of Jesus just as a good teacher. Our text verifies Jesus was truly of the same substance as God. A good teacher, you can ignore. Being Divine, no man can afford to neglect.

What is it like to be a king dressed in royal apparel, a golden crown, and universal respect? In eternity, in His Father’s Heavenly Palace, Jesus knew the glory, radiance, and honor of being the Son of God. A rainbow of colors flashed before his angels like stage lights on a performer. Choirs with a hundred thousand voices lent their talent to sing His praises. So bright was the flashing display of glory, seraphim covered their faces.

In the eternal state, the Father commissioned His Son to surrender it all, to leave the beauty and comfort of heaven and descend to earth to be a man in order to save sinners from their sins. Lacking in the Son was any sense of greed, covetous, selfish ambition, jealousy, competition, or aspiration. He chose the finite over the infinite; the limitation of man rather than the limitlessness of God; the cloudy perspective of humanity over the clarity of the Divine perspective.

“**Mind**” (*phroneo*) refers to the basic orientation, bent, and thought patterns of one’s thinking process, rather than to the intellect itself. When announcing this in the present tense (continuous action, lifestyle) active voice (personal decision of the will) imperative mood (command not suggestion), Paul calls us to be humble like Christ.

Someone has said the hardest instrument to play in the orchestra is second fiddle. Pride is essentially competitive. Pride is not content with having honor. It must have more honor. Pride is not content with a piece of the pie. It must have a larger piece of the pie. There was no pride in Jesus.

“Bits & Pieces” illustrates the futility of greed in Leo Tolstoy’s story about a peasant farmer who was not satisfied with his portion in life. He wanted it all. One day he received a generous offer.

For 1000 rubles, he could buy all the land he could walk around in a day. The only catch in the deal was that he had to be back at his starting point by sundown. Exhausting himself in a mad dash marathon to cover as much territory as possible, the farmer realized he was far from home. In the afternoon, he picked up his pace. Sweat rolled down his forehead. His heart raced. As the sun began to sink below the horizon he came within sight of the finish line. Gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he called upon every bit of strength left in his body and staggered across the line just before the sun disappeared. He immediately collapsed, blood streaming from his mouth. In a few minutes, he was dead. Afterwards, his servants dug a grave. It was not much over six feet long and three feet wide. (“How Much Land Does a Man Need?”)

STEP TWO: “He Emptied Himself”

Divestiture: From the verb “**emptied himself**”, theologians have developed “Kenosis Theories.” A question arises, “What did Christ give up when He came became man?” Some errantly concluded that He gave up his deity; that is, in becoming man, He gave up omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. Others have concluded He did not know that He was the Creator of the world; or that He did not realize who He was until His baptism. Such speculation boggles the mind.

My understanding of this passage is that in becoming man, Christ did not give up His deity as much as He gave up the glory and honor associated with deity. In becoming man, Christ did not give up His Divine attributes as much as He assumed the nature and status of a man. This is called the *hypostatic union*. Christ was truly God and truly man. While on earth, our Lord did not cease to be God; but, He did live His life without adorning himself with external robes of the Divine nature. For a glimpse of that which He divested Himself, consider the amazing events on the Mount of Transfiguration.

To grasp this, let’s look at an illustration from *Today in the Word*, April 3, 1992. A reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, elderly British socialite Lady Diana Cooper fell into conversation with a friendly woman who seemed to know her well. Lady Diana’s failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest, until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and realized she was talking to Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Diana curtsied and stammered, “Ma’am, oh, ma’am, I’m sorry ma’am. I didn’t recognize you without your crown!” “It was so much Sir Robert’s evening,” the queen replied, “that I decided to leave it behind.”

When Messiah came to earth, he left his crown (glory) behind. In becoming man, there was no regret and no envy of the Father by the Son.

STEP THREE: “Taking the form of a servant.”

Service: The text refers to the “**form**” of God and the “form” of a servant. Both are the same word (“*morphe*”). There are two Greek words for form, “*morphe*” and “*schema*.” Both must be

translated “**form**” because there is no other English equivalent, but they do not mean the same thing.

Morphe describes a condition that never alters; *schema* describes a state which can change from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance. For instance, the *morphe* of any human being is humanity and this never changes; but his *schema* is that part of our humanity which is continually changing. A baby, a child, a boy, a youth, a man of middle age, an old man always has the *morphe* of humanity, but the outward *schema* changes all the time (Barclay). In Matthew 17: 2, Jesus was transfigured before them. This is the word *metamorphoo*, which was a revelation of the essence of Jesus and His unalterable Divine nature.

The text says our Lord took the **form of a servant**. One of the questions my grandparents use to ask me as a boy was, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” My answer included being a big football star. This question is asked every boy and I do not know of any that would include the answer: “I want to be a servant or a butler or a bellhop.” Even as Christians we want to do big things for God. We live in a success driven, corporate world where men are dominated by trivia. But, Jesus? He took the form of a servant.

Dr. Samuel Brengle of the Salvation Army loosely translated this verse, “He girdeth Himself with a towel.” Our Lord was not just any servant; He was the Servant of the Lord. Most of us serve our own desires, but Jesus could truly say, “Not my will, but Thy will be done.” Many of us serve, but we lack a servant attitude. Not so with Christ. The Savior not only served, He possessed servant attitudes. When He was tempted on the Mount of Temptation by Satan and urged to take leave of the fast commanded by the Father, He responded, “It is written.”

In Philip Keller’s marvelous book, “Sheep Dog,” Keller tells the story of a stray Australian sheep dog on his sheep ranch. Though Keller needed a dog for his ranch, the dog was a stray and avoided any contact with Keller. Keller decided to feed the dog and not compel him to submit. After several weeks, the dog put his nose in Keller’s hand and gave himself to the rancher. Keller trained the dog. Perfectly trained the dog would heel, sit, bark, and herd sheep. Often the dog would go into a thicket to chase out wayward sheep and come out with all kinds of thorns in his side and paws. He was the perfect dog. When it came time to sell the ranch, Keller put his dog to sleep. In explaining why he did this Keller explained that “the dog had given himself to me completely.” The ranch was sold and the dog’s work was finished. He was mine and the dog trusted me. It was my decision to end his life. End of the answer.

Likewise, Jesus was God’s Sheep Dog sent to earth to round up strays. Ordered to the cross, Jesus obeyed. He was the *doulos* of God who from first to last. From beginning to end the Son was fully, wholly, totally dedicated to the will of God. What? One man on earth wholly committed to the will of God? What a delight to Heaven's eyes!

STEP FOUR: “Was made in the likeness of men . . .”

Humanity: On that first Christmas morning, the Son of God lay in that manger with two eyes, two ears, ten little fingers, and ten toes. He was truly man subject to all the incumbencies that human beings face. This was a gigantic step down for the Son. For you and I to become an ant would not be half the step it took for the Son to become a man. As a man, he experienced all the irritations that men feel in life: fatigue, hunger, and pain. He understood heat, cold, sweat, and the tears of humanity. He learned how to crawl, to walk, to speak. He went through the growth stages of humanity: birth, growth, puberty, and adulthood.

STEP FIVE: “Being found in the fashion of man, he humbled himself.”

Humility: From the word “**fashion**”, we get the word *schematic*. It is the same word we use to describe the electrical circuit on the back of a washer or dryer. Like all men, Jesus walked, talked, ate, and slept. He was fully man. And, as a man, he endured all the frustrations and difficulties of manhood. He knew what it was like to be hungry, tired, and weary. Yet, he did not shrink back from the task.

Not only was Christ a man, **he was a humble man!** Unlike the rest of us, Jesus had a choice of what kind of man to be.

He could have been born in Jerusalem, the City of Kings, but he was born in Bethlehem, the smallest of Jewish villages.

He could have been born into a family of wealth and privilege, but he was born a carpenter’s son.

He could have been born in a sterile hospital surrounded by nurses, but he was born in a stable surrounded by farm animals.

He could have grown up in the city with all its fun and excitement, but he was raised in Nazareth, the “other side of the tracks” so to speak.

He could have been a doctor or lawyer or statesman, but he chose the occupation of a carpenter.

He could have owned a wardrobe, but at the cross soldiers gambled for his only garment.

He could have been born rich, but when giving an illustration he had to borrow a penny.

He could have entered Jerusalem on a white stallion, but he entered on the back of a donkey.

Consider the wonders of our Lord's attitude in contrast to this question: If you could change ten things about your life, what would it be? Jesus had that choice, and He chose to be an ordinary, Hebrew boy raised in a poor Jewish home in the “hillbilly” country of Northern Galilee. Chew on this cud for a while.

STEP SIX: “He became obedient unto death . . .”

Obedience: The test of obedience is surrender to God’s will when things do not go our way. It is not easy to obey the will of another, but it is even more difficult when death stares us in the face. Death has many indignities including sounds and smells and fears and pain. In surrendering himself to the Father’s will, he faced the most common plight of all men. There is no pride in death. All powers to save life are taken away. All control is stripped from a dying man. He has no choices. All rights are taken away. The final prayer for salvation from death is answered with a “No.” So aware of the Father’s resolute will, Jesus prayed with great drops of blood streaming from his forehead, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” The Father said, “No!” and Jesus accepted it. What a man! What a Son! What a Savior!

STEP SEVEN: “Even the death of the cross.”

Shame: The final humiliation of Christ was the kind of death he died. If I could choose my own death, it would be a hero’s death—an instantaneous death—something like the death of actor Bruce Willis in the movie “Armageddon” where the only hope for earth was for Commander Willis to blow up the asteroid with self-detonation. Instant death! No pain. Dying a hero! But, Jesus had none of these ambitions nor any of these fantasies. His was the most difficult death a man could die.

The cross is the Christian’s most sacred symbol. We often wear smooth, silver crosses around our necks. However, we need to remember that there was no status connected to crucifixion. The wooden cross had splinters and knots that scraped the skin. Accusation, charges, incrimination, damning verdicts, beatings, stripping of clothes, impalement, nakedness, agonizing pain, and public humiliation choked all optimism out the victim. Crucifixion is a death by tetanus poisoning where in the latter stages gripping thirst screams for attention while muscles contort and cramp causing a person to die of toxic asphyxiation.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-12).

Humble in life and humbled by death, the Lord Jesus waited on the Father to raise Him from the dead. Today, **that babe in Bethlehem** is called “the Christ,” “the King,” “the Son,” “the Savior,” that at the name of Jesus every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

A long time ago, a good king ruled in Persia. Because he wanted to know how they lived, he dressed in the clothes of a working man and went to the homes of the poor. No one knew he was their ruler. On one occasion, he met a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the man’s simple food. He spoke cheerfully and kindly to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man

again and disclosed his identity by saying, “I am your king!” The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn’t. Instead he said, “You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate my simple food. You brought joy to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!

Likewise, Heaven’s King has visited us on earth. Let’s remember the seven downward steps of Jesus. Because He took steps downward, we can be assured of walking on the streets of gold in Heaven’s celestial city. If we truly understand the glories of our eternal destiny, we can afford to give up our pride and prejudice, and take steps to be humble. Because of His humiliation, we have salvation. God was among us and has risen above us to save us, to guide us, and to deliver us.

Let me encourage you to develop **more Christ-esteem** and less self-esteem. We don’t need to be thinking more about ourselves, we need to be thinking less about me, my, and I. Our problems are not related to poor self-esteem, they are busy eating away at our core because we have **TOO MUCH SELF-ESTEEM!** Let us think more of Christ . . . and less of self! The problems in the Christian community are due to one defect: We think too little of Christ!

The text informs us that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. “Jesus” is the sweetest name I know. Don’t use His beautiful name and drag it down into the gutter. Stand up to those who abuse His name. Shame them with being so banal and blasphemous. Do you love Jesus? Then stand up for Him! Stand up to those proud, filthy men who dare take Heaven’s sweetest name and dip it in a human cesspool. Show some teeth. Bark at the blasphemers . . . in nice Christian way, of course . . . or, maybe not.

All men will bow the knee to the Lord Christ -- some willingly in this life and others by force in the age to come. If you have not bowed the knee to Him and surrender to His authority, I encourage you to forsake your neglects of God and start a new life under His authority and His management. If you confess Him as your Lord and believe in your heart that He died for your sins and rose from the grave now, He will be your Savior for all eternity (Romans 10:9, 10).

4.7 The Trisagion of the Church

Psalm 29:9

In His temple all cry “Glory!”

◆ The phrase “**Holy! Holy! Holy!**” is the “Trisagion” of the Church generally— the invocation to worship, and the requiem of the Eastern Church specifically.

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

How should Christians respond to political defeats and their disappointments?

Proverbs 29:2 “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”

There was a day in Isaiah’s life when his political hopes were crushed like berries under the paws of death when his preferred candidate for office suffered a fatal defeat.

Uzziah was a beloved king -- a popular ruler among the people. From 2 Chronicles 26 we learn the following about this monarch (809-758 B.C.):

- His 52 year reign brought prosperity and stability to the nation (26:1-3).
- He was a moral, righteous, spiritual man (26:4).
- God caused the man to prosper and to be a blessing to the nation (26:5).
- He had military success against the Philistines, Arabians, and Moabites (26-6-7).
- The Ammonites paid taxes to his administration giving a boost to the economy (26:8).
- He repaired and rebuilt the towers in Jerusalem increasing its defenses (26:9).
- He increased the water resources of the nation causing a boom in agriculture, farming, and ranching (26:10).
- He repaired the military infrastructure, strengthened the nations defenses, and funded a powerful military (26:11-13).
- He equipped his army with weapons of war by manufacturing shields, bows, swords, slings, spears, helmets, battering rams, catapults, ladders, and torsion equipment (26:14).
- He fortified Jerusalem and manned a police force to protect the nation’s capital, and he did all this with the help and power of God (26:15).
- He breached holiness and was suddenly and irrecoverably stricken with leprosy

Confidence in the administration of Uzziah was high, and the people enjoyed the benefits of an ethical, protective king who sought the blessings of the Lord and the best for the people for 52 years.

But, there was a day when the blue skies disappeared and charcoal grey clouds settled in like a long winter storm.

The reign of Uzziah was “a time of vigorous and prosperous peace, in which the nation was completely overwhelmed with manifestations of divine love” (Keil and Delitzsch).

This success went to Uzziah’s head. In his pride, he breached the temple to offer incense to the LORD God — a transgression that violated the separation of powers ordained by God in Leviticus 9-10 – injunctions which banned the executive branch from performing acts of the priesthood.

Consequently, Uzziah lived the rest of days as an ulcerated leper banned by God and separated from men (26:16-23). And, like Uzziah, the nation became leprous in His sight.

What a tragic end to what would have been a very successful career!

Uzziah not only lost his power as a king, he lost his birthright among Hebrews. Who can describe the surf and the foam, the feelings and emotions which crashed on the shores of the nation’s political life? Confidence turned to shame; hope to fear; joy to grief; abundance to want; calmness to anxiety; health to leprosy.

Isaiah 6:1-3 I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

It was during this depressing political era, Isaiah says, “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.”

“High and lifted up” is imagery of an Eastern monarch sitting on his throne. **“His trained filled the temple”** portrays a king adorned in royal regalia governing the nation.

Under this dark cloud of national mourning that sucked light out of the skies over Jerusalem, the Lord permitted Isaiah to gaze into the brightness of the temple with the eye of faith to see in his mind’s eye super sensuous imagery of Himself. YHWH sits upon a majestic throne, clothed in the apparel of an ancient monarch, with a robe and a train of glorious light which filled the Holy of Holies, the Royal Palace of Yah.

And, “in His palace doth everyone speak of His glory” – (Psalm 129:9).

THE LESSON IS CLEAR: Though Uzziah had lost his throne and the nation experienced a devastating spiritual defeat, God had NOT lost His throne. He was still the “king of the nations” (*Jeremiah 10:7*) with angels at his beck and call.

Isaiah pronounced six woes upon the nation for their sins (Isaiah 5:8-9, 11-12, 18-19, 20, 21, 22-23). But, he reserved the seventh woe for himself (6:5).

Isaiah 5:8 – Avarice

Isaiah 5:11 – Intemperance, dissipation, drunkenness

Isaiah 5:18 – Uninhibited, unrestrained, ab libitum

Isaiah 5:20 – Confusion, demoralization, confounding

Isaiah 5:21 – Pride, plumage, arrogance, conceit

Isaiah 5:22 – Devotion to intoxication and euphoria

Isaiah 6:5 – Common, profane, unclean, defiled, inappropriate speech

The effect of this vision had a profound impact on the prophet. Not only did the pillars of the temple shake with fear and awe, Isaiah's knees knocked as he felt the ugliness and shame of Uzziah's leprosy politically. Furthermore, he felt the stinging condemnation of moral leprosy personally:

“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:6).

The lessons here are many, but we shall look at six of them:

First, at the core of spiritual health is a mind that understands (stand under) the holiness of the LORD.

“Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

“And one cried to another” refers to angels reciting the holiness of the LORD.’ That is, the Seraphim cried to each other in alternate responses. One cried “Qadosh” (Kadosh), the second repeated it; then the third. Most likely they united in the grand chorus, **“Full is all the earth of his glory.”**

Who cannot feel the knee-knocking impact of hearing the solemn cry of the Seraphim: **“Kadosh! Kadosh! Kadosh!”**

If the solid rock door pillars of the temple shook at the Trisagion, so should the pious.

Using the term **“holy”** (Kadosh) three times is the Hebrew way of expressing the superlative or highest degree of perfection . . . of cleanliness . . . of purity. It is the only moral quality of God that is repeated three times in one sentence in the Holy Scriptures.

In English, we emphasize the superlative by an exclamation point (!), but the Hebrews used repetition; that is, the Spirit emphasizes the holiness of God by publishing “**Kadosh! Kadosh! Kadosh!**” The repetition is emphatic, not didactic — a message that God is separate, special, unique, and more valuable than what the Kor-I-Nor diamond is to men and more special than the Holy Grail to the sainted.

Though human analogies fail, here are a few that remind us of God’s awesome holiness.

“**Kadosh! Kadosh! Kadosh!**” is like reading a label on a brand of chili, “Hot! Hot! Hot!” Or, “Dangerous, No One Allowed!” Or, “Private: Intruders will be shot!” Or, “Poison: Do Not Touch!” Or, “Not safe for human consumption!” Or, “Secret: Keep Out! Trespasser will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law!” Or, “Gas Masks Required.” Or, “Extremely Flammable!” Or, “Radiation Hazard!”

But, the LORD God is not only awesome, **He is also admirable**: “Worship the LORD in the beauty of His holiness!” The whole angelic choir sings, “Worthy is the Lamb” “He is altogether lovely.” He is all sweetness and no bitterness; all sunshine and no midnight; all beauty and no blemish; all good and no evil (Revelation 5:14-18: SS 5:16).

When Christians celebrate a “holy day,” they mean it is set apart from other days. It is a day that requires holy perception and careful preparation.

*1 Corinthians 16:2 Upon the **First-day Sabbath** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

Second, the people should approach God with reverence and awe.

Peter called Christians “**to be holy as He is holy**” (1 Peter 1:15). Holiness is one of the five calls of God in 1 Peter. The standard for piety is the holiness of God.

In Isaiah, *the angels covered their faces and lower extremities. These* are expressions of reverence drawn from our conceptions of civility and modesty. When coming before kings in ancient times, all bowed, most lay prostrate on the floor, all were clothed in their finest apparel as a measure of respect. No one looked at the monarch directly.

That with two wings the angels did fly speaks of readiness to serve the will of Jehovah — a model of how Christian men should be ready to obey Christ the King.

The phrase “**the whole earth**” reminds us that the mountains, seas, streams, trees, animals, and people, reflect His majesty and glory; that all men have the duty and privilege to reflect on the wonders of our God and to live in the light of His holiness.

That the pillars of the house trembled at His voice as if in an earthquake reflects the stunning authority and the striking majesty of the LORD — a visual presentation of how men should honor and fear His name. When the Bible is read, men should rise, be silent, and listen.

There is nothing casual and relaxed in this scene. Everything communicates stateliness, honor, formality, royalty, excellence, precision, awe, beauty, dignity, and reverence — the very opposite of “coffee-cup” Christianity and the casual “Donut Church.”

Genesis 28:16-22 “When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’ He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.’

Psalms 96:9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

The preferred response is awe and wonder. There are 53 references to “**awe**,” 92 to “**amazing**,” 22 to “**astonish**,” 38 to “**reverence**,” and 109 to “**wonder**” in the Bible.

As the disciples were described as being in “**fear and amazement**” after Jesus rebuked the wind (Luke 8:25), and as women “trembling and bewildered” when they looked into the empty tomb (Mark 16:8), we should conduct worship in our church services.

The New Testament teaches that when Christians come together to worship, men should remove their hats to honor Christ. Women veil their heads to memorialize God’s law order and His holiness. Dignity is the rule of the hour — “For God is not the author of confusion (disorder), but of peace (harmony), as in **all churches** of the saints” (1 Corinthians 11:1-16; 1 Corinthians 14:33).

Likewise, the strength and vitality of a nation rests in its devotion to the thrice holy God. A nation courts danger (leprosy) the further it transitions away from a theocentric society toward an anthropocentric tar pit.

Third, seek to be a kingdom saint.

The true wealth of a nation is its spiritual connectedness to the LORD!

No matter what party gains power in Congress, Christians would do well to seek Christ and His authority . . . His rule . . . His reign over them now— “thy kingdom come;” i.e., may men recognize your authority now! When we suffer disappointments in the election process, let us remember, “the Lord reigns” and

“the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath shall He restrain” (Psalm 97:1ff; Psalm 76:10).

The great need in America is not political change, but spiritual reformation and revival – a return to founding principles. We are not statist that place our hope in leprous governments. Only a people who see with the eye of faith the Lord in His holy temple and are cleansed by the coals of the brazen altar (the cross) can have true power. Only a people that know Christ and seek Him can cause a nation to prosper (Isaiah 55:6-7).

Four, prosperity is not part of the formula for godliness.

As riches did not create godliness in Uzziah's nation, America's prosperity has not made her holy. Prosperity is the product of holiness, not the root; a crop, not the seed; a fringe benefit of responsible living, not the brick and mortar of a great society.

It is not "the economy, stupid" as president Bill Clinton stated, but the heart of men that needs transformation, regeneration, and reconciliation. (Mark 7:21-23).

As Uzziah was a leper, American politicians are lepers in the sight of a holy God.

Three times the text says God is holy. "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts" — a revelation of the unique nature of YHWH. While God is loving and merciful, there is no text that says, "Love, love, love is the LORD of hosts."

When we see that God is holy (personable, pure, beautiful, unstained, wonderfully unique and ethical), we will all fall on our knees and confess, "Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (6:6-7).

Five, there is a remedy for spiritual leprosy.

As soon as Isaiah heard the angels proclaim, "**Kadosh! Kadosh! Kadosh!**" he saw his own uncleanness and unfitness to represent the LORD to the nation. Thus, the man God uses is not focused on the faults of others. He is attentive to his own need to grow up in Christ.

To qualify the man, the Lord sent an angel to the brazen altar to fetch a rock-like coal that burned the sacrifice to touch and cleanse Isaiah's lips.

This grand metaphor informs us that God has provided a means of cleansing the soul from leprosy-like sins — a coal from the brazen altar — an icon of the cross, the shed blood, and the sacrifice of Christ for our sins at Calvary.

Jennifer Hudson:

There is a fountain filled with blood,

Drawn from Immanuel's veins;

And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,

Lose all their guilty stains:

Lose all their guilty stains,

Lose all their guilty stains;

And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,

Lose all their guilty stains.

4.8 The Remedy for Guilt

1 John 1:7

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,”

There is Power in the Blood

◆ When men sin, they are guilty of transgressing against the law. We are not referring to guilt feelings, but true guilt.

Before us is God’s remedy for true guilt.

Have a troubled conscience? This verse is for you.

This wonderful text has three important clauses.

The contingency word “**if**” introduces a 3rd class conditional clause with the subjunctive” — maybe you do, but maybe you don’t, but if you do, you will walk in the light.

we have fellowship one with another,

John did not say, “if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God;” but, “**fellowship one with another.**”

Walking with God’s people is primary evidence one is walking in the light. Instead of calling the pretenders “liars,” John flips the coin on its edge to expose the false claims; that is, those claiming to walk with God must also walk happily with the flawed, fractured people of God. God’s heart is with His people, and if professing Christians do not love God’s people, they don’t know God. If one claiming to know the Shepherd does not hang around the sheep, he is probably a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

The verb “**cleanseth**” (katarizo) introduces the subject of sanctification, and not justification.

We get the word “**catharsis**” from this Greek stem. “Catharsis” is “a metaphor used by Aristotle in the Poetics to describe the effects of true tragedy on the spectator. The use is derived from the medical term *katharsis* (Greek: “purgation” or “purification”). Aristotle states that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse “terror and pity” and thereby effect the catharsis of these emotions” (Britannica).

The spirit uses the term “catharsis” to define the healing of lepers in Matthew 11:5.

The concern in 1 John is not being saved from the penalty of sin, but the power of sin and its haunting influence on the conscience. He is not discussing being “redeemed” by blood, but being “cleansed” and “healed” by blood. Even the best of saints sin and “feel” the ring, pop, and thump of of guilt pounding away like kettledrums in the conscience. This text ministers to the conscience informing believing men that awareness of the blood cleanses

and qualifies them for moment by moment fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith in the blood, therefore, silences the percussions of a troubled conscience (Hebrews 10:17).

Rest, soul, rest in the sufficiency and efficiency of the blood of Christ which is working now, this moment, to cleanse your conscience.

- Believing men are propitiated through His blood – Romans 3:25
- Believing men are justified by His blood – Romans 5:9
- Believing men are redeemed by His blood – Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:12, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 5:9
- Believing men are made near to God and His promises by His blood – Ephesians 2:13.
- Believing men secure peace with God through His blood – Colossians 1:20
- Believing men obtain a clean conscience through His blood – Hebrews 9:12-14
- Believing men attain boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus – Hebrews 10:19
- Believing men are sanctified by His blood – Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2
- Believing men are repaired and equipped to serve God by His blood – Hebrews 13:20-21
- Believing men are cleansed by His blood – 1 John 1:7
- Believing men are washed from their sins by the Blood of Christ – Revelation 1:5
- Believing men are made white in the blood of the Lamb – Revelation 7:14
- Believing men gain victory over Satan, the accuser of the brethren, by His blood – Revelation 12:11

In 1 John 1:7, the apostle is not occupied with the cross, but with the throne; not with the blood that purchases sinners, but the life-giving blood of Christ which purifies and sanctifies the saint. Blood in this text has “the cleansing power of life” similar to Paul’s statement in Romans 8:2 ‘the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death.’

We are not only saved by his death from the penalty of sin, we are saved by his life from the power of sin (Romans 5:10).

When Zachariah gained insight into the Christ child, he saw the hope that “*we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear*” (Luke 1:74).

How can we serve Him without **fear**? The answer is in 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 13:20-21).

In Hebrews we read, “**through the blood** of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect (katartizo) in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight” (Hebrews 13:20-21).

The word “**perfect**” (katartizo – tisai) (aorist optative – a wish) means “to equip thoroughly” and “to repair.” It is translated, “perfectly joined together” in 1 Corinthians 1:10; “fully furnished” or “equipped” in 2 Timothy 3:17; “to mend” nets in Matthew 4:21; “to restore” in Galatians 6:1; and “to frame” in Hebrews 11:3. In using the optative the apostle is expressing a wish that a believer’s consideration of the blood will fully equip him to serve God.

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through **the Power of His Risen Life** unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through His life from the power of sin. He saves men from the condemnation of sin through faith in His death, and saves men from the domination of sin through faith in His Highly Exalted Life (Colossians 3:2).

A growing cleansing from the dominion and the power of sin is granted to us, if the life of Jesus Christ is breathing in our lives as we depend on His heart-beat operating within us by His Spirit.

The sacrifice on the Cross is the basis of everything, but that sacrifice does not exhaust what Christ does for us. He died for our sins, and lives for our sanctifying. He died for us, He lives in us. *Because He died, we are forgiven; because He lives, we are made pure* (MacLaren).

That only way we can become free from the tyranny that dominates us, is having the life of Christ as the animating principle of our lives. *When we depend on His life as the animating principle of our lives, the spirit of Jesus emancipates us from the power of sin and death* (MacLaren).

The blood of Christ at the cross redeems us from the penalty of sin unto justification (being declared righteous), but the quickening blood of Christ in His intercessory work at the right hand of God cleanses us from the power of sin unto sanctification (being made righteous).

The verb “**cleanseth**” is a present active indicative meaning His blood cleanses and keeps on purifying the saint. Believing men are not only redeemed by His blood, but cleansed day by day, moment by moment by His blood in order that men might be sanctified and qualified to walk in the light. Like silver is refined by heat, the heart is refined by continual reliance on the life of Christ as the animating power of one’s life.

If the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from ALL sin, what does that leave for baptism . . . or prayer . . . or penance . . . or saying the Rosary to cleanse?

4.9 Beans or Blood?

Hebrew 9:22

“ . . . and without shedding of blood is no remission of sin”

◆ Do you love beans? Lots of people do!

Are all Religions the Same? President Joe Biden thinks so:

“We all practice the same basic faith but different faiths. I happen to be a practicing Catholic, and I grew up learning from the nuns and the priests who taught me what we used to call Catholic social doctrine. But it's not fundamentally different than a doctrine of any of the great confessional faiths.” (Heavy.com / news - 2015) (Did you notice the double speak and the practice of relativism?)

Biden is not alone in his views. The entire new world seems to be telling us that all religions are basically the same and that there is no fundamental difference in the religious faiths. -- that man needs to find the good in all religions and build a society on syncretism / universalism.

Really?

Universalism defined: *the belief in the salvation of all souls regardless of what religious faith one practices:* that is, pagans and Christians, St. Augustine and Pol Pot will share heaven together.

Syncretism defined: *The combination of different forms of belief or practice of different religions without regard to existing contradictions between the two systems of belief.*

Many in Great Britain are united around Universalism - the belief that all religions are good and that man can be united around universal principles contained in all religions in order to create a one-world faith -- a global, international faith built on the synchronization of all faiths. King Charles sees / saw himself as the "Protector of faith," and NOT the "Protector of the Faith."

Even Christians have fallen for Universalism, Syncretism, and Unitarianism -- the belief that men can unite around the fruits of the Spirit . . . or love . . . or universal, "spiritual" principles.

There is only one word to describe the push for universalism - "**Beans!**"

A Lesson from the First Biblical Prophet

Let's look at **the Biblical story of Cain and Abel** and the difference between blood and beans (Genesis 4).

If there is a scientific difference between blood and beans, then there is a cataclysmic difference between Christianity and the other world religions.

First, it must be wonderful to be a public official and live in the White House because suddenly you become an expert on everything including Theology, Levantine history, engineering, metaphysics, anthropology, and sociology.

Second, notice the president utilizes “double talk” and “double speak” common to misleading politicians: *“We all practice the same basic faith but different faiths.”*

Doubletalk is the ability to hold two contradictory statements in tandem without acknowledging a conflict of ideas. It is the belief there is no difference between beans and blood.

Third, if I remember my history correctly, there was this small, tiny, itsy bitsy division between Reformationists and the Roman Catholics that took place in the 16th Century. Amtrak Joe would do well to consider the difference between the Westminster Confession of faith which believes in Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, and Sola Gratia, and what the Council of Trent stated as a confession of faith for Roman Catholics.

But, I would agree with the President in that all religions in the world are basically the same in one respect: ***All religions, except Christianity, believe God loves beans.***

All religions advise worshipers to offer beans to God in exchange for their soul. They may differ in that their choice of lima beans, pinto beans, or green beans, but they are still beans.

Christianity, however, teaches that blood is the only offering accepted for the redemption of the soul.

If I could personally deliver a message to Mr. Biden it would be this: **there are only two religions in the world:** the way of Cain, and the way of Abel; an offering of beans, beets, and broccoli or an offering of blood; the way of human works or the way of blood sacrifice; legalism or grace; the broad way or the narrow way, all religions or Christ.

You know the story (Genesis 4). Cain and Abel were brothers: both had the same mother and father; both were sinners; both were mature men; both had the same upbringing; and, both sought a right standing with the same God.

Cain brought the fruits of his labor, beans and broccoli, as a sacrifice, but it was rejected by God; Abel brought a lamb (shed blood) as a ransom for his soul, and he was accepted.

Thus, the two brothers represent two different types of religious orthodoxy: the creed of Cain, and the creed of Abel.

Judaism, Islam, and the Sanātana Dharma faiths follow the creed of Cain because they practice a performance-based theology as a means of approaching the Creator-God. Christianity, on the other hand, follows the creed of Abel because Christians accept Jesus as God's Lamb "Who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). This is why Jesus could truthfully say,

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," (John 14:6)!

All the world's religions lead to hell because they follow the confession of Cain.

Jews and Muslims are trying to cover their sins with fig leaves, and pay a ransom for their soul with vegetables and virtue; Christians rely upon the shed blood of Christ to discharge their debt to God.

Christianity is different than all the religions in the world in that Christianity is a bloody religion. It is a history of crying lambs, slit throats, and bloody altars.

My friend Shalom correctly observes that the "animal skins of Adam and Eve, Abel's lamb, the Passover, the Levitical sacrifices, and the cross of Calvary proclaim one unified truth: *"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins"* (Hebrews 9:22).

A soul cannot be bought with silver and gold (1 Peter 1:18-19). What use does a Spirit have for shiny metals? The Avenger seeks blood, not gold. Penalties to the High Court must be paid in blood, not with beans, beets, broccoli and bullion.

BLOOD IS THE CURRENCY OF THE SPIRIT WORLD!

Blood is the only tender accepted on the altar of the Great Spirit for the redemption of a soul. For this reason the great symbol of Christianity is the cross, because it was at the cross that Christ shed His blood to ransom His own.

1 Peter 1:18-19 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Shalom concluded that Abel was Christianity's first prophet (Mark 11:50-52) and his message to the world was that sinners infected by the Poisonous Tree must be redeemed—redeemed by blood (Genesis 4). Just as Adam and Eve had to be emancipated by blood and clothed in animal skins, all who seek parole must discharge their debt to God with blood currency.

Forget the Prophet Muhammad! Listen to Abel, God's First Prophet! Muhammad proclaims a bean theology; Abel announced a blood theology.

Please don't misunderstand. The world loves bean counters and hates blood creeds. Abel's message was true, but not popular. The bean farmer (Cain) killed the shepherd (Abel).

Christ spoke of the martyred prophets from Abel to Zachariah.

Both Abel and Zechariah followed the blood beliefs and were executed for their hemoglobin dogma. Cain killed Abel because he introduced the blood creed, and Josiah's government officials murdered Zechariah because he rebuked them for departing from the blood creed (2 Chronicles 24:17-21; Mark 11:50-52).

Both Abel and Zechariah had one message: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22).

And, the wonder of Christianity is that God Himself provided the Lamb (Genesis 22:8); that God Himself paid the sinner's ransom with the precious, valuable, cherished, darling, pure, holy blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—the gift of God, Sola Gratia.

But, **isn't exclusivism dangerous** . . . to believe that your religion is right and everyone else's religion is wrong? **No**, it was **not** Abel who killed Cain, but Cain who murdered Abel! The liberal beets and broccoli guy killed the man who believed there was only one way to approach God. A man who believes in the Lamb of God is harmless (John 1:29).

Forget beans, beets, and broccoli! Put your faith in Christ and his blood shed for you.

Yes, there is a difference between Christianity and all other creeds. Harry Ironside put it this way,

"There are only two religions: Do and Done! Which one do you follow?"

There is the way of Cain and the way of Abel; there is an offering of beans, beets and broccoli or the offering of blood. Which are you relying on for salvation?

Understanding the importance of blood in Christianity

Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Blood is the currency of the spirit-world.

The difference between Talmudic Judaism, Islam, the pantheistic cults, and Christianity is that Christianity teaches that blood, **not** good deeds, is the currency that must be paid to redeem the soul.

Christianity is a bloody religion through and through. In ancient Israel, blood flowed like a river from the temple into the Kidron Valley. Hundreds of thousands of lambs, birds, goats, and bulls spilled their blood at the site.

From the animals killed to provide clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) to the death of Christ (John 18-19), the Scripture teaches one fundamental truth: *Blood must be shed to*

pay for sin! Blood must be on the altar to gain acceptance before the LORD God of the Bible. God is just, and He cannot ignore, whitewash, avoid, overlook, or turn a blind eye to transgressions against His law. Blood is the only currency received by the Great Spirit in exchange for the soul.

Modern man with his love of money and psychological gimmicks fall short of achieving his spiritual ambitions because he fails to grasp that blood is the only lawful tender accepted between spirits and mortals. Talmudic Jews substitute prayer for propitiatory blood sacrifice. Muslims practice the five pillars of Islam: faith, prayer, alms giving, fasting, and treks to Mecca. Hindus believe karma marga (works) is the way of salvation. None seek blood on the altar. None!

Humanly speaking, blood is a powerful subject.

There is something in all of us that causes us to react to blood. The sight of that bright red fluid -- whether it was coming from an enemy or friend or yourself – provokes fear and awe. Hemophobia is the fear of blood. Blood is associated with such powerful concepts that some people can't stand the sight of it. Many faint at the sight of a bloody scene.

Blood is life. Blood is power and vitality—when you push yourself, your heart pounds and your pulse races as your blood rushes to supply oxygen to exhausted cells. A woman bleeds during her menstrual cycle, there's blood at childbirth. A drop of blood is your human signature. Your blood contains DNA and not only identifies your individual characteristics, but your entire family history. If you donate blood you might be saving someone's life. Blood banks are the first aid of life. Transfusion saves lives.

Genesis 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood:

Even in the French Quarter of New Orleans where Voodoo Queens practice love spells and curses, necromancers understand that to summon the gods of the underworld, blood must be mixed with frog hairs and toenails to attract the spirits.

Blood magic is the use of a few drops of blood, usually your own, to summon the gods of power. Even ancient Egyptians understood that mediation between the goat-gods and man required blood—lots of blood. Drinking blood, washing in blood, and sprinkling blood on symbolic objects guaranteed the Grand Zombi access to demonic powers.

Blood is associated with death on the battlefield, the slaughter of animals, cycles of fertility, and pagan rituals wherein occultist bath in blood or offer blood up to spirits of power.

But, modern man seems oblivious to the necessity of blood redemption.

The only legal tender Americans understand are worthless FRNs and Citibank Credit Cards. "Money" is the American religion. After all, every dollar boasts it is backed by "the full **faith** and credit" of the U.S. government -- a bankrupt corporation at that! To man

Americans, FRNs can buy anything, even favors with God. In love with gold-platinum credit cards, BMWs, and dollar bills, the average U.S. citizen hopes to gain power by spending himself into debt, by devoting himself to yoga exercises, and by using psychedelic drugs to engage the spirit world.

In the month of May 2018, Breitbart News reported that people were leaving Illinois in droves because of high taxes. "So, how is the state's legislature reacting to the tens of thousands of constituents leaving every year over high taxes? Well, legislators are proposed a massive tax hike, naturally."

Even in the Christian community, people pray the rosary, offer money in exchange for spiritual favors, and practice oil anointing in hopes of contracting for power in the spirit world. But, why would a spirit be interested in gold or silver or those worthless green FRNs with pictures of dead presidents?

Will Americans wake up and realize that blood is the currency of the spirit world; that only by blood can men escape the penalties of their naked arrogance, shameful lusts, and outbursts of anger?

Gold and silver are of no interest to the Eternal Spirit . . . but blood?

The Great Spirit is attracted to blood . . . the blood of Abel's lamb . . . and the shed blood of Abel . . . and most importantly, the blood of Christ.

Notice that blood speaks to the Almighty; that blood is of utmost interest to the Great Spirit; that blood speaks a message.

*Genesis 4:10 "And he said, What hast thou done? **the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.**"*

*Hebrews 12:24 "**the blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel.**"*

The blood of Abel's lamb cried out for pardon; the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance upon his murderer. The blood of Christ cries out "forgiveness" for trusting sinners.

Which raises the question: How can a transgressor appease the offended Spirit he has neglected all his life? How can a proud miscreant who has plunged into sensuality, fornication, and abominable idolatries be reconciled with his Creator?

The Bible from beginning to the end drills in one truth. Blood has to be brought to the altar. Blood is the only currency recognized in the spirit world. Blood is the only consideration accepted for a contract. The rituals of religion won't do. Feeling sorry for your wicked deeds can't buy spit. Saying "I'm sorry" to an offended Spirit will get you thrown into hell.

Cain was a farmer. Cain's offered vegetables to God and was rejected. Abel was a shepherd. Abel offered the blood of a lamb and found acceptance (Genesis 4).

From this account we learn there are only two religions in the world--(1) the religion of beans, beets, and broccoli--a religion of works; and (2) the religion of blood redemption. Judaism, Islam, and the pantheistic faiths are based on the belief that one's good deeds commend a man to God; that is, they follow the way of Cain and practice a vegetable religion. Christianity is based on the blood sacrifice of the Son of which all the Levitical sacrifices are a type.

The only tender accepted for ransom is blood . . . and a very special kind of blood--innocent blood, pure, sinless blood! Is there such a rare treasure as this? Yes, there is!

In His grace and mercy, the great Spirit offered the blood of His Son as currency for redemption: "knowing that you were ransomed from the corruptible ways inherited from your forefathers, not with worthless things like silver and gold, **but with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect" - 1 Peter 1:19.

Therefore, if you are trusting in your miserable money or worthless religious rituals or feeble beliefs that you are not that bad of a person, flee to the cross and lay hold of the horns on the altar. Plead the blood of Christ might be applied as payment for your sins. "Under stand" ("stand under") the blood of the Lamb and its authority. It is the only currency accepted in the spirit world.

This is our gospel.

They Overcome Him by the Power of the Blood

Q: What does it mean they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb?

Revelation 12:10-11 **And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.**

A loud voice: amid this terrifying war, God delivers a message of hope to men. Like the roar of giant waterfall, John hears a thundering voice. There is a gospel message here for mankind:

Salvation has come to men by virtue of Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

Strength: "strength" (dynamis) is the power God that was present in Christ defeating man's enemies: Satan, sin, and death.

The kingdom of God has come; that is, the rule of God has been manifest on earth in and through the Son. Since Christ spoiled Satan, the kingdom arrived in history (Matthew 12:28).

Power: The term "power" (exousia) refers to authority. As the Son, Christ has authority over demons, disease, blindness, deformity, and over the grave. Before His death, our Lord

claimed authority over all men (John 17:2). As the ascended Savior, all authority in heaven and earth is given to him (Matthew 28:18). He is the “king of King and Lord of lords,” the Prince of the kings of the earth (1:5). And, it was this message that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6-7).

The kingdom of God is the rule of God. Christ is on the throne ruling the affairs of humanity with a view to defeating Satan in order to bring men under the blessings of his kingdom.

The word “**power**” means authority. All authority, in heaven and earth, has been transferred to Christ. His rule is not something to be revealed during an alleged millennium, but active in history since His ascension into heaven.

Satan is called the “accuser of the brethren.” Visualize the Spoiler standing in a high court as a public prosecutor before the Judge seeking to persuade him to condemn, denounce, and sentence Christians to a life of misery: “Look at those people and what they do. They are lazy, errant, despicable sinners. They don’t deserve any of your love or favor. Punish them!” Due to our Advocate, all charges by the Accuser of the brethren become claims upon which relief cannot be granted. Christ paid for our sins at Calvary (1 John 2:1-2).

Satan is cast down. The expulsion of Satan from heaven is the antithesis of the ascension of Christ to the throne. The former was rejected; the latter gladly received! Satan’s defeat began with Christ’s first coming at the cross (John 12:31), not his second coming. No longer is Satan able to deceive the whole world. By virtue of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, Satan was cast out of heaven. Satan no longer works from a position of power (heaven), but is forced to an inferior position (earth) where he defends what is left of his kingdom. Satan no longer acts as a victor in heaven but a spoiler on earth.

Blood: The saints overcome Satan and his accusations by **the blood of the Lamb**. It is true that sins are real and offensive to a Holy God. Sinners are in need of redemption. They must be purchased and the debt must be paid. But, the “blood of the Lamb” declares victory. The sins of believers are paid for with blood – “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19) -- the currency of the spirit world.

Believers have power to claim heaven’s blessings of forgiveness and justification (Hebrews 10:19). The basis of salvation is blood on the altar. Sinners are dirty, but the blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Believers are declared righteous not because of any good they have done, but because of the good Christ has done. They are more than victors because their Representative obeyed the law for them. They are more than conquerors because their King engaged the trilogy of evil on behalf of His people and crushed their power. Christians are more than champions because their Representative died for their sins making it possible for transgressions to be stricken from the record in the High Court of Heaven. They do not stand on their own merits, but the merits of Him who received Heaven’s “well done!”

“Loved not their lives unto death” means that these believers chose devotion to Christ over fame and fortune; allegiance to Christ over allegiance to the State; obedience to God’s law over submission to man’s codes, statutes, and executive orders. They did not make an idol out of life or bills passed by the Roman senate. Faithfulness to Him was more important than escaping from the corridor of condemnation before earthly judges.

Before us is an ideal. Every Christian should be willing to live for Him or die for Him. We love life, promote life, preserve life, but we must not fall into the humanistic error and idolize life. If we die, we have a home in heaven. Some things are more important than gold, more important than life itself—the faith and principles that guide a man’s life (1 Peter 1:5-7).

It was this gospel that was established by Christ and proclaimed by the apostles in the 1st century. Though Satan lost the war legally against our Lord, he renews that war among God’s children.

Unite your hearts to the blood of Christ and be safe!

Note_Christianity Today's Comment on Universalism, August 25, 1972:

"Universalism is nothing new. The first Universalist congregation in America was founded in Gloucester in 1779. Eleven years later Universalists met in Philadelphia to prepare their first declaration of faith and plan of government.

As time progressed the liberalism of the Universalist church increased until in 1942 the charter was changed to read: “To promote harmony among adherents of all religious faiths, whether Christian or otherwise.” Finally, in May of 1960, Universalists and Unitarians merged into the Unitarian Universalist Association. At no time have the major evangelical denominations recognized these churches as part of the Protestant tradition.

Evangelical Christianity is now confronted by a different form of universalism, all the more dangerous because it insidiously distorts the Gospel and opens the door of salvation to all, not on the basis of faith in Christ but on the basis of inherited participation in God’s redemptive love. “Salvation must be effective for all men,” say the universalists.

4.10 Your War with Amalek

Exodus 17:8-16

◆ In traveling through the hot, dry wilderness toward Mt. Sinai, Israel ran out of water and became desperately thirsty.

Moses cried out to the LORD and the LORD instructed him to smite the rock with his staff. He did, and out came water to refresh the people and the livestock.

No sooner had the people of Israel drank from that “spiritual rock” when they were attacked by King Amalek (1 Corinthians 10).

The water out of the Rock is a picture of eternal life given by Christ (the rock) to those who believe.

Amalek is a picture of the flesh at war with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). Shortly after believers trust Christ and are refreshed by the water of life, they find themselves locked in with a fierce battle with the flesh and the principle of sin in the man (Amalek).

Anyone seeking to walk with God will find themselves at war with Amalek. The pious must be fierce fighters with praise on their lips and a sword on their hips (Psalm 149:6).

Theology: We are saved from the penalty of sin by the death of Christ (Exodus 15: the tree at Marah); and, we are saved from the power of sin by the life of Christ and his intercession for us at the right hand of God (Romans 5:10; Hebrews 7:25). In saving men from judgment, Christ did it all for us at Calvary; but in saving us from the power of sin we must cooperate with Christ by praying and obeying. Exodus 17 is an illustration of the intercessory work of Christ for us while we fight sin in us and around us.

8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

- Amalek’s name is mentioned 23 times in the Old Testament.
- Amalek is a descendent of Esau, the carnal brother of Jacob – the leading Bedouin from Beersheba, and the one man God hated in Scripture (1 Chronicle 1:34-36).
- Amalek’s mother was a concubine; that is, he is the product of the flesh (Genesis 36:12).
- Amalek became the chief of a tribe within Edom (Genesis 36:36). He was a powerful ruler and the Bible calls him the first of the nations (Numbers 24:20; Malachi 1:3).
- Amalek and his descendants became the arch enemy of Israel — an enemy the Hebrews had to fight from generation to generation (17:16): See Agag King of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15); and, Haman descendent of King Agag (Esther). Herod the Great was born in the land of Idumea or Edom around 74 B.C. He became king of the Jews and gave the order to kill Christ in Matthew 2. His son executed James in Acts 12.

- Amalek represents political rulers hostile to the Christian faith. It is the duty of men to resist lawless regimes who are hell-bent on installing corrupt, carnal tyrants to rule over a nation.
- Amalek is a type of the flesh lusting against the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). There is no escape from this battle. The believer will battle with Amalek (the flesh), the unregenerated part of a man's humanity all the days of his life. And, just as God gave Israel victory over Amalek, the Christian can expect victory over the flesh: "Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).
- Amalek was a walking dead man hostile to God and His Law-word. Devoted to the works of the flesh, he represents the adlers of anger, the bobcats of criticism, the lions of lust, the foxes of fornication, the sharks of strife, the warthogs of wrath, the houseflies of heresies, the hellbenders of homosexuality and the carnality that devours mankind. He is the fool in Psalm 14, the wicked man of Proverbs, Gog and Magog of Ezekiel, the puppet of the antichrist, and co-conspirator with the beast (Revelation 13).
- Amalek is the thief that cometh to kill and destroy (John 10); the lawless man (2 Thessalonians 2); the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12); the Judas within; and, the dead-duck hanging around the neck of every Christian.

The flesh is **not** the body, but the dominion of sin that claims authority over the whole man. In Romans eight the flesh is the non-Christian man; in Galatians five, the flesh refers to the unregenerate Jew under Judaism, and that part of the Christian man that is not born again.

9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

Fighting Amalek is not easy task. Moses sent Joshua, the general of Israel's armed forces, and the best men in the nation to wage war against this King of Edom. War is a manly occupation, and it takes a manly men to engage the enemy. Christians need to man-up and soldier-up if they are going to fight a battle with fangtooth Amalek.

"God, harden me against myself, the coward with pathetic voice who craves for ease, and rest, and joy. Myself, arch traitor to myself, my hollowest friend, my deadliest foe, my clog whatever road I go." – Amy Charmichael

10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

It is not enough to have brave generals and manly men fighting Amalek. It takes the power of Heaven as represented by Moses, Aaron, and Hur to defeat Amalek.

Moses represents the prophetic word, law, righteousness, the rule of law, intercession, and devotion to the LORD God.

Aaron represents the priesthood and overcoming the Accuser of the Brethren by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11).

Hur, according to Jewish tradition (Joseph., Ant. Jud., iii. 2, § 4) was the husband of Miriam, and so the brother-in-law of Moses and Aaron. He was a descendant of Judah through Pharez and Hezron. (1Chronicles 2:3-20.) Moses left him joint-regent with Aaron when he ascended up Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:14) (Ellicott). Moreover, He belonged to the Tribe of Judah and may have been its political leader at the time of Moses (Exodus 31:2-5; 1Chronicles 2:18-20.), and he was grandfather of Bezaleel (Bet'sa'el: "in the shadow of the protection of God"), the great sculptor and artificer of the tabernacle (Exodus 31:2-5) (Barnes).

11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

When Moses held up the rod of God (a symbol of authority), Israel advanced against Amalek.

Here is a lesson on intercessory prayer and the efficacy of the priesthood of Christ "who ever liveth to make intercession for" God's people (Hebrews 7:25).

One would do well to study Romans 6 and notice how the Spirit identifies the believer with the victorious history of Christ so that dominion of sin is defeated. So effective is the truth of identification, the believer has the duty of declaring death to sin and his new status as "being alive to God" (Romans 6:1-6; 11).

12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Moses, Aaron, and Hur were struck by the fact that the fluctuations in the battle coincided with the motions of Moses' hands. If the battle was not to be lost, it was necessary to find some remedy for fatigue – a rock to sit on, and help holding up the rod of God.

Moses held up his hand, with the rod of God in it for hours. This gesture, though fervent prayer was doubtless joined with it, seems **not** to have been the gesture of praying, which is the lifting up of both hands, but of an ensign-bearer of *spiritual authority*, and of one's readiness to smite his enemies (Matthew- Poole).

"to the going down of the sun:" The length of this first great battle indicates the strength and stubborn persistence of this tribal chieftain. He did not yield to Joshua, but he was forced to retreat because of the intercession of Moses.

13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Joshua's fighting and Moses' praying defeated Amalek. God calls Christian to soldier up, to pray and to fight, to never quit, and to never surrender to Amalek / flesh. But, that fight

must be done in dependence on the power of the risen Savior-Priest sitting at the right hand of God.

14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

Write this in a book and rehearse it demonstrates the need for older saints to teach the younger generation how to fight, who to fight, and the strategy for victory (See Romans 6-8:4; 1 John 3:1-5:4).

As God has contempt for Amalek, we must have contempt for the flesh. God declared Amalek to be an enemy and one that would lose his place in the history books. Likewise, the Spirit informs us the flesh is an enemy in Galatians 5. This is the Spirit's way of telling us to live for God and be rewarded or live for the flesh and be forgotten.

15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi:

Moses built an altar to sacrifice thank-offerings upon it, as an acknowledgment of the Divine mercy in giving Israel the victory over the desert chieftain. But, secondarily as a memorial to commemorate Israel's triumph.

Jehovah-nissi—"the Lord is my banner"—announces to all there had been a fierce war against an enemy, and the people which worshipped YHWH had been victorious. For future generations to be triumphant, they must know who they are fighting for, who the enemy is, and the need to join forces with the LORD to fight with them.

16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

The plain sense of this passage is that Amalek, by attacking Israel, had lifted up his hand against the throne of God. Consequently, God took an oath and declared war against Amalek from generation to generation. Moreover, God is at war with all who resist His authority . . . and, His King. In the end, Christ will destroy all His enemies, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Thirsty? Struggling to be holy? At war with Amalek? Marshal your best forces, man-up and fight. While fighting your Amalek, know that the Lord Jesus is in heaven interceding for you, and with His help you can have victory before sundown.

4.11 Looking this Way and That

Exodus 2:11-15

◆ **Key:** one of the keys to the Christian life is to be God-conscious and NOT man-conscious.

Q: What kind of person are you? Are you more man-conscious or God conscious?

Before us is a glimpse of one of the greatest men in history. Preserved in an age of abortion, he became a statesman, scholar, soldier, orator, and CEO trained by the priestly doctors of Egypt.

Yet, with all this education, He was unequipped to serve God.

Eventually, He became God's instrument to free people from tax bondage in Egypt and become the legal architect of the nation of Israel.

Acts 7:22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

While on the threshold of a brilliant career, he committed a tragic blunder that made him useless to God and Pharaoh.

11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

Mature in age, Moses became grieved by the **injustice of the Egyptian taskmaster toward** his Hebrew brother. Consulting his own wisdom, he took action and committed murder one. There was nothing wrong with his sense of justice and his hatred of tyranny. But, at this moment he allowed sincerity and true compassion to rob him of his true vocation.

12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

In looking "**this way and that way**," east and west, north and south, we discover that Moses was more man-conscious than God-conscious; crisis-centered, instead of Christ-centered. Why didn't he look up? Out of balance, he thought he had to do something, but what he chose to do cost a man his life.

13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

Man-conscious instead of God-conscious, Moses was tuned in to public opinion . . . and public opinion turned against him. He wrongly concluded his Hebrew brothers would understand what he did, but they did not.

14 And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

Moses did not understand that Pharaoh was a god in the minds of the Hebrews. And, when government is god in the minds of people, you cannot expect them not to betray you.

Men of God do not look around for man's approval. They are content to walk the pilgrim path alone without the approval of people. Nehemiah building the wall . . . Philip among the Samaritans . . . Peter preaching to Cornelius . . . Robert E. Lee resigning his position under Lincoln and accepting his appointment for the Confederacy come to mind.

Too often, slaves do not want to be free of oppression; rather, they want to be secure in their chains.

Committed to a need instead of God, Moses lost his spiritual equilibrium. So strong was Moses desire to be accepted among men, it would take him 40 years in the desert to deliver him from self-reliance and man-consciousness.

John 5:44 How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?

15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

Pharaoh was the Chief Executive Officer of the Egyptian government, and like all officers in government, he protected his own. Egyptian tax-collectors could thrash Hebrews, but Hebrews could not defend themselves against the abuse of Egyptian police officers. Government officials think nothing of treason to God, but treason to government is a capital crime.

Where are you in this journey? Are you more man-conscious than God-conscious; more concerned about man's rejection than God's recognition; relying on your wisdom and timing instead of patiently waiting upon God to discover your mission?

God does not call His servants to a task . . . or need . . . or a mission field, but to be committed to Him; to please Him and only Him; to serve Him when only He can see and judge.

We must **not** confuse "need" for a **calling**; bustle for business, placement for power; perspiration for inspiration; and college training for God's training. We have a brain, but we don't have to prove to men that we are smart; we have a mouth, but we don't have to prove to men we have knowledge; we have hands, but they don't always have to be busy to prove that we are valuable.

Psalm 32 teaches us there are two types of natures that men possess: the nature of mules or the nature of horses. Mules have to be pushed, pulled, and shoved to get moving. Horses

tend to run ahead and must be restrained to travel at the pace set by the horseman. Moses was a horse. What kind of person are you?

Sometimes, the need of the hour is to be “still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10). God does not need the energy of youth. When a man catches fire for God he burns without being consumed. See Exodus 3.

Want to be used of God? Then spend time with Him; listen to His Word; and unlearn all that you’ve learned at Cairo University.

Notes: Moses, like most Christian men, are a product of faith and fear. In grace, the New Testament informs us that Moses actions, though deficient in holy wisdom, were motivated by his faith in God.

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

4.12 A Burning Bush and a Man on Fire

Exodus 3:1-8

◆ Dictionary.com defines piety as “having or showing a dutiful spirit of reverence for God or an earnest wish to fulfill religious obligations.”

“Light yourself on fire with passion and people will come from miles to watch you burn.” -- John wesley

In Exodus 2, Moses matured as a man, but without piety. He correctly discerned evil and oppression, but he lacked a reverence for God. At age 40, we see him looking “this way and that way,” from side-to-side, but not upward. Being man-conscious and not God-conscious, he killed a man and fled Egypt as a fugitive.

In Exodus 3, Moses meets the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At age 80, we see him at the burning bush learning his first lesson on walking with God.

Exodus 3:1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

Moses Discovering the Burning Bush

2 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

Moses met the LORD, not because he was seeking God, but because God was seeking him. God, not Moses, chose the time for the man to meet Him.

Manifesting Himself as fire in a burning bush without the bush being burned or filled with smoke captured the attention of this shepherd.

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

Having never seen wood burn without smoke and red-orange amber, Moses had to investigate the phenomenon.

God chose to reveal himself in this way to Moses in part because Moses needed to learn how to serve God in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

At age 40, Moses tried to serve righteousness. Energized by emotion about the abuse of the taskmaster, Moses found himself burning somewhere between ardor for the LORD and anger against injustice; between faith in God and the fear of Pharaoh.

At age 80, Moses saw an ordinary bush on fire without being consumed — a lesson for this shepherd on how to live for God — on how to burn without burning out — on the possibility of being on fire for God and serving Him without being stressed, tired, or fatigued.

Moses Discovering a Holy God

4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, 5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

God is the initiator drawing Moses to Himself. But, Moses had much to learn about following the LORD.

Notice the adverb “not” in verse five. The first instruction Moses had to learn was the “NOT” of God. In and of himself, Moses was not qualified to meet God: “Draw **not** nigh hither.”

Likewise, the God-seeker must learn that entering the kingdom of God is not like a smorgasbord where you can do as you please.” There are things he cannot do; places he cannot go; things he cannot say, words he cannot use. Like Moses, we must learn the Ten Commandments, nine of which begin with “thou shall not.” “Broad is the way that leads to destruction; narrow is the way that leads to life.”

The first lesson Moses had to learn at the school of the burning bush was that God is holy.

Because God was there on the mountain, the ground was holy. The ground was holy because the holy God was there at the burning bush manifesting himself to the man. God graciously instructed Moses on how to approach Him. “Put off thy shoes” is an eastern custom requiring guests to honor the host by removing their dirty sandals from off their feet when entering the home.

Dirt is common, holiness is rare. The Lord taught Moses to separate himself from the common business of men in order to do holy business for God. He had to separate from the common , dirty ways of men in order to be an instrument of a pure God.

Thus, the first lesson a seeker of God must learn is that the LORD maintains a holy, clean house. He is holy and those who serve him must serve him in holiness: “Be ye holy as He is holy” (1 Peter 1:13-14). The Hebrew word “holy” (*qadosh*) is mentioned 431 times in the Old Testament, and if we add the Greek word “holiness” to the term “holy” (*hagios*) in the New Testament, we discover the term (*hagios*) is used about 200 times. It is a reference to his pure and holy character.

Moses Discovering God’s Purpose

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

Forty years before the burning bush event, Moses looked this way and that way. Now, in his first encounter with the LORD, he hides his face because he was afraid to look upon God.

Little did he know that he was going to be God’s burning bush to the nation of Israel; that he was going to be on fire for God and not be consumed by the exhausting task of freeing a nation of slaves and organizing them around the rule of law; that his ministry would last 40 years.

Moses did not become holy to meet God, but after he met the LORD, he became holy. Holiness is not the way to Jesus, but Jesus is the way to holiness.

After Moses learns that God is holy, the LORD introduces Moses to His purpose — to deliver Israel out of bondage in Egypt. Likewise, only those who know God in his holiness can successfully proclaim the gospel to sinners.

The Second Great Lesson Moses Learned at the Burning Bush:

Just as important, Moses learned *it is possible to be on fire for God and not burn out!* “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Exodus 34:7).

Likewise, the servant of the Lord must learn “to be strong in the Lord and power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10); to burn and not grow weary (Isaiah 40:31).

Moses Discovering Mission Impossible

7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

What a daunting task? Carefully consider Mission Impossible:

- Moses was called to confront the hard, stubborn heart of Pharaoh, King of the Nile. Most men would be doubled over with depression after his first rejection, but Moses did not quit, retreat, or resign. Most men panic after receiving a “You-owe-me” letter from the IRS. God needed a man that would burn, but not be consumed. Moses did not yield. He bravely confronted the most powerful monarch on earth ten times until he gained freedom for the Hebrews.
- Moses was called to organize two million man march out of Egypt. Imagine the task of organizing reluctant men, women, children, babies, and grandparents, flocks of sheep, goats, and chickens out of the Nile Valley into a desert by the shores of the Red Sea. Most men would have burned up with anger and frustration over the impossible task. But, Moses did it without being rattled or irritated.
- Moses was called to advance two million scared people out of Egypt through the Red Sea with Pharaoh’s armies in hot pursuit. But, Moses did it without burning up with fear or anxiety.
- Moses was called to lead tired, thirsty, hungry complaining men, women, and children through a hot, dry desert not knowing where to find water or food. This pressure would cause most men to quit. Moses did it for 40 years without resignation.

- Moses was called to frame Israel's constitution and to unite a nation of uneducated slaves around the Ten Commandments. This assignment would task the bravest of hearts, but Moses did it without annoyance, grievance, or resentment.
- Moses was called to organize and transform an army of inexperienced slaves into a disciplined army to attack and slaughter the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Such a task would test the courage and skills of any man. Moses did it without melting with fear.

Moses Discovering he is to be God's Burning Man

Moses First Objection

11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Rightly so, Moses objected to Mission Impossible. He was not rash in accepting the contract offer. He saw himself as an ordinary man unqualified for the task of emancipation. But, this is the point of this encounter, any ol' bush will do.

God's Answer to this Ordinary Man

12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

Thus, God says to this ordinary man, **"I WILL be with thee."** Just as I was present in this burning bush and it was not consumed, I will be with you. I will be your Fire, and you will not melt, char, incinerate, burn out, or even smolder.

And, we know from the rest of the story that Moses was God's holy, burning man who did it all without being consumed by anger, frustration, lust, grief, fear, resentment, or bitterness.

Likewise, America has been enslaved by psychopaths at the helm of power. What man has the power to deliver a nation from communism, tax slavery, feminism, homosexuality, fake science, addiction to transvestism, and love of abortion?

Are you available to lead God's people out of tax slavery? Out of sin, and fear? You must become a burning bush that is not consumed by the size of the mission.

Emotional maturity and the ability to burn without being consumed is a pre-requisite for leadership. May the Lord help us all.

Notes:

Like Moses, men are a product of faith and fear. In this messy business of justice, the New Testament reveals the spirit of faith operated in Moses through this ordeal.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

4.13 The Bitter Waters of Marah

Exodus 15:20-25

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. **23** When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. **24** And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" **25** And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree (log) and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

Bitter waters and bitter hearts

◆ God instructs us through testaments in His Word, and through historical events that illustrate truth.

The first lesson taught to the redeemed Israelites after leaving Egypt was about a tree that could heal bitter water. Just as there are bitter waters, there are bitter experiences and bitter souls. Consequently, the Spirit directs the believer to Calvary in order to find healing from the stagnant waters of sin.

The journey of Israel from the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai is a lesson on how God educates His people. Having gone days without water, the LORD led his thirsty caravan to the acerbic-

waters of Marah in order to teach them (and us) about the bitterness of sin. Likewise, it is not long into our pilgrim journey we discover sin's putrefaction and the need for healing.

The bitter water at Marah is a picture of the corruption caused by Adam's sin upon humanity. All the anguish, crying, and sorrow we experience is caused by sin inherited from the first-family. We live in a sin-sick world. From head to toe, from old to young, people suffer because of original sin (Romans 5:12ff).

While the people were murmuring, crying, and complaining about the saltpetre water, the LORD showed Moses a tree. He threw the timber into the playa, and the stale water became sweet. There is nothing medicinal about wood. It wasn't the lumber that purified the pond, it was the work and power of God. God planned it this way in order to create an historical illustration of the cross and its healing power.

As Moses plunged a tree into the waters of Marah to solve its bitterness, God sent His Son to die on a tree to save us of from the bitterness of sin. Through the precious blood of Christ men are redeemed, forgiven, and purified. *Though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be white as snow* (Isaiah 1:18ff).

The cure for Adam's sin is at the cross of Christ. It is through the vicarious suffering of Christ we find salvation. Believe it; receive it; and you will be saved.

It was at Marah that Israel learned about ***Jehovah-Raphi***: "I am the LORD that healeth thee." This is the beginning of salvation.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (rapha / raphi – healed of our transgressions and iniquities).

****The peace we seek between God and us is only achieved by the vicarious suffering of Christ.***

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Galatians 5:16 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Let us remember . . .

- That God saves us from the PENALTY OF SIN by the cross and the power of His blood;
- That God saves us from the POWER OF SIN by the life of Christ and the outpouring of His Spirit;

- That God will save us from the PRESENCE OF SIN when we are called home to live with Him forever.

Cruci dum spiro fido (As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross)

4.14 Saved by His Present Risen Life

Romans 5:10

◆ Christianity is more than a dream, an ethic, or religious-ritual. It is more than a set of rules. It involves an intimate relationship with the living God through His Son, risen from the dead, sitting at the right hand of the Father.

He is the content of the Christian life; the Water of Life; the Fuel in the tank; the Life-force working within the Christian heart through His Spirit. The One who calls us to holiness is the One Who supplies the power to be holy . . . to love . . . to suffer . . . and to serve.

There is hope for a powerful, victorious life because our Lord sits at the right hand of God.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God . . . (Colossians 3:1)

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiahs 33:3).

We do not serve a dead Savior, but an alive, all-powerful, victorious Savior exalted to the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 1:3, 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Acts 7:55-56).

“It is promised that the people who were long in sorrow, shall again be filled with joy. Where the Lord gives righteousness and peace, he will give all needful supplies for temporal wants; and all we have will be comforts, as sanctified by the word and by prayer.” (Matthew Henry)

What God promised to the people through the prophet, Jeremiah experienced in his own life (17:14ff).

Jesus lived in total dependence on the Father.

John 5:19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

We must not only respond to the call to be saved from sin, but to walk by faith in dependence upon Him; to walk in the Spirit; and to walk in holiness and love. He does not save us and then abandon us to serve Him in our own little, weak way. The One who saves us by the death of His Son at Calvary also supplies power to overcome sin now in this life by Christ “Who is our life” (Colossians 3:4).

God works in the man to accomplish His will.

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (sanctification)” - 1 Thessalonians 5:24

“ . . . for the battle is not yours, but God's . . . , stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you” - 2 Chronicles 20:15-17.

Like the Savior, “we can do nothing!” And, like the Son we are to live in total dependence on God to sanctify us. Like Israel in Jehoshaphat’s time we must learn to “stand still.”

The “it” in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 refers back to God’s call to be holy in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

God’s power is available to us NOW.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

We are not abandoned to our own grit and power to do God’s will. It is God who works in us to accomplish His good pleasure (obedience to His law – Romans 8:4).

His “good pleasure” refers to working out life’s problems (salvation / sanctification) by the power of God as one seeks to obey His Word.

Christ saves us now by his life.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Romans 8:2 ‘the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death.’

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the Power of His Risen Life unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through His life from the power of sin. He saves men from the condemnation of sin through faith in His death, and saves men from the domination of sin through faith in His Highly Exalted Life (Colossians 3:2).

A growing cleansing from the dominion and the power of sin is granted to us, if the life of Jesus Christ is breathing in our lives as we depend on His heart-beat operating within us by His Spirit.

The sacrifice on the Cross is the basis of everything, but that sacrifice does not exhaust what Christ does for us. He died for our sins, and lives for our sanctifying. He died for us, He lives in us. Because He died, we are forgiven; because He lives, we are made pure (MacLaren).

That only way we can become free from the tyranny that dominates us, is having the life of Christ as the animating principle of our lives. When we depend on His life as the animating principle of our lives, the spirit of Jesus emancipates us from the power of sin and death (MacLaren).

The blood of Christ at the cross redeems us from the penalty of sin unto justification, but the quickening blood of Christ in His intercessory work at the right hand of God cleanses us from the power of sin unto sanctification.

4.15 Miscarriage at Jericho

The Dirty Little Secret at Jericho and the Salt that Heals Barrenness

2 Kings 2:18

And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not? 19 And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

◆ Before us we see a beautiful city with a dirty little secret.

Located in the Jordan Valley, Jericho was an oasis in the desert 1,300 feet below sea level. A winter-resort for kings, everyone wanted to live there during the cold months. No doubt travelers admired the beautiful orange-citrus groves and commented to the locals how lucky they were to live in such a charming valley.

The inhabitants showed a brave face and displayed a casual smile when caravaneers commented on the visual delights. Underneath, however, the locals carried a dirty little secret. They knew the truth:

“the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.”

When the text says, “**the water is naught**” it does not mean there was no water in the valley. It meant the water was contaminated and polluted; that the alkalinity was so bad it caused the crops to miscarry.

When the text says “**the ground is barren**” it does not mean nothing grew in the fields.

The word “**barren**” means “causing to miscarry.” In the spring you would see green leaves, sprouting buds, and other evidence of an abundant harvest — even a bumper crop.

But, the locals knew the truth. Just before harvest, the fruit would fall to the ground to the tragedy of the whole community. Some carried a feeble hope that this year would be different. But, the older residents knew the fruit would fall to ground just before harvest. Death, miscarriage, sterility, flower pedals falling off, grapefruit dropping to ground, and total agricultural crop failure BECAME NORMAL.

Think of it! Sterility, failure, defeat, disappointment, frustration, and hopelessness BECAME NORMAL! This was the heartbreak of the city — the dirty little secret.

Of course, this is a picture of many a Christian life. The struggling believer hopes for life, for power, for fruit, but instead he is empty, impotent, and enslaved to the flesh. Believers talk salvation, but live destruction. They talk victory, but live defeat. Preachers talk soul-winning; but, are barren in and out of the pulpit.

These people are NOT hypocrites. They are tired . . . desperately tired of being defeated day after day after day. They put on a beautiful act, but inside they carry a dirty little secret: “**the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.**”

The Christian life is an impossible life. It takes the presence and power of the God to live it.

When the situation became intolerable, the men of the city went to the man Of God. Pouring out their hearts, they told him about their hidden sorrow: We are barren, fruitless Hebrew citrus-farmers.

Elijah had a remedy for fruitlessness:

20 And he said, ‘Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein.’ And they brought it to him.

21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

As far as we know, there is nothing agriculturally therapeutic about pouring salt into an irrigation ditch.

Moreover, this story is not here to provide solutions for agricultural crop-failures. Rather, the story is here as a tutorial on the remedy for spiritual sterility.

Salt is a known preservative used to preserve pork, fish, and beef in barrels without refrigeration.

Salt represents the risen, highly-exalted life of the Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the father from where He has poured out His Spirit upon believers (Colossians 3:1).

Every sacrifice under the Levitical system had to be sprinkled with salt to complete the type of the death and resurrection of Christ (Leviticus 2:13; Ezekiel 43:24). Believers are not only saved by **His death** (by blood) from the penalty of sin (Romans 5:8), they are saved by **His life** from the power of sin (Romans 5:10). Because He lives, we live. Because he is alive at the right hand of God and hears our prayers, we have the hope of answered prayer. Because He lives we can experience a powerful, victorious life here on earth. ***His life is the salt we need to overcome sterility and fruitlessness.***

*Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by his life.***

*2 Corinthians 9:8 And **God is able to make all grace abound toward you;** that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, **may abound** to every good work:*

*Philippians 4:13 For it is God which worketh in you both **to will** and **to do** of **his good pleasure.***

*1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful **is** he that calleth you, **who also will do it.***

22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

We need healing from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. The lesson in this story is about being healed from the impotence and barrenness caused by sin.

God gave his Son to die on the cross that we might be saved from the penalty of sin. Christians have an unlimited salt supply through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. This salt can save us from the power of sin that sterilizes, corrupts, and pollutes all that we do.

*Romans 5:10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, **shall we be saved through his life!***

When God heals, he saves us from death and unfruitfulness.

Jeremiah 17:14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, For You are my praise.

Pass the salt, please.

4.16 Pass the Salt, Please!

2 Kings 2:20

♦ What is the typical meaning of the term “salt?”

Salt healed the bitter waters of Jericho

2 Kings 2:20 And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him . And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. 22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

Salt is a type of the present, risen, saving-life of Christ reigning at the right hand of the Father

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Salt is an illustration of the life of Christ working in the believer

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith (faithfulness) of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Salt was sprinkled on every sacrifice as precious type of the victorious, risen life of Christ—the life that saves a man from the power of sin.

Leviticus 2:13 And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

Salt represents the life and enduring nature of the agreement, alliance, or contract.

Ezekiel 43:24 And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the LORD.

**Barnes notes: " the rabbis assert that there was a great heap of salt close to the altar, always ready for use, and that the inclined plane to the altar was kept covered with salt."*

The supply of salt had to be unlimited to complete the type — the endless life of Christ.

Ezra 7:22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much.

Limits were placed on the amount of silver that the returning exiles could utilize from the king's treasury, but no limits were placed on the amount of salt that could be used to re-establish the sacrificial system in the rebuilt temple.

Salt must have preservation powers or it is good for nothing

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus' life and gift of the Holy Spirit is the prototype for salt.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Jesus said,

"Everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt" (Mark 9:49). Salt is a type of judgment and a type of salvation. All who believe are salted and preserved by the power of the Spirit. All who reject Christ will be salted with fire.

Salt is a picture of the power of God.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Salt is a picture of the sanctifying work of Christ available to every believer.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Salt healed the bitter waters of Jericho; and, reliance on the life of Christ heals barrenness.

2 Kings 2: 21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

Progress toward piety is grounded on Christ's work at Calvary which secures a righteous standing before God, and upon Christ's present life at the right hand of God which strengthens our service to Him through the salt / power of the Holy Spirit.

Pass the Salt, please.

4.17 Poison in the Pot

2 Kings 4:38-41

◆ If you have ever been doubled-over throwing up after a BBQ on a hot summer day because of food poisoning, you know how alarmed the Bible students at Gilgal were when they learned there was Poison in the Pot.

2 Kings 4:38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and see the pottage for the sons of the prophets.

39 And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not.

40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

During the time of Elisha, the Northern Kingdom suffered from apostasy due to the two golden calves erected at Dan and Bethel. In response to the severe departure from the faith, God sent a famine upon the land for the purpose the people would realize their backsliding and return to the Lord. A lesser judgment would not reform a wicked nation.

To combat apostasy, Elijah started a school for the prophets — a seminary-of-sorts to train young men for the prophetic ministry. After the death of Elijah, Elisha took the baton of revelation and passed it on to Bible students at Gilgal near Jericho in the Jordan Valley. When Elisha arrived, he found the Bible students hungry and malnourished.

Needing a good meal, Elisha ordered his servant to fire up a huge kettle and prepare vegetable-stew for the students. But, one of the young men who went looking for “herbs” (greens) inadvertently gathered poison gourds, chopped them up, and added them to the stew without the knowledge of any attendants. Thus the saying, “too many cooks spoil the broth.”

When one of the students first tasted the broth, he yelled, Stop, “O thou man of God, there is death in the pot!”

Death in the pot refers to some type of bitter toxin that could sicken the whole Bible school. Food poisoning symptoms can start within hours of eating contaminated food; it often includes nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, and even death. It can last for days or weeks.

Unruffled, Elisha ordered **meal (flour) to be added to the stew**. Miraculously, the stew was detoxified and the men enjoyed a tasty, healthy meal.

Again, the Lord provides us with spiritual lessons through this historical event:

(1) Unlike the bitter waters at Jericho, and the *private* grief each citrus farmer shared, the poison in the pot was totally public. Adding wild gourds to the stew threatened the life of every Bible student and their future ministry in the teetering nation.

(2) The bitter gourds illustrate how false doctrine threatens the spiritual health of a Bible community. Like the young, undiscerning student that picked malignant gourds, eyeless ministers mesmerized by the latest fad can poison the pot by introducing heresy-herbs into the church.

(3) The “meal” at the school performed the same function as the “salt” at Jericho. It was not the meal that saved the stew, but the power of God.

(4) The “meal” is a picture of Christ as the Bread of Life that provides life for the soul . . . the Antidote for the sin-sick soul . . . God’s Provision to men hungry for truth.

*John 6:33 For **the bread of God** is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

*John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.***

Major Lessons

The first lesson is that every church has energetic youth gathering wild gourds from dirt bag professors at Pervert University (PU) that poison the pot. Modernism, socialism, communism, feminism, and humanism come to mind.

The second lesson in this story is that the Christian community must feed on the spinach of God’s Word and not go in search of wild gourds to nourish the soul. Consider how the doctrines of feminism, psychology, evolution, transgenderism, and critical race theories poison the pot.

People seem to love the fettuccine of feminism, the artichokes of fake science, and the sugar peas of psycho-therapy, the Brussels sprouts of British syncretism, and the gourds of global government, but these wild herbs spoil the church.

The third lesson in this account is that the prophet did **not** command the students to pick the poisonous gourds out of the pot, **but to add meal to the soup!**

It is not possible to remove all the poison in the pot (church), but if the church will feed on Christ, it will be fine . . . even flourish!

Add the sweetness of Christ to every conversation and the Christian community will experience life and joy. Those that eat the bread of life will be happy and healthy.

Praise is to the Devil what complaining is to the God. Praise the Lord and drive Satan away.

Instead of chasing down all heresies in the church coming from those picking wild gourds, let us feed on the sweetness of the Savior. Devour the Bread of Life and you will experience sweet fellowship with Christ and sweet fellowship one with another.

Jesus is the Sweetest Name I know by Lela B. Long

*There have been names that I love to hear, oh, yes
But never has there been a name so dear
To this heart of mine, as this name divine
This precious, precious name of Jesus*

*Jesus is the sweetest name I'll ever, ever know
And He's just the same as his holy name
And that's the reason why I love Him so
Jesus is the sweetest name I know*

Furthermore, it is not possible to chase down all the sins in one's life. But, we can daily gather the Manna and enjoy the Bread of Life. Feasting on Him strengthens the soul, and will result in deliverance from all that disturbs us.

"There is no pit so deep that Christ is deeper still" – Corrie Ten Boom.

Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

4.18 Prescription for Bitterness

Exodus 15

♦ **Moses prayed, and God showed him a tree. Moses ordered the tree be placed in the bitter waters and to everyone's amazement, the waters turned sweet.**

Scholars have tried to figure out what kind of tree could perform this kind of cleansing. But, in my opinion the search is useless.

God performed a miracle and the tree performed the function as a type of Calvary. The solution for the bitter waters was a **TREE**, and the solution for bitterness of soul is the **Tree of Calvary** which represents the **Judgment of God** and the **Grace of God**.

Israel complained because they lost sight of God's love (in the Passover lamb) and redemptive purpose (at the Red Sea); and, Christians complain because they lose sight of the **CROSS**.

Do you feel like God has given you bitter waters to drink?

You can overcome a bitter spirit by applying the following prescriptions:

Prescription 1: Stop looking at trials as God's punishment upon you, and start looking at trials as God's training program to make you strong.

The whole of Hebrews 12 is about God's training program for his children. All his children are disciplined. Discipline is not punishment, it is child training. It may feel like

punishment, but it is not. If Christ took all our punishment upon himself at Calvary, how much punishment is there left for you and me? God does not punish His people, but He does discipline them for their good.

God led his people to the bitter waters of Marah, not to hurt them, but to help them; not to disappoint them, but to encourage them; not to poison them, but to perfect their souls with a demonstration of His power.

Anyone familiar with strength training and muscle building knows that muscle development follows muscle exhaustion.

Likewise, God often exhausts His saints to strengthen them. Brokenness precedes holiness.

For this reason, the Spirit exhorts His people to “**not despise the discipline of the Lord**” (rebel) nor “**faint**” (quit) when they are reprovved by Him (12:5). Bitterness grows when germinated by resentment and resignation.

Where there is bitterness, add the sweetness of Christ. Praise to God and thankfulness for trials sweetens the waters of Marah. Praise is to the Devil what complaining is to God. God loves it; the Devil hates it. Add grace and gloominess with turn into sunshine.

Prescription 2: Stop seeking perfection, and start seeking excellence.

Idealism and perfectionism are regions where bitterness grows best. Those with high expectations for others will always be disappointed. Bitterness grows where people have unreal expectations of themselves or others. ***Those who "want it all" set themselves up for bitterness and a fall.***

We live in a fallen world. Clothes wear out. Cars break down. Paint peels. Milk sours. Toast burns. In an imperfect world, the stickler will always be disappointed and critical.

Perfection is God’s job, but excellence is our job. Excellence recognizes the impossibility of perfection. Excellence recognizes the sinfulness of man and knows that perfection is impossible; but, it does encourage people to do the best they can. Only a demanding, critical legalist demands perfection.

God led Israel to Marah’s bitter waters because this was *the beginning of their integrity training*.

How do you take a nation of slaves and train them to be spiritual leaders, soldiers, and statesmen? Integrity training! He wanted to show this nation that He could fix broken things and make them whole; that He could take bitter things and make them sweet; that good can come out of bad experiences; that He is sovereign over every circumstance; that they needed to go deeper into trust and to believe that God had their best in mind.

Prescription 3: Stop fearing death, and start fearing sin.

As humans we fear want, need, and death. We fear failure and financial ruin when we should fear sin. It was Adam's sin that brought death and misery to humanity; and, it is sin that wrecks relationships and mars our spirit today. ***Sin in the heart was more of a threat to the nation's health than bitterness in the waters of Marah.***

Psalm 97 has been called the OT gospel. Notice that in Psalm 97:10 the fundamental attribute of the godly is not love, but hatred—hatred of evil. The whole instruction in God's law was designed to produce in men the fear of God and animus toward sin (Deuteronomy 6:1-2).

The course of this world sees sin as a form of entertainment and embraces it; but, those instructed by God's Word see sin as an enemy and wage war against it. ***Bitter people lay down their swords, stop obeying, and surrender to be ruled by their bosom sins.***

Prescription 4: Stop looking at the difficulty of circumstances and start looking at the power of Christ.

Calvary, **not** circumstance, is the criterion of God's love for us. Out of Egypt, God prepared his people to enter Canaan. Israel was enrolled in Integrity Training 101 and the first lesson was about trusting God in the time of need. ***Would Israel bite their lip and trust God, or would Israel bolt and bellyache?***

His disciplines are not indicators of a change in God's disposition toward us, **but evidence of His love toward us.**

*Those He elects, He lovingly corrects. Those He corrects, He zealously perfects.
Those He perfects, He wonderfully protects – Stockton.*

Psalm 37:9 . . . but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

In 1 Chronicles 28:20 David said to Solomon his son,

*“Be strong and of good courage, and do **it**: fear not, nor be **dismayed**: for the LORD God, **even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee** (raphah), nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.”*

This verse is in reference to the building of Solomon's temple.

The word “**dismayed**” (*chathath*) is a stimulating word. It means “to be shattered” or “fall apart.” Negative circumstances have a tendency to shatter our confidence in God's love. ***But, a soul at rest will not unravel.***

The verb “**will not fail**” (*raphah*) thee means “to sink,” “to drop,” “to abate,” or “to abandon.” It is also a Hiphil / causative. The verb *raphah* is translated “idle” in Exodus 5:8. There, Pharaoh accused the slaves of being bootless on the ground when work needed to be done. When we rest, **God will not be idle** (raphah)!

Prescription 5: Stop looking on the inside, and start looking outside to His Word.

We must **not** look inside ourselves for a reason why God should love us. The reason is not within us, but within the character of God.

The primary work of Divine grace is not God's work exerted in us, but God's work outside of us in Christ at Calvary.

God does **not** choose to be gracious to us because of a change in our heart, or the activity of faith in our souls, or because we are born again, but **because it is in His nature to be gracious!**

God loves because of Who He is, not because of who we are (1 John 4:8ff). What He does flows from Who He is: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son . . .” (John 3:16).

Prescription 6: Stop trying to earn God’s love, and start accepting His love.

- Consenting to be loved while unworthy is a great secret of the Christian life (Romans 5:8).
- We did nothing to gain God’s love, and we can do nothing to lose His love.
- His love is not bestowed because of human merit, nor can it be withdrawn because of human failure.
- Grace triumphs in the presence of human weakness, and it ceases to be grace if it is withdrawn because of human failure.
- God knows all about us. He loves us, not because of Who we are, but because of Who He is—a God of love.
- Grace extended in spite of us will not be retracted because of us.
- Even if we give God our very best, we cannot earn more grace. His grace is independent of us, and it is not dependent on anything we do or do not do.

Psalm 27:13 says, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”

The word “**believed**” (תָּנַחֵם אֱלֹהִים הַיְיָ) is a Hiphil perfect. The idea behind the Hiphil is causation. David is saying that unless God acted to cause his heart to believe, he would have camped in the desert of despair.

Both faith and fear will sail into the harbor of our minds, but only faith should be allowed to drop anchor.

Our enjoyment of grace is totally dependent on our faith, that is, our ability to perceive the love of God at work in our lives. When we believe, we really enjoy God’s grace.

Bitter people are often critical of people, even railing others for their sins against them. Strangely, however, they often see themselves as righteous; that is, they focus on the

failures of their spouse or boss or neighbor, and never upon their own sins, failures, anger, bitterness, thanklessness, fears, unbelief, or unreal expectations of others. Why such negativity?

Bitter people can be blind people--blind to their own wretched sins and self-righteousness. In their minds, it is not themselves that need healing, but others; it is not themselves that need to repent, but their spouse or neighbor.

Bitter people are sometimes "perfect" people in their own minds. Who can live with a perfect person whose tongue is filled with the poison of asps railing others for their faults and failures? Who can live with a person that constantly criticizes them, but is righteous in their own eyes?

Thus, bitter people are fixated on the faults of others and seem to have a total incapacity to admit wrong, confess sins, and ask forgiveness from those closest to them. Those with hemlock in their own hearts and foul breath don't feel the need for the Savior, or the cross, or for forgiveness. In their minds, other people are 100% at fault and are to be blamed for their miseries.

We are instructed in Psalm 46:10 "**Be still** (raphah), and know that I *am* God."

In Exodus 4:26 the Hebrew word *raphah* is translated "So he let him go" (raphah).

In Exodus 5:8, the word raphah is translated "idle."

In Joshua 10:6, the word is translated "slack."

When we trust Him and are at rest, He will not be idle.

When Solomon's temple was built, there was no sound of the hammer or chisel. God's works best when we are quiet and there is no fleshly activity (1 Kings 6:7).

In Ezekiel 44:18 the Spirit instructs priests not to wear wool lest they sweat teaching us the dangers of soul sweat in the work of the Lord.

*Ezekiel 44:18 They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves **with any thing that causeth sweat.***

God's people are not permitted to bind themselves with anything that produces noise . . . and human sweat. God's people are called to serve, but not to sweat . . . to work but without fleshly perspiration- anger, anxiety, fear, frustration, etc.

Do you get the idea? We have too much "soul sweat!" We must learn to be still, to be idle, to be slack, and to rest so God can go to work. When we rest, God rolls up His sleeves and builds the kingdom.

Anger, wrath, anxiety, worry, angst, rage, slander, railing, and bitterness creates an environment where Satan feels at home. God, on the other hand, inhabits the praises of His people. Praise is the remedy for poison in the pot.

Prescription 7: Stop grumbling and start thanking God; i.e., stop counting your troubles and start counting your blessings.

We have to fire the chorus of complainers, and we have to employ the attitude of gratitude. Praise is to God what complaining is to the Devil.

The word for **grumble** in this passage is the Hebrew word **lun** (לונ). It is translated “tarried” in Genesis 28:1, “lodged” in Joshua 6:11, “remain” in Psalm 55:7, and “grudge” in Psalm 59:15. The idea here is that Israel was headed down hill to set up camp in the valley of despair. Every thought and every emotion was lodged in the crevice of bitterness.

Thankfulness creates an atmosphere where God can work.

Grumbling creates a work shop for the Devil.

God loves praise; the Devil hates it.

Kindness, goodness, and joyfulness is the antidote for bitterness

Remember Psalm 50:23? The psalmist says that whosoever praises God clears a road for the chariots of His salvation (deliverance from the circumstance).

Ruth Graham tells this story:

While attending Wheaton College, one of my roommates, Kimberly Long (Wyckoff), and I would sing "His Loving Kindness" while we walked the six blocks to campus in the morning. In the evenings when we walked home, we sang heartily, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." The idea came to us from Psalm 92:2: "To show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night" (Ruth Bell Graham, Prodigals and Those Who Love Them, 1991, Focus on the Family Publishing, p. 104).

A Lighthouse of God's Grace

Bruce Goodrich was being initiated into the cadet corps at Texas A & M University. One night, Bruce was forced to run until he dropped -- but he never got up. Bruce Goodrich died before he even entered college.

A short time after the tragedy, Bruce's father wrote this letter to the administration, faculty, student body, and the corps of cadets:

"I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my family for the great outpouring of concern and sympathy from Texas A & M University and the college community over the loss of our son Bruce. We were

deeply touched by the tribute paid to him in the battalion. We were particularly pleased to note that his Christian witness did not go unnoticed during his brief time on campus."

Mr. Goodrich went on:

"I hope it will be some comfort to know that we harbor no ill will in the matter. We know our God makes no mistakes. Bruce had an appointment with his Lord and is now secure in his celestial home. When the question is asked, 'Why did this happen?' perhaps one answer will be, 'So that many will consider where they will spend eternity'" (Our Daily Bread, March 22, 1994).

In conclusion, all of us will be led to bitter waters because we are enrolled in God's integrity training program. We need grace: grace to believe and accept life's difficulties from God to make us better, not bitter; grace to admit our own faults and flaws; and, grace to forgive those who hurt us.

When God leads us to Marah, let us look up instead of down. Let's us look up to the cross and not down at troubles; let's eat from the branches of grace and not chew on a root of bitterness . . . resting instead of grumbling. Believing God loves us makes the bitter waters sweet.

4.19 In the Day of Trouble

Psalm 50

Psalm 50 is a summons by the Judge for His people to come into the Court to plead their case while being in darkness where the white lilies grow. If you are a believer in covenant with God, you have standing in this court to plead your case.

Psalm 50:15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Psalm 50:23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

◆ **You can have the deliverance, but God must have the glory. You can have your health, but God must have the honor. You can have your win, but God must receive the worship. You can have your pardon, but God must have the praise. If you are a thief of God's glory, how can He honor His promise to deliver?**

The only uncertain thing about this promise is the “When?” While we wait for God to work, we wait in darkness where the white lilies grow.

Does God delay?

He did with Mary’s prayer for her sick brother (John 11). But, maybe a resurrected Lazarus could bring Him more glory than a recovered Lazarus?

Did God wait 14 years to answer the prayer of aging Abraham? Maybe, a child from an old man and an old woman could bring Him more glory than the gift of a child to a young bride.

Did Jacob’s plea for protection and prosperity happen in the first year of his departure from Canaan? Maybe, an impoverished patriarch with no commodities, two wives, and eleven children could bring Him more glory than a wealthy single bachelor.

After defeating Goliath, could not God have made David king of Israel? Maybe, an innocent but vilified fugitive seasoned by years of hardship would make a better king than a naïve boyhood-king.

Out of the Darkness

Out of the dark forbidding soil

The pure white lilies grow.

Out of the black and murky clouds,

Descends the stainless snow.

Out of the crawling earth-bound worm

A butterfly is born.

Out of the somber shrouded night,

Behold! A golden morn!

Out of the pain and stress of life,

The peace of God pours down.

Out of the nails — the spear — the cross,

Redemption — and a crown! (Source Unknown).

Men dig deep in the earth under darkness to find gold, but men can’t seem to find the truth of God.

Matthew Henry on Job 28:1-11 . . . The caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the counsels of Heaven. Go to the miners, thou sluggard in religion,

consider their ways, and be wise. Let their courage and diligence in seeking the wealth that perishes, shame us out of slothfulness and faint-heartedness in labouring for the true riches. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! How much easier, and safer! Yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of precious things out of the earth, so men call them, though really they are paltry and perishing, be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

4.20 Affliction is Tov

Psalm 119:71.

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes”

The Value of Adversity

It is good (tov) for us to have troubles, for trials warn us about hoping in worldly achievement. Moreover, they cause us to seek His law and His approval.

It is good for us to suffer criticism, to be misjudged by men even though we do well and mean well.

These things help us to be humble and shield us from pride. When men think ill of us, it reminds us to look to Heaven and to bask in the sunshine of His love through Christ.

A man ought to root himself so firmly in the love of God that he does not feel the need for the consolations of men.

Our greatest need is not expressions of goodness from men, but grace from God.

The man of God know that to live is Christ and to die is gain; that peace with God is more important than peace with men; that troubles wean us from the love of this world and cause us to glean fruit from the tree of life.

4.21 The Fellowship of His Sufferings

Philippians 3:8

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

◆ Joni Erickson, trapped in her physical tomb, provided this insight:

When she read verse 8, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,” Joni said,

“Amen! I want to explore the golden treasures of the knowledge of Christ . . . and, losing all things for Him is tough, but worth it.”

(2) When she read verse 9, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:” Joni responded,

“Amen, I want the righteousness that comes from God through the faithfulness of Christ to God’s law which is received by faith.”

(3) when she read verse 10, “*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,*” Joni said her heart sang like a yellow-tailed cockatoo wanting to know Him and His power. Sounds good! Oh, to have His power!

But . . . when she came to the section which refers to “*the fellowship of his sufferings,*” her enthusiasm turned from pianoforte to pianissimo (soft and restrained); When she considered the call, “*being made conformable unto his death,*” **the music stopped!!**

She doesn’t want to die. She wants to live. Joni could embrace suffering knowing the person of Christ and reach for His power, but “being made conformable unto his death” called for a whole new level of growth in Christian grace. Embracing *conformity to His death* required enrollment in an advanced course of spirituality, faith, and following Jesus. Amen!

R.C. Sproul had this to say about the value of *being conformed to his death*:

“When God issues a call to us, it is always a holy call. The vocation of dying is a sacred vocation. To understand that is one of the most important lessons a Christian can ever learn. When the summons comes, we can respond in many ways. We can become angry, bitter or terrified. But if we see it as a call from God and not a threat from Satan, we are far more prepared to cope with its difficulties.” — R.C. Sproul, Surprised by Suffering

Possibly, the apostle refers to Christ and the . . .

(1) acceptance of death to self with all its desires for pleasure, comfort, and ease without revolt, retreat, reserve, resistance, regret, remorse, and rebellion; or,

(2) the fact the believer does not seek death; but, rather, he accepts death as part of the will of God for his life.

(3) to the character of our Lord's suffering on the cross without anger, bitterness, rage, feelings of revenge, defensiveness, regret, or outbursts of self-pity; or

(4) that in our death to self and suffering for the gospel we might be a source of healing, redemption, and salvation for others.

He could say on the eve of His death, "Not my will, but Thy will be done!" Likewise, we ought to be able to say, "Not my will, but Thy will be done."

Moreover, Jesus died . . .

- Without having lived out all the natural years of a normal man;
- Without wealth, riches, or money – in poverty;
- Without owning any property on earth;
- Without having seen and enjoying all there is to see on this earth;
- Without honor among men while being greatly misunderstood;
- Without having straightened out all his family's problems;
- Without marriage or having any physical children or grandchildren;
- Without solving the world's political problems;
- Without correcting all the injustice in the Roman theater;
- Without having exhausted his own powers to heal men of their physical diseases;
- Without fulfilling his potential as a man;
- Without writing a book;
- Without seeing the full manifestation of the kingdom of God.

In the eyes of the world He died a failure, a loser, a tax protestor, an apostate from Judaism, a rebel to Rome, a criminal, a delusional apocalyptic preacher, a pauper, a deceiver, a liar, and a powerless man.

Furthermore, it is the privilege of those seeking piety to be conformed to his death.

4.22 Augustine on Profiting from Calamity

Hebrews 12:6, 10, 15

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth . . . but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”

◆ Because our Heavenly Father loves holiness and hates sinfulness, no Christian can escape the chastening hand of his Heavenly Father –no man!

Are you made bitter or made better by your afflictions; that is, are you reaping the benefit of the trials that have come into your life?

Sin is a strange adversary. What is it about the heart of man that he is so easily “depraved by good fortune,” and not improved by misfortune?

St. Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, lived after the sack of Rome by the Barbarians (390, 410, 455) and observed that the severe destruction of the city did not stop their vices nor improve the virtue of the Romans.

Book I, Chap. 33

That the overthrow of Rome has not corrected the vices of the Romans.

*“Oh infatuated men, **what is this blindness, or rather madness, which possesses you? . . . Depraved by good fortune, and not chastened by adversity, what you desire in the restoration of a peaceful and secure state, is not the tranquillity of the commonwealth, but the impunity of your own vicious luxury.** Scipio wished you to be hard pressed by an enemy, that you might not abandon yourselves to luxurious manners; **but so abandoned are you, that not even when crushed by the enemy is your luxury repressed. You have missed the profit of your calamity; you have been made most wretched, and have remained most profligate.”** (Augustine, “City of God”)*

The great tragedy of the Christian life is not that we suffer, but that we fail to profit from our pressures.

What a wonder it is to see a man capitalize on chastisement rather than collapse under the pressure of calamity.

Why are we spared? Again, Augustine has this insight:

Book I, Chap. 34

Of God's clemency in moderating the ruin of the city.

"And that you are yet alive is due to God, who spares you that you may be admonished to repent and reform your lives. It is He who has permitted you, ungrateful as you are, to escape the sword of the enemy, by calling yourselves His servants, or by finding asylum in the sacred places of the martyrs . . ."

May we not be men that bite the hand that feeds us . . . or ones that buckle under the belt of his chastisement! May our adversities wean us from ungodliness and wed us to holiness.

4.23 Poured from Vessel to Vessel

Jeremiah 48:11

Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.

Profiting from the trials of changing circumstances

◆ Ancient winemakers did not have the sophisticated technology involved with modern machinery today.

In Biblical times, the wine with its squashed grapes, a.k.a "lees", were put through a purification process called "decanting." The skins settled to the bottom and became hard and crusted.

To separate the lees from the precious beverage, winemakers poured wine from one pottery jar into a decanter (pottery jar) preserving the liquor, separating out the skins, and aerating it for taste. Thus, we get the phrase "from vessel to vessel."

All of God's servants go through a spiritual decanting process. The man God loves ***must be separated from his unusable lees.***

Lee including dreadful, dreary habits that conform us into the ordinary, that clog the brain, and clutter our time with common patterns that prevent us from pursuing the higher life.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, the great Russian Christian, observed this same deadly obsession with habit when he said, “It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man’s life is made up of nothing, but the habits he has accumulated during the first half.”

Spiritually speaking, lees include “the works of the flesh” and “all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking . . . with all malice” (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:31).

To purify the soul, the Lord changes a man’s circumstances, jobs, friends, and locations. Winds shift. Sunlight disappears. Clouds gather. Thunder rumbles. Lightning strikes. Rain falls. The sea roars. Waves thrash the shoreline. Thus, His godly ones are “poured from vessel to vessel”.

This decanting process results in clarity of thinking, purification of character, refinement of skills, adoption of a heavenly perspective, the polishing of ideas, the shedding of husks, and the purging of lees. God’s decanting process retains the good and discards the dregs; replaces the bitter with the better; and, displaces the ordinary with things superior.

But, Moab would not submit to the refinement process. Consequently, Moab remained an irrelevant, average, mediocre country that ended up in the grave yard of nations.

Thus, Moab represents the stubborn man that resists God’s sanctifying process.

The secular mind has no room for suffering in his pursuit of pleasure. All difficulties are obstacles to his hedonistic desires. He sees suffering as unfair, unwanted, and unprofitable. To him, suffering is worthless . . .

. . . but to the Christian, suffering is the process that causes him to love God more and things less.

Only the best people suffer. Job and Christ come to mind. Perhaps, only the virtuous truly suffer; that only the innocent suffer wrong; and, that only the righteous profit from adversity. Evil men with evil deeds suffer no wrong.

Guilt is the ransom we pay for wrongs done, and joy the reward we reap for suffering unjustly.

However, the eye of faith does not look at suffering as punishment for past sins, but a tutor to prevent future ones; not a robber of riches, but a guide to true wealth in Christ; not a stumbling block to cheerfulness, but a stepping stone to holiness.

The cross-carrying Christian does not see suffering as a footnote in his story, but suffering as the theme that unifies his novel.

Our lives are full of contradictions, and if we are going through a decanting process, let us rejoice that God separates us from our lees . . . and our sleaze.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

If your circumstances have changed, and you feel like you are being poured from vessel to vessel, remember, the Wise Winemaker has a vineyard that produces age-worthy Cabernet Sauvignon to delight the palate — decanted souls rich in flavor capable of refreshing others.

4.24 The Remedy for Guilt Feelings

1 John 1:9

♦ Many Christians can't pursue a walk with God because their conscience screams "guilty" or "unworthy" every time they pray. Their defiled consciences prevent them from enjoying the Lord and His accomplishments for them at the cross and the throne. Therefore, pursuing Christlikeness is more of a burden than a passion.

The Greeks honor a mystic Saint named Demetrius (13th century) in the Village of Basarabov who sought to live a holy life through asceticism. As he was taking out the cows to pasture, he stepped on a nest of baby birds hidden in the deep grass crushing them to death. Distressed over his carelessness, he decided go barefoot for three years as an act of repentance. Later, he joined a monastery and spent much time in prayer and service to God. He was considered so holy and pure, that after his death miracles were said to happen by touching his coffin.

A Good Conscience

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 3:16, 21).

A good conscience is one that works right. It is programmed by God's Word and sounds an alarm when evil is present. How can you avoid evil, if your conscience does not recognize its presence? A good conscience is indispensable for spiritual warfare.

A good conscience is one that has been trained by a proper study of God's law. It sounds the alarm when evil is near. **It does not, however, go off over trivialities** like driving ten miles over the speed limit or for strapping on a weapon for self-defense.

The Bible warns against misplaced pity and shunning duty related to justice and the punishment of evil doers (Deuteronomy 7:16). A good conscience rejoices in justice where the unrighteous fear to tread, but is grieved by personal sins that others applaud.

A Defiled Conscience

“Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1: 15).

A defiled conscience is a dirty conscience. It is like a car windshield that gets dirtier and dirtier. A dirty conscience is undependable, unreliable, overloaded, tired, and sluggish. It fails to produce a loud alarm in the presence of evil.

The solution for a dirty conscience is a thorough scrubbing by the Word of God (Psalm 119:9-111 John 1:7) – a coming into the light to be cleansed.

1 John 1:9 is the remedy for the misery of those suffering from the megaphone of guilt.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The word, “**confess**” (*homologeo*) means *to agree with*. It is part of the 3rd class conditional clause involving a subjunctive: *If we confess our sins,” and few do, but if we do . . .*

The word, “**just**” in this context means “faithful to His promises;” that is, God is a promise-keeper.

“**Walking in the light**” involves naming and confessing one’s sins as the Spirit identifies them to him. Formal admission of sins to God is evidence the believer is walking in the light with God. Silence, denial, and concealment belong to the darkness.

Confession by itself does not sanitize the soul. Cleansing is ONLY accomplished by His sacrifice at the cross. There is no cleansing from sin apart from our Lord. All the prayer in the world cannot cleanse the soul unless one has appropriated the cleansing power of His blood — the currency of the spirit-world.

But, after one is saved, cleansing from defilement for the Christian is achieved by confession. Christ need not die again! Confession brings the stained believer in contact with the cleansing power of the blood. This is the lesson Christ provided for His disciples at the Last Supper as He was washing their feet (John 13) – and, this is the lesson restated and developed here by the Apostle John.

Light cleanses because the truth reaches the man. As light dispels darkness, confession exposes sin so that the light of Christ’s accomplishments can heal the man. Mothers used to say, “*Play in the sunshine*” because of the therapeutic nature of sunlight. As sunlight disinfects and heals wounds, walking in the light with an honest and open heart heals the defiled believer; that is, confession enables the man to come into the sunlight where the blood of Christ can be applied to the soul (1:7).

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confession by itself does not cleanse the soul. There is no forgiveness apart from the doing and dying of Christ. Confession is the catalyst that enables the blood to be applied to our sins so we can maintain our walk with the Father and the Son moment by moment.

Confession to a priest does not cleanse the soul. The “blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.” Confession of sins to God (and forsaking them) enables the Spirit to apply the cleansing power of the blood to the conscience (Proverbs 28:13).

God is faithful to purify the believer because of the doing and dying of Christ. Confession connects the Christian with the cure (blood) to effectively maintain the man in his walk “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Because Christ is the believer’s Representative at the throne of God, he can afford to admit guilt before God. Walking in the light means the man can be humble and acknowledge the worst about himself knowing he will **not** be rejected. The one honestly confessing known sins in their full extent has the full assurance of free and full forgiveness necessary to walk in the light “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Those walking in the light are given a promise. Confession, as opposed to suppression, enables the believer to claim God’s forgiveness and enjoy the cleansing of the conscience from ALL unrighteousness. This confidence is not based on one’s “victory” over sin or the strength of one’s resistance to sin, **but upon God’s character**: i.e. when we come into the light and confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us because His Son shed his blood as a payment for our sins. Being so cleansed equips us to pray and serve Him.

*1 John 2:20 For if our heart condemn us, **God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.***

*Luke 1:74- 75 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies **might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness BEFORE him, all the days of our life.***

*1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casteth out fear:** because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Confession of sin is more like a “foot washing” than a total bath (See John 13) — a necessary process to wash away the defilement that comes from rubbing shoulders with other sinners on this earth.

Confession must be accompanied by faith. Faith has to be aggressive after the conscience has knowledge of failure. For this reason the psalmist (Psalm 32) exhorts confessors to **triple down** on laying hold of the benefits of confession by denying one’s feelings and believing the promises until one’s feelings match the truth of God’s promises. Joy over

forgiveness is evidence of faith. These acts of obedience make the heart glad. Believe it, then achieve it.

King David, in his great confession said,

*Psalm 32:11 **Be glad** in the LORD, and **rejoice**, ye righteous: and **shout for joy**, all ye that are upright in heart.*

4.25 The Great Confession of King David

Psalm 32

◆ This is a psalm by a sinner for sinners; by a beggar telling other beggars where to find food and shelter; by a repentant saint telling others how to find healing and forgiveness.

Because this psalm throbs with emotion traversing the north and south of despair and joy, the reader must "feel" his way through the sinner's experience to reap the blessedness of the psalm. This is a psalm for the heart, not just the head.

The psalm begins with a blessing, but this is not where the psalmist started. He announces his conclusion first and then explains the lessons he learned on his spiritual journey.

The blessedness is what he discovered at the end of his spiritual experience, not at the beginning. At the outset, David felt the drumming sounds of true guilt pounding on his conscience when the Spirit said, "Thou art the man!"

After hiding in the dark, this sinner came into the light. While exposed to the sunshine of truth, he felt the warmth of Divine forgiveness restoring life in his soul.

The Blessing of Forgiveness

1 (A Psalm of David, Maschil.) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

A Maschil Hymn, a psalm enforcing lessons on wisdom and piety, is a teaching psalm that instructs the congregation on how to walk with God.

The term "**blessed**" is in the emphatic position of the stanza stressing the awe and wonder of being right with God (Romans 4:6-8).

Guilt is like living with a thundering headache. Three words are used to describe the cause of David's migraine: transgression, sin, and iniquity-- the trinity of evil. While they mean basically the same thing, there are subtle differences.

“**transgression**” refers to deeds that cross the line of forbidden behavior like trampling on the rights of others. It is doing what God says thou shall not do. It expresses apostasy and rebellion, the breaking of God's law (Romans 4:15; 1 John 3:4).

“**sin**” is a falling short of Divine commands. It is more than failure or doing wrong, it is a departure from God by way of disobedience to his commands.

The word, “**forgiven**” means "to carry far away." The word (nasa) is used in connection with Noah's ark when it was "lifted up" above the flood of judgment safe and secure (Genesis 7:8).

“**covered**” -- What can possibly cover scarlet red sins? Only the waters of judgment that buried the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:24-28), or blood on the mercy seat (Exodus 12:13; Hebrews 9:12)!

When God takes sins off a man's shoulders and removes them as far as east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), the heart hums with joy. With praise on his lips, this pardoned poet penned this wonderful psalm.

Imagine a toy soldier red with rust. Oiled, painted, and reclaimed, the little marine shares the blessedness of returning to his company and his Commander. He thought it would take a million years to heal his wounds, but after coming into the light, he is all smiles.

Matthew Henry notes how hard it is to bring a sinful man to humbly accept mercy; but, this is what the psalmist did.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

“**Blessed**” is used a second time to reinforce the psalmist contagious joy. The second use of the term "blessed" emphasizes the happiness that pardon brings. The psalmist and happiness were not strangers. Like nuggets of gold in a miner's pouch, forgiveness makes the poor man rich. Like the prodigal son who returned to his father's house, there is joy and celebration in reunion between the wayward creature and his wonderful Creator.

Next, we are introduced to the 3rd monster at the gates of hell.

“**iniquity**” (v. 2, *avon*) refers to the willful, shameful foolishness of sin -- an act that deserves lashes because it is willfully performed. It is doing what one knows is wrong to do. The Hebrew word *avon* refers to guilt worthy of "punishment" in Genesis 4:13; "bear your iniquities" in Numbers 14:14; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" in Deuteronomy 5:9; "bringing iniquity to remembrance" in Numbers 5:15; and "eyed David" for punishment in 1 Samuel 18:9; 20:1.

Oh, the terrifying groans that sin, transgression, and iniquity cause within the guilty soul. The Lord Jesus silenced the roaring of these monsters at the cross of Calvary. The trinity of evil is defeated by the Holy Trinity.

Let us never forget why forgiveness is possible. God cannot forgive sin just because a man prays for pardon. If God could forgive sin through prayer, there would be no reason to send his Son to the cross. Forgiveness is only possible because Christ discharged the sinner's debt at Calvary by a blood bond (Isaiah 53:5; Numbers 14:18).

Remember, the first prophet in the Bible taught us that blood is the currency of the spirit world. Eternal redemption is by the shed blood of Christ and not by beans, broccoli, and beets (Genesis 4; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The word "**impute**" is an accounting term. It means "to think or account or ledger." The adverb "not" negates any idea that God keeps a little black book of his children's sins in order to indict them at a later time. Like a drum major leading the band, the phrase "not impute" announces pardon to men of faith.

The term "**forgiven**" and "**not impute**" express the blessed sound of one in harmony with the LORD. Fountains of joy bubble within the heart when the burden of sin is lifted off one's shoulders. The one in whom God does not account iniquity feels the night embrace and the moon smiling down upon him. Forgiveness is sweeter than the sounds of magic bells on angels' wings.

The author of Hebrews says, "He remembers them no more" (Hebrews 8:12). Believers can remember their sins, God can't. Thus, the believer can experience dissonance between his mind and the mind of God -- discord that can only be reconciled by tuning in to the benefits of the cross and believing God's Word.

"guile" refers to deceit, trickery, and treachery. Guile is saying one thing and doing another; it is talk without the walk; a smile without sincerity.

"no guile" refers to the man who is as true as a carpenter's level. Because forgiveness is not a deception, the pardoned is not a pretender. Because forgiveness is real, the man is free from the chains that bound him in darkness. Those washed in the blood of the Lamb are free of deceit, pretense, and hypocrisy.

The blessed state of the forgiven is that they do not force their cheeks to smile. What you see is what you get. Because God has forgiven them, they do not grovel around in the graveyard of sins digging up corpses at midnight. There is no purification here through self-torment. Knowing that Christ paid for their sins on the cross, those seeking forgiveness afresh do not flagellate themselves with beat sticks. Because God lifts sins off their shoulders, they do not go in search for them. Forgiven, they walk in the light on the highway of life without shackles of guilt cutting and ripping their soul. By faith, they claim and enjoy the grace-benefits of forgiveness.

Though the godly take sin seriously, they triumph over haunting memories knowing that God's promises of forgiveness are true, correct, certain, and not misleading; that his promises to remember sins no more are more real than their own eerie awareness of past transgressions.

The Burden of a Dirty Conscience

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

The term "**silence**" describes the psalmist's spiritual condition after he sinned. Knowing he played the fool, he hid from God. His voice was so thick with conviction he became dumb and mute. He couldn't pray or praise God. Guilt sucked certainty out of his soul and turned his backbone into jelly.

"**my bones waxed old**" is the psalmist way of telling us that sin stressed him to the bone robbing him of strength. As David's world turned charcoal grey, his spirit groaned like a coal miner's mule pulling a wagon of rocks.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

The psalmist uses the metaphor "**thy hand was heavy upon me**" to express the tonnage of guilt weighing on his conscience.

"**my moisture . . .**" is a reference to dehydration of his entire body. With hot needles from the sun piercing the eye of his conscience, his tongue dried up like a mouth full of dust during the dog days of summer.

"**Selah**" means "stop and think about this."

Indians understood how guilt dried out the mouth. If three men were suspected of a crime among the Indians, each had to stick out their tongue. The prosecutor would then take a hot knife and touch the tongue of each suspect. The one with a burnt tongue was considered guilty.

The Blessing of Confession

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Like a criminal caught red-handed by the sheriff, David confessed to everything.

"**I acknowledge my sin**" is David's way of telling us he could no longer live with the pounding headache of guilt. A fugitive from justice, David came into the light to make a full confession of sin. Because he could no longer live a lie, he bore his soul to God. Like a man with a huge boil on his arm, the psalmist submitted to the lance. Out came the puss and toxins created by sin in his heart.

David quit the game of "Escape & Evasion" and made a full confession. He did not call his sin a *mistake* or *blunder*, nor did he hide behind the fig leaves of self-righteousness. He called an "ace an ace, a spade a spade," and sin a sin. He did not call the death of Uriah a "casualty of war," nor did he call his romance with Bathsheba an "affair." He confessed to the somber facts of murder and adultery.

He called his feast at Satan's Yum Yum Tree near the gates of hell a *transgression, iniquity, and sin!!*

This drama closes with a simple, sweet reality: **"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."**

As long as men call sin a sin, there is hope. God forgives "sin," but there is no Divine remedy for "mistakes, blunders, and errs." Confessing, "I was wrong" is much better than saying, "I am sorry."

How did David know his sin was forgiven? Because Nathan the Prophet said, "God has put away thy sin:" that is, David believed the Word of the Lord and then claimed the joy of forgiveness.

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

The psalmist applies the lesson to the **"godly"** reader. Truth seekers pray in the darkness as well as in the sunshine; in stormy seas with its ocean spray and on calm waters with its blanket of peace.

"For this" means on "this ground" or "for this cause" (legal footing). The Hithpael verb is reflexive in meaning; i.e., let the godly apply the didactic shared by the psalmist to their own conscience-battles with sin!

"in a time when thou mayest be found" or "in the time of finding," means to confess and repent while there is a window of opportunity to do so; that is, keep short accounts while your heart is tender towards him.

"floods" are a metaphor for trouble and adversity. If the godly seek restoration to the LORD, He will "lift away" their sins, and row them to safety away from the danger of the deluge. Think of Noah's ark being lifted up out of the sea of death. Benson claims, "As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not, 1 John 5:18, so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts of both kinds drop short of them."

7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

"Thou art my hiding place" is a confession of trust by this saint. Oh, the warmth and peace one enjoys finding shelter from the storm! Our Lord is not just the God of the masses, He is the Savior and Protector of individuals.

"**thou shalt preserve me from trouble**" refers to God's providential dealings with the psalmist. Storms are difficult, but they cannot destroy the soul. No harm shall come to the man leaning on the everlasting arms. In response to his prayer and pious ways, God saves the pilgrim from leveling floods and the sting of the sea.

"**compass me about**" refers to Heaven's angels that surround and protect the godly.

"**songs of deliverance**" are on the lips of mariners caught in the wind and surf of a sinister sea. The hope of deliverance presents an occasion for praise and rejoicing. The Christian man does not fear the roar of the waves nor wallow in self-pity. Because he accepts grace, he is a grateful man.

In summary, this didactic teaches us that David humbled himself, came into the light, confessed his sins, accepted forgiveness, and rejoiced in a renewed relationship with God by faith.

The Blessing of God's Guidance

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

"**I will**" is the voice of the Spirit providing an answer of assurance to the sinner's confession.

"**instruct and teach**": With sins confessed and slate clean, the Spirit promises instruction in the way the man should go; that is, God teaches the teachable. We are not pardoned so we can play near the gates of hell, but we are pardoned so we can learn Heaven's ways. The world regards a man as poor if he doesn't learn Plato, Darwin, and Freud, but the man that learns the law of the Lord and the grace of the gospel is rich beyond measure.

The verb "**instruct**" (*sakal*) refers to providing practical guidance consistent with God's law; and, the term "**teach**" (*yarah*) means "to cast" or "to shoot." The latter is translated "direct his face" in Genesis 46:28; "teach thee what thou shalt say" in Exodus 4:12; "to teach when it is unclean" in Leviticus 14:57; and "shoot three arrows" as a code instruction in 1 Samuel 20:20.

"**I will guide you with my eye**" is a tender promise from a caring father. Guidance *with the eye* stands in juxtaposition to masters that are forced to beat their slaves into submission.

Looking at the eyes, children can discern whether their father is sad, mad, or glad. When a father's eyes are narrowed to a pinprick, the child knows he'd better change his behavior. Thus, we learn that a godly man studies the face of God to discern the way he should go.

What a comfort to those who feel the cold chills of those who believe we live in an anthropocentric world.

This promise of guidance requires the righteous man (1) to study the Word of God, and (2) to follow God's leading. "Quench not the Spirit!" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Christian life is

not like a walk in the city with all its "Don't Signs" and barriers. It is more like a walk in the forest that demands discernment and decision.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, *which* have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

"**Be ye not**" is a Jussive exhortation (command) to sinners. Sin ends in sorrow. Transgression leads to trouble. Iniquity rhymes with wickedly.

"**the horse**" loves to run and often bolts ahead of the rider. To slow a horse down wranglers pull back on the reigns. This text is instruction for "eager beavers" among us who are prone to go, to do, and to run without being sent.

"**the mule**" is the opposite of a horse in that the owner has to kick and whip the animal to *giddy up and go*. Out of the American West came the idiom "stubborn as a mule." This instruction is for the indecisive, reluctant, and fearful. Don't be like a mule God has to smack in order to force performance.

10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

"**sorrows**" is a reference to grief and trouble.

The term "**wicked**" does not refer to Christian men. Rather, the term identifies the godless man who has chosen a course to follow evil.

This is an argument to reinforce the proceeding exhortation. God has ways to motivate and chastise the wicked in order to subject them to his will, but don't be like them!

Those who are not reformed by gentle instruction must learn through the rod of affliction in the school of hard knocks. But, the one who learns at the feet of the Master will enjoy his goodness and protection. Mercy shall "compass him about" like a warm blanket on a cold day.

The Blessed Responses to Forgiveness

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

The Spirit instructs the forgiven on how to respond to the King's pardon: Three imperatives are ordered by the Spirit: *Be glad, rejoice, and shout!* -- a triple remedy for melancholy of soul!

Being pardoned and enjoying that pardon are two different staircases.

The Spirit knows that Satan is the accuser of the brethren who seeks to blind men to God's forgiveness and bind them to melancholy by focusing them on their sins, transgressions, and iniquities (Revelation 12:7-12). Because Christians know that God will not punish them, many have a tendency to beat themselves with a guilt stick. The remedy for this

phenomenon is to remember that Christ was punished for our sins . . . and to take comfort in his salvation.

Obedying these three commands is essential to being released from the pounding headache of guilt.

(1) "**Be glad in the Lord**" is an imperative that takes positive spiritual energy to fulfill. The Christian life is not a choice between melancholy and happiness. Being glad is duty. God is not glorified when we pine in sorrow over our sins. He is glorified when we celebrate his pardon. There is no glory for him when we visit the graveyard of past failures, grieve over our sins like mourners, and beat our heads with a brick.

(2) "**rejoice**": Double your effort to be glad! Stir your own soul to rejoice. The righteous rejoice in his pardon whether they "feel" like it or not. Who can be sad in the King's presence with pardon in hand?

In case we missed the proper response to a pardon, the Spirit repeats his instructions a third time. Gladness and joy is hard for those who have mourned over the trinity of evil. But, it **MUST BE DONE!**

(3) "**shout for joy**" is a Hiphil imperative meaning prod yourself "to overcome, and cry out" with joy because of his pardon . . . even when you don't feel like doing so!

Triple your effort to rejoice in his pardon. The Hebrew word for "shout" is *ranan*. It is translated "sing" 20 times; "rejoice" 11 times; and "sing aloud" 4 times. For serious conservative Christians this takes an act of the will! Sing, soul, sing!

Rabbis consider not serving the LORD with joy as the greatest sin . . . and rightly so:

"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things . . ." – Deuteronomy 28:47.

One time I saw a powerful preacher singing to himself in his car before a service. I went over to him and asked, "What are you doing? Are you all right?" He explained, "I am very discouraged. I am going to sit here and sing until my heart is filled with joy." I immediately understood.

The last command is addressed to the "righteous." Let us find our supreme joy in the Lord, and not our alleged victories. Our focus **must be** upon the King and his gracious pardon, **not** upon our cruel sins, transgressions, and iniquities that sentence us to a debtor's dungeon. Because the wicked will never praise God, let us triple rejoice in Jesus and his salvation. His blood cleanses us from ALL sin! (1 John 1:5-7).

"Rejoice, and again I say rejoice" - Paul (Philippians 4:4).

4.26 Releasing the Spirit

Galatians 5:17

A study on "flesh" and "spirit"

◆ In handling frustration, some men “give up;” others “blow up.” The key is to “scrub up” and “grow up” Christ by walking in the Spirit.

Rome not only crucified criminals, they had other strange punishments. A murderer, for example, might have the body of his victim tied to his body, face-to-face, hand-to-hand. He would have to stare the white, rotting corpse in the eyeballs until he perished. In one sense, the Christian carries with him a rotting corpse called the “flesh.” The flesh does not and cannot respond to the life of the Spirit.

All who seek to serve God will one day discover that the great hindrance to the walking with God is not others, but himself. There is a dead body hanging around our necks that keeps us from living life to the fullest. Paul put it this way,

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

The carcass that prevents the life of Jesus shining through our lives is called “the flesh.” The flesh resists the life of the Spirit. The preposition “against” is the Greek word “kata.” It means “down;” i.e., the flesh seeks to stand upon and rule over the Spirit.

The term “contrary” is in the present tense indicating that this conflict is ongoing. If you are having difficulty doing what you ought, it is because of the dominance of the flesh in your life. When the flesh calls, don’t show up for duty. If drafted by captain flesh, step backward.

The term “flesh” needs to be defined properly or we may confuse the issue even further.

The “flesh” in Pauline literature has been improperly translated as the “sinful nature” causing many to think they have two natures. This view causes people to think of themselves as Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde creating a kind of spiritual schizophrenic Christian.

The flesh in Romans 8 and in the Book of Galatians is a reference to “unregenerate man.” All non-Christians are unregenerate people whom Paul calls “the flesh.” All Christians are “in the Spirit” – even the ornery ones (Romans 8:9).

Historically, it was the unregenerate Jews (the flesh) who persecuted regenerate Christians (the Spirit). This historical tension in the first century between unregenerate Jews and

regenerate Jews and Gentiles also expressed itself in one's personal gestalt in the following sense: When a believer is born again (John 3:5), the Spirit of God regenerates his inner being. He becomes a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17) and the life of God is active within him. But, there is a part of him that is not born again; that is, his body, mind, emotions, habits, values, memory, and the like.

It is not long after the believer is born again that he experiences a conflict between his regenerated spirit (the Spirit) and his unregenerate parts (the flesh). Paul is saying the flesh (the unregenerate part of man) is in conflict with the spirit (the regenerated part of man).

The Twofold Solution

The Christian life is an impossible life. It was never meant to be lived by human energy. Walking with God, judging sin, loving our neighbor as our self, taking up the cross and following Christ cannot be done without supernatural strength. Living the Christian life with one's own resources is like trying to light the entire city of New York with a single car battery. It can't be done. The key is to switch power cells; that is, to disconnect from the flesh and to plug into the power of God's Spirit.

You can experience freedom from the flesh and freedom in the power of the Spirit in your walk with God by adopting two opposing life principles.

The Principle of Death and Life

In Galatians 5:16, Paul exhorted the Galatians to "walk in the Spirit" and then promised, "**You shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**" The word "**in the Spirit**" is what Greek grammarians call a DLI case (dative, locative, instrumental). In other words, the word could be translated "to the Spirit," "in the Spirit," or "by the Spirit." I think the instrumental case is preferred here; that is, Paul intended to say we should walk by the Spirit's power.

The word "**walk**" is a present, active imperative implying that one must exercise the will to continually walk by the Spirit. Later on in this section Paul exhorts those in pursuit of piety "to walk in the Spirit" again (5:25), but here the term "walk" is a different term, a military term meaning "to keep in step" with the Spirit.

When I asked my wife to marry me, she said, "Yes." But, in saying "Yes" to me, she also said "No" to every other suitor. She was dead to all others. The point that is important to understand is that walking by the Spirit involves a decision. However, this has dual action. When one says, "Yes" to the Spirit, he also says, "No" to the flesh. Both the principle of death and life must be active in the life of a Christian. If one does not say "No" to the flesh, it is impossible to "walk in the Spirit."

Paul put it this way to the Romans: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the **deeds** of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13). Paul urged the Romans to mortify (to put to death) the sinful demands of the body in order that

life might be released by the Spirit. Perhaps this is what Paul meant when he said, “Not I, but Christ” (Galatians 2:20).

This wonderful change of rulership in a Christian’s life that denies the “flesh” and “releases” the Spirit may take place at the moment of salvation or it may come later in a person’s life.

In trying to define this definitive point, D.L. Moody, A.W. Tozer, John Wesley and others have called this “the filling,” “baptism of the Spirit,” “**brokenness**,” “the crucified life,” and “the deeper life” and “sanctification.” While Christians have disagreed on the definition of such terms, all agree there is a point when great Christians discover the resources of the Spirit as the empowering Agent to live for Christ.

The Principle of Brokenness

Mary: In John 12, we have the beautiful story of Mary’s worship of Christ. It wasn’t until her vile of spikenard was broken that the sweet aroma of Mary’s perfume filled the house. Brokenness preceded sweetness.

The seed illustration: Jesus said, “Except a **kernel** of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John 12:24).

Borrowing an illustration from nature, Jesus emphasized that a harvest of corn can only come when one seed dies. Death proceeds life. Life bursting inside the seed of corn can only be released when the shell is broken. Likewise, the life of the Spirit can only be released when the dominant self-life (flesh) is broken.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, “take up his cross.” *The principle of death has to be applied to the activity of the flesh in the Christian life.* As a homemaker applies Lysol to grimy areas in a home to kill bacteria, the pious apply the cross to the self-life, lest it usurp the place of Christ in the heart.

Paul: We can see the principle of death and life at work in Paul’s ministry. Forced to share his bitter trials with his childish flock in order to defend his apostleship, Paul revealed two thoughts: “*death is at work in us, but life is at work in you*” (2 Corinthians 4:11). And again, “*Though our but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Jacob: His name means “heel supplanter” and has been interpreted to mean “cheat,” “usurper,” or “manipulator” by many Bible students. When Jacob returned to the land of Canaan from Padan Aram, he received a message that his brother Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Like an electrical shock, fear rippled through Jacob’s veins. He quickly devised a fleshly plan to appease his brother by dividing his family into two groups in hope that one part might survive the confrontation. Fearing for his life, Jacob sent his family across the ford of Jabbok, and was left “alone.”

When he was alone, the angel came and wrestled with Jacob. Unable to defeat the powerful grip of Jacob's self-reliance, the angel dislocated Jacob's hip. Unable to run, unable to flee, and unable to control his brother, Jacob placed a vice-lock on the angel and would not let him go until he received a blessing from the heavenly messenger. From that moment on Jacob was broken. He walked with a limp. But, he received his blessing. And, his name was changed to "Israel," meaning "prince with God."

Gideon: When Gideon's small army of three hundred men blew the trumpets and broke the clay pots and exposed the light, the Midianite camp erupted into confusion and were destroyed (Judges 7:19-25). It was not until the pottery vessels were broken that the light shined through. Likewise, the grip of these vessels of clay must be broken in order that the Spirit can be released.

The Spirit said through **Isaiah**, "but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is poor* and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (66:2). The word "look" is a Hiphil verb implying that something in God will cause him to attend to the man described. The term "poor" (נָּוֶה) can be translated "humble," "weak," or "afflicted." The word "contrite" in spirit (נִכְהָרָה, *nakeh ruah*) can be translated "smitten" or "broken." It is translated "smote the rock" in Psalm 78:20 where the psalmist rehearses the story when Moses smote the rock and water gushed out. It foreshadowed Christ and the cross and the Spirit of life that would come to men. In other words, God takes a special interest in broken men who rely not on the flesh, but on the Spirit.

Zerubbabel: This prince was assigned the leadership of reconstruction following the return from Babylon in 536 B.C. The task was riddled with difficulty as the exiles had to rebuild the infrastructure for a nation in a land ravaged by war and neglect. This task included rebuilding Solomon's temple (the second temple). Choked by poverty, insufficient workers, and hostile government agencies, the work on the temple ground was forced to halt in 530 A.D. (Ezra 4:24). Apparently, the locals levied a legal complaint against the exiles for not having a building permit, and the Persian officials were persuaded to issue a restraining order against the builders. Ten years passed. In 520 B.C., the prophets Haggai and Zechariah began their ministry. In to this weakness and poverty, fresh winds ignited flickering wicks of faith, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6). The Hebrew word "might" (לִיאֵהוּבָּ בְּחַיִל) means "army," or "strength," or "wealth." The word "power" refers to human strength. God informed the exiles that the temple would indeed be rebuilt, but not because of their wealth and strength.

Interestingly, Zerubbabel resumed the new building project. When the locals complained to King Darius (423-404), he gave orders to search for the original building permit under King Cyrus (539-530). When the permit was discovered, King Darius had no alternative but to honor the edict and to order that the temple project be paid for by the Treasury Department of Persia. Not only was the temple completed, it was completely financed by taxes from the local protestors. Interestingly, the power of God was revealed only after the project was broken.

The Widow's Oil (2 Kings 4:1): The most difficult job in the church is to be the pastor's wife, in this case, the wife of a prophet. The text says the wife's husband died and she was left with no money and two sons to feed. Could anything be worse? As the sting of death and poverty bit this poor widow and creditors merged to enslaver her sons, she sought the help of Elisha. He ordered the woman to borrow every pottery vessel she could from her neighbors, place them inside her home, and then fill the pots with oil. She did. After the oil multiplied and pots were filled, she had a pension from which to pay her creditors and to sustain her life. As the principle of death shook this family, so also the principle of life!

What the widow did with the pots, we must do. Just as the widow surrendered every pot in her house, we must surrender every aspect of life to Christ in order that the oil of the Spirit may fill every part of our soul.

Jim, a dear Christian friend, shared that he had a rough day at work and felt like tearing the world apart. He was angry as a hornet. Knowing he would probably sink his stinger of angry words into the soul of his dear wife, he stopped to pray. Applying the cross to his temperament, he surrendered his soul to the Lord. Entering the home with a smile, his wife gave him a kiss. His kids came running in to give him a hug. What could have been a disaster turned out to be a delight! Grace was in this home because Jim knew how to put to death the flesh and to walk in the Spirit.

In conclusion, when men and women of God realize the defeating nature of the flesh and surrender to live life under the power of the Spirit, there is brokenness: light emerges from the broken vessel, the sweet perfume of the Spirit is released, the oil of the Holy Spirit is multiplied to bless the people of God. Have you discovered the impotence of the flesh and the power of the Spirit? Can you say the power of the flesh has been broken in your life and that there has been a release of the Spirit?

WARNING: Do not confuse the activation of the principle of death and life, brokenness and the release of the Spirit with the pseudo-spirituality of the modern day Charismatic movement. The former leads to self-denial and a life of love (Galatians 5:22); the latter leads to self-occupation and fleshly indulgence. Pseudo-spirituality is plagued with sensual, carnal displays of people's carnal nature. Any religious activity or teaching that does not lead one to deny self and to love others is apocryphal in its origin.

4.27 You Not in Charge

Psalm 76:10

◆ My sister has a granddaughter (Sandy) that is quite vocal about everything. She is often caught giving commands to grandma . . . but, grandma gently places her fingers on her cheeks saying, “Sandy is not in charge!”

Oh, that all of us could learn this lesson. He does not call us to solve all the problems in politics, education, economics, religion, and medicine. “Christian, You are not in charge!”

Psalm 76:10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Note: The subject of this psalm is the Assyrian Invasion into Judah during the time of Hezekiah (721 BC) – a true, historical event that is recorded three times in the Old Testament (2 Kings 18-19, in Isaiah 36-39, and in 2 Chronicles 32)

Which of us hasn't felt utterly exasperated after listening to the evening news? The world is dangerously over populated with reporters that slant the news. The depravity of politicians seems to have no boundaries. Psychopathic men and women hold offices of power in Western countries. We know there is a limit to intelligence, but there doesn't seem to be a limit to the madness of God's enemies.

“Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe.” (Albert Einstein)

“Power is okay, and stupidity is usually harmless. Power and stupidity together are dangerous”. (Patrick Rothfuss, The Name of the Wind)

“Never argue with stupid people, they will drag you down to their level and then beat you with experience.” (Mark Twain)

Is there an anchor for the soul that can keep us together while lunatics captain the ship?

The conjunction “surely” announces the main lesson of the psalm—a detail about the sovereignty of God, that if grasped, can cause us to experience calm in the midst of political storms.

The phrase “wrath of man” refers to all the insane, imperial ambitions of politicians.

Not all psychopaths are behind bars. Maniacs are in power and hold key positions in the apparatus of government. Madmen run for office. Voting fails. Money talks! Justice breaks. The status quo in the hands of unaccountable bureaucrats makes ordinary citizens feel as helpless as ants to stop the elephant stampede of lunacy thundering across the land.

"shall praise thee:" Ellicott says, "Possibly we should render, 'and those who remain from their wrath shall celebrate a festival,' since the suggested emendation is the word used in that sense."

The Cambridge Bible adds, "All rebellion against God's will must in the end redound to God's glory: it serves to set His sovereignty in a clearer light" (Exodus 9:16).

The Pulpit Commentary considers man's wrath "shall give occasion for great deeds on God's part - deeds which will bring him praise and honor."

The word "**restrain**" in Hebrew means "to fasten one's belt" or "to gird" with a sash (Exodus 12:11; 29:9). God restrains these nutcases. Like guard dogs, they are on a leash.

Benson: "thou shalt put it on as an ornament, which the girdle was; thou shalt adorn thyself with it as a conqueror adorns himself with the spoils of his enemies."

Barnes: "It is not that there was anything in the wrath itself, or in their plans or intentions, that was in itself "adapted" to honor God; but that it was overruled by him, so that he took "occasion" from it to display his own character."

Timothy, in his battle against heresiarches in Ephesus, faced "madmen" (*anoia*) like the sorcerers, Jannes and Jambres, Pharaoh's magicians. See 2 Timothy 3:9-10. In this passage Paul assures his son in the faith "*they will make no further progress;*" that is, there is a limit to what these lunatics can accomplish because God restrains them.

The great question for the godly is, "How much evil must these tyrants do before God shackles them?"

The answer is, "just enough;" that is, these belligerents are not capable of carrying out all their wicked schemes against innocent people. God limits the plans of those intent on world dominion.

The term "**remainder of wrath**" refers to the frustrated devices of ambitious politicians—evil plans they cannot legislate — cannot mandate -- schemes and dreams they are precluded from executing while in office.

The trusting Christian is not in a panic because he knows that God has these devils on a chain. These criminals that appear to be unrestrained in their folly will be used for the glory and praise of God.

The problem with man is not something from without, but from within.

Jeremiah 17:9 "the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?"

No man knows the depth of his own wickedness. No man is as evil as he can be because God restrains evil.

And in our story, the might of Sennacherib and his army fell as corpses in that ancient theater in order to demonstrate the crushing, bone-breaking power of the Lion of Judah.

The invasion of the Assyrians to Jerusalem and their stunning slaughter resulted in praise to the LORD; their retreat from Jerusalem demonstrated how God restrains the wrath of man.

4.28 Piety Leads to Power

Ephesians 1:18-19

“ . . . the exceeding greatness of His power toward us . . . ”

◆ Men are in search of power, and the power of this world is closely connected to money. But, there is a power that comes from God that unites men to Christ and sustains them during their pilgrim journey on earth.

Insight Into the Power of God

Ephesians 1:18-19 that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Because our own battle records are filled with defeat, we tend to doubt the power of God. Paul wants his readers to know there is more to the Christian life than they have already experienced.

On fire, Paul sizzles with burning confidence as he ruminates on the power of God available to the pious. When conditions are right, there is a furnace operating in believers that can light the fires of many.

“Dynamite” and “dynamo” are derived from the Greek word for power (*dunamis*). This is not covert power, but overt power that actually works.

Two Greek words define the quality of this power.

(1) The word “**great**” (*megathos*) is a noun which means huge in size. Various English words are derived from the term “great” (mega): *megaphone, megabomb, megabyte, and megaton* (the explosive force of a million tons of TNT).

(2) The word “**surpassing**” or “exceeding” comes from the Greek word *huperballo* which means “to throw beyond.” It was used by Olympian champions who threw their javelins beyond other throwers. God’s megatons of power were detonated in raising Jesus from the grave. Even with all the doctors and scientists and megatons of TNT available, none can raise the dead. In raising Christ to God’s right hand in glory, God out threw, out ran, and outperformed man’s abilities, expectations, and dreams.

“**of his power**” is a genitive referring to the source of power; that is, the power that comes from “*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*” (17). This is God’s power from the throne. It cannot be found in nature nor in man. It is unique to God (See Isaiah 44:6-8).

We are acquainted with the power of salvation, but there is the power of sanctification. Not only is there power available for every word and deed, but there is also power available to meet our every need. His power is not the power of positive thinking, but power external to

our very being available for every contest. Moreover, His power is unlimited. It is not confined to our weak minds and frail constitution. He can do what no man can do; what money cannot buy; what talent cannot achieve.

By power, Paul is not promoting worldly power found in temporary fame, money, crowd frenzies, overt psyche manipulation, and pseudo spirituality like tongues, slaying of the spirit, or holy laughter. But, real power — power that comes from the reign and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ!

There is power for men and women, for the young and old, to the known and to the forgotten. The One beyond time controls the events and circumstances of our time, and He can change the events and circumstances of our time at any time.

Jeremiah 32: 27 “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?”

Luke 1:37 “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

1. He enabled Israel to pass through the Red Sea unharmed and on dry land -- Exodus 14:13-31.
2. He solved the problem of the bitter waters at Marah -- Exodus 15:23-26.
3. He gave them water out of the rock -- Exodus 17:5-7.
4. He turned the water into wine -- John 2:1-11.
5. He stilled the storm -- Mark 4:35-41.
6. He fed five thousand -- Matthew 14:15-21.
7. He raised the dead -- John 11:38-46.

Three Greek words are used to describe this power.

(1) The Greek word “**working**” or *energia* (noun) refers to power in action. It refers to the release of Divine energy. This is not suppressed power, but power discharged when God raised Christ from the dead — power available to believers in now-time — a power that actually works (*energeian*)

(2) Another word in this series of descriptions is the word “**mighty**” or *ischus* (*genitive*), which is the source of all power in God. When this potential force is released from the Divine capacitor, it produces *kratos* or work—the displacement of oppositional objects or bodies.

(3) The term “**power**” (*kratos*) (*genitive*) is translated “*strength*” or “*might*” in Mary’s Magnificat where Mary attributed the miracle of her pregnancy to the *kratos* / strength of God. Somehow, Paul wants us to know and understand the stored energy (*energia*) of God’s

megaton power (*dunamos*) coming from the source of His strength (*ischus*) that was released with great force (*kratos*) in history when He raised Christ from the dead.

This power is available for believers. It is near us, on us, in us, around us, and over us. Like the stars, His power is always there available to us.

Paul did not pray for power to do God's will, but that we might know we already possess the power extended to us and in us to do God's will. If we know His will and His strength, we can experience His power.

4.29 Strength in the Storm

Isaiah 30:15

♦ There is something about us that as soon as we experience a storm of troubles, the wheels in our little minds begin to turn to all the human solutions that we can think of to find safety from the pressure of our struggles. Agitated, we fret and fret. But, this text is one of main texts that inform us on how to experience safety and greater power while swimming through dynamic undercurrents of life.

Isaiah 30:15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In (your) returning and rest shall ye be saved; in (your) quietness (rest) and in (your) confidence (trust) shall be your strength; and ye would not.

The background is the Assyrian invasion and the pragmatic decision of Jews to form an alliance with Egypt.

"ISRAEL always felt the difficulty of sustaining itself on the height of dependence on the unseen, spiritual power of God, and was ever oscillating between alliances with the Northern and Southern powers, linking itself with Assyria against Egypt, or with Egypt against Assyria" (MacLaren).

The contract offer is from **the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel** to Judah who was unsettled by the politics of the time.

He called for repentance - "**returning**" (noun) is the word *shubawh* which means to retire or withdraw from your plans of desperation. The noun "rest" (*nachath*) means "quietness" or "rest."

The verbal infinitive "**quietness**" (*shaqat*) is an action that requires quietness, rest, and abandonment of all human effort to finagle circumstances to their advantage.

The noun "**confidence**" (*bitchah*) means trust -- s movement to a place of rest.

*Ellicott: "The words describe a process of conversion, but the nature of that conversion is determined by the context. In this case it was **the turning from the trust in man, with all its restless excitement, to a trust in God, full of calmness and of peace.**"*

MacLaren: "They had gone away from Him in their fears. They must come back by their faith. To them the great lesson was trust in God. Through them to us the same lesson is read. The principle is far wider than this one case. It is the one rule of life for us all . . ."

'Returning and rest' correspond to 'quietness and confidence,' so as that 'rest' answers to 'quietness' and 'returning' to 'confidence.' In the former clause we have the action towards God and then its consequence. In the latter we have the consequence and then the action."

4.30 Be Still in the Storm

Psalm 46:10

The stillness that leads to the knowledge of God

Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

◆ Many carry a secret pain in our own souls because we can't feel God; because we can't sense His presence; because He seems so aloof; because time with Him seems so unproductive and barren.

"Where is God when I need Him?" is the groan within.

Notice our text. There is a connection between stillness and knowing God. Stillness is essential to a closer walk with our Creator. There is so much noise and movement in this world, it is difficult to stop and commune with Him. He has spoken in history. We have His Word, but we can't seem to get off the treadmill of life to investigate Him. We prefer business to quietness; industry to tranquility; and, talking instead of hearing.

The Character of the Psalm

Notice this psalm moves from the roar of a waterfall to the quiet trickle of a rolling brook; from natural disasters and political turbulence to trust and peace.

This is called “Luther’s psalm” because when all else failed, he would sing this psalm.

The psalmist speaks of trouble and turmoil in verse one.

46:1 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

46:3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

He refers to natural disturbances . . . floods . . . moving mountains . . . and shifting continents: “though the earth should change . . . mountains slip into the sea.”

Can you hear the blast of a volcano, the roaring landslides, the thunder of collapsing mountains in this verse?

Can you hear the plumbing leak, the knock in the engine, the flat tire, the grinding in the washer, the leak in the roof, all those people screaming about climate change and things that annoy us?

Oh, the noise caused by drought, earthquakes, tornadoes, scorching heat, spring freezes, blights and crop disease. The forces of nature can blast away peace and burn fig leaves leaving men naked and afraid.

The psalmist addresses political turmoil rising out the sea of politics.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

Madmen drunk with power seeking the total subjugation of the total man to total government sit on thrones in legislatures, executive offices, and trial courts eager to prove their power over us.

Immune from liability, they prosecute the infractions of the people with vigorous, relentless force and power of the state. Hell bent on controlling the world, these monsters seek and destroy God’s sheep. Our politicians are psychopaths constantly demanding revision. They preach change and the necessity to visit the cults of chaos in order to improve society. It is sheer madness. The turmoil created impoverishes nations and strips men of peace leaving us naked and afraid.

Think of all the sounds that drown out the voice of God (Scripture) in our lives.

Sounds of stuff: We live in an industrialized society with international contracts and businesses of all sorts hawking their wares. We are buried in an avalanche of commercials on the radio and TV. Greedy producers overwhelm us with hundreds of advertisements in every hour of programming trying to sell us things we don’t want or need. Newspapers are sprinkled with “buy me now” ads. In a search for information on a single website, you can find your search hijacked by a half-a-dozen advertisements.

We are bombarded by commercialism, capitalism, and consumerism telling us we need more and better stuff. The noise surrounding stuff is constant, relentless, and unending. We can't even hear ourselves think. We can't hear God!

Sounds of unconfessed sins: We are trapped between sounds without and sounds within. There are sins that are known and loved; sins unconfessed and unforsaken; sins screaming for attention begging to be let out of the closet. And, then there is the guilt that comes crashing in upon us after we sin: "I wish I hadn't;" "Oh, I shouldn't have done that!" "Why am I so weak?" "I should know better, but . . ." Oh, the roar of guilt that drowns out the voice of God.

Guilt pounds its cadence of condemnation. It's hard to be still because the grinding sounds coming from our own factories of sin; and we sin again and there are more pricks and pains—a personal, noisy storm within that drowns out the voice of God in His Word.

Sounds of confessed sins: Then there are sins we have forsaken; sins we have confessed; sins we taken to the cross. They reappear like devils jeering their accusations. Their echoes return to us like shouts over a canyon cliff; sins we can't believe are forgiven; sins that we dredge up again and again; sins that disturb us and haunt us like ghosts at a séance.

Sounds of hate: Oh, the sounds of malice, of delight in doing evil; of getting even; cheer leading us to win; to crush our enemies with a final defeat. How can I win, get back, get even? We seethe with anger and bitterness. The fury burns and spreads its fires of destruction. The roar of these fires keeps us from hearing God, seeing God, and resting in God.

Sounds of controversy: Many of us are energized by a controversial spirit of debate. We use argument to build up our case and to win disputes. We stay awake at night sharpening our tools on the grindstone of revenge where all rhetoric fashions it sharp swords. The clashes of controversy create a clanking noise that drowns out the voice of God.

Sounds of people: Can you hear the people at work? The telephone calls, letters, emails, texting make demands on our lives. We are surrounded by the whispers and sounds of wrinkled paper in meetings, staff lunches, and breakfast fellowships. People, people, people . . . dozens of conversations, contacts, controversies . . . and the aftermath—the noise in our soul over unresolved conflict! Expectations, demands, children, church activities, failures, stress—all upset the soul and drown out the voice of God.

Sounds of criticism: Think of the criticism and complaining of men about the weather, government and politics! We can't help ourselves. We have an opinion on everything. There is a constant noise of gossip, accusation, slander, and misunderstanding that muffle the voice of God in our lives. It's like being in a football stadium with cheers and boos drowning out our own thoughts.

Sounds of the media: Think of how quiet it used to be seventy years ago. Today, there are continuous sounds on the radio and T.V. announcing to us all the troubles around the world. The Zionist media is telling what to know, how to think, and what our agenda should

be for the day. They are telling us what we should be upset about, angry about, active about. There are thousands of voices . . . of words . . . of tones . . . of images . . . of ditties . . . of sounds telling us what to believe and how to think.

Be shocked, angry, jump, write, protest, call your congressmen. Hundreds of voices are telling us what's important . . . ***but there is not one voice in the media telling us to be still and know God. Not one!***

The message is the government's not perfect, but it can be improved! Be agitated! Be angry! Be disturbed! Be upset! Get involved! Wake up! Vote! Write! Call! Protest! March! Do! Shout! Scream! Make noise! Government is our hope! God? Where is God in all this clatter?

As long as people think their vote counts, America will never experience revolution.

Sounds in the city: Think of noises we hear. There are the sirens of police giving out tickets; arresting this person or that person; the sounds of fire engines, ambulances, and emergency vehicles blasting down city streets rushing to resolve some domestic crisis . . . to aide in some car crash . . . to arrest some criminal. There are the sounds of legislators enacting new legislation to crackdown on people who failed to pay traffic tickets or fines or fees or taxes. Like a bouncing ball our little brains are shuffled down the court like a basketball always in motion and never still.

Sounds in government: Nightly news is like a junior high band warming up before the teacher walks in – screech, clang, and bang. The cacophony of claims, lies, propaganda, censorship, disinformation, and accusations split our ear drums.

There is the day's police chase, the cops that shoot an unarmed citizen that never get charged for murder; congressmen whining that the government is broke and they must enact new taxes to take from us to build a bigger, better, more controlling government. While IRS agents never go to jail, there are regular reports on these agencies oppressing some poor sap-citizen struggling to put food on the table and to keep what he earned through sweat and tears.

There are courtroom reports about criminals being acquitted and good citizens found guilty. Government corruption goes unpunished; politicians get away with fraud and lies and pay offs.

Then there is the constant conflict in the Middle East where Moslem clerics are shouting death to Israel while pledging revenge on the Great Satan, the United States. There are wars . . . rumors of war . . . international conflicts . . . cruel dictators . . . starving children in Africa . . . psychopathic legislators eager to chain citizens down with new codes and statutes. We are bombarded with reports about those dead in a terrorist bombing . . . an airliner down over the Pacific. The frictions and stabbings and shootings are enough to make you deaf and callous.

All this friction grinds out the voice of God in our lives.

Notice our text: “**Be still . . .**”

The word “**still**” means “to cease,” “be quiet,” “relax,” “withdraw,” and to “drop it.”

It is translated “cease from anger” in Psalm 37:8 and “forsake” in Psalm 138:8 and “let go” in Proverbs 4:13.

Do you see what the Spirit-inspired psalmist is asking us to do?

We can’t hear God when we are surrounded by the shouts of commercial hucksters and government propagandists. We can’t hear God when our own sins are screaming for attention. And, it was this lesson that the LORD had to teach His servant Elijah amid the pounding drums of Jezebel’s threats.

1 Kings 19:12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

God was not in the storm, but in the silence of it all.

“**Be still**” is more than a rushed prayer in between commercials. It takes decision, deliberate action, days and weeks and even months of pursuing silence so a man can hear God.

By hearing God, we do **not** mean hearing an “inner voice” or some dynamic self-authenticating personal experience. We mean reading and studying the Holy Scriptures in such a way that it impacts and effects our lives with truth—truth about Christ and His accomplishments at the cross and His sanctifying will for our lives; insight that sheds light on our walk with him in this dark world; spiritual food that delights our soul causing us to sing His praises.

There is a stillness that leads to the knowledge of God in the sea of conflict . . . Have you found it?

Twice in this psalm the author concludes that in the midst of a troubled sea the Lord is with us.

*“The LORD of hosts **is** with us; the God of Jacob **is** our refuge. Selah. (76:7)*

*“The LORD of hosts **is** with us; the God of Jacob **is** our refuge. Selah.” (76:11)*

Consider the Charge to Stop Fretting Psalm 37.

God orders His people to cease fretting over the temporary success of the wicked (rasha).

37:1 (A Psalm of David.) Fret not thyself (tit'har) because of evildoers (ra'im), neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

'Fret not thyself' is a reflexive verb which prohibits God's man from fueling his anger by stoking the fire with reports about what "evildoers" (pl) *ra'im* are doing.

The word “**fret**” (*charah*) is translated by the word “hot” ten times, “angry” nine times, “fret” four times, and “burn” once in Scripture.

The word “fret” is the same word used in Genesis 4:5: “And Cain was very *wroth*, and his countenance fell;” that is, he was angry enough to kill. Selah. The word “**wroth**” is our word “**fret**” in Psalm 37:1. “**Fret**” is a Hithpael verb (reflexive, future) which means the one fretting is causing himself to suffer emotional strain by burning with anger. The one who feeds the furnace of anger injures himself.

Some reports about the success of the *ra'im* (wicked) are disturbing. Consequently, some men are tempted to “**envy**” (*qana*) and be jealous of their financial and social success.

The “**evildoers**” (*ra'im*) are the movers and shakers in society promoting transgression of God's law-order. . . . people in blue suits and red ties in the Municipal Corporation in the District of Columbia.

“**workers of iniquity**” (*asah-evel*) is contrasted with those who do good in verse 3. These are the people that sow tares in the wheat field with malice aforethought. The *rasha* are more than sinners. They are committed to evil as a means of advancement in society.

The opposite of fretting is trusting (3), delighting (4), committing (5), resting (7).

The grounds of this “rest” are twofold: (1) God knows and protects the righteous; (2) God knows and punishes the wicked.

4.31 Golden Silence

Habakkuk 2:20

◆ In chapter one, Habakkuk complained that God was not doing anything about the depravity of his era. In chapter two, God answers His prophet and shows him His future judgment on the nation by the terrifying Babylonians.

Stunned by this revelation of judgment and the black clouds of trauma coming on the nation he loved, Habakkuk learned a great lesson about walking with God.

“But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.”

The Holy Temple

The conjunction “**but**” presents a contrast between the nothingness of the nations, and the everything of God . . . between dinky idols, and the uttermost of the Almighty . . . between

gods that don't exist, and the God Who does exist . . . between deeply flawed men, and the infinite perfections of the LORD.

Having declared the powerless of the nations and all that is not God, Habakkuk summons the nations to enter His Court and to shut their mouths before the Great "I am."

His temple refers to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem which is a giant metaphor for the Presence of Sovereignty. "He reigns" is the gospel of the Old Testament (Psalm 97:1).

The Lord is in His holy temple with gavel in hand. "The temple of God" is an icon for God's rule . . . His throne . . . His authority . . . His universal jurisdiction over mankind . . . His law-order . . . His justice . . . His courtroom chambers where He permits the ancients to study Him . . . where only humble, devout men can gain a hearing before His Majesty.

This presentment is not a contrast between heaven and earth. He is not more present in heaven than on earth. Nor is He more available to angels than to men. "*God is wholly everywhere, and the whole of Him is nowhere.*" His temple could be damaged, but God's care for His people could not be destroyed (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 79:1).

When David declared, "*the Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven*" he meant Court is in session 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Psalm 11:4; and, Psalm 18:6, Psalm 18:9).

His eyes see the sons of men. Not only did the LORD know about the evil among His people, He planned to use the Chaldeans as His chastening rod. Israel's Judge would severely chastise Israel, but He would not crush them. Not only did God know all the horrific crimes the Babylonians would commit, He had already pronounced sentence upon them! Unlike the remnant of Israel, they would be utterly ruined and buried in the graveyard of the nations.

The great message of the Book of Habakkuk is that the LORD reigns. Court is in session. International complaints against nations are heard in His chambers.

Parties summoned, charges are presented. Matters are serious. He knows the facts of each case. He prosecutes. He defends. He judges. He commands. He executes. Destinies of nations are in His hands. He makes judicial decisions and nations are shattered (Psalm 75:7).

Therefore, "let all (faces) on the earth keep silence before Him."

BE SILENT means "**Hush!**" The object of the interjection "Hush!" is addressed to "all faces" *of men* on earth. Quiet! Court is in session.

Like Habakkuk, we are often tangled in knots over the mysteries of our age. What good man has not been grieved by the spread of lawlessness during his time (1:2-5)? In His presence, the problems regarding the mystery of our being are solved (Barnes).

Therefore, "let all the earth keep silence before Him." Since the all-wise, all-present, all-powerful God is in Heaven beholding the deeds of His people, "let all the earth keep silence before Him."

The Spirit is telling us get into His Presence, "shut up and put our ears on." "Shema, O Israel . . ."

Let us come into His Presence, and let Him release us from the chains and shackles that bind our souls and minds with the sins of our own heart and the contradictions of this world.

The command "**keep silent**" is preceded by the *protasis*, "**the LORD is in His holy temple;**" that is, because Heaven's Court is in session, "Be Quiet!"

Men need to enjoin the wisdom of silence. We are surrounded by shrieking sirens, roaring engines, 18 wheelers thundering down interstates, honking horns, alarm clocks beeping, cell phones invading our day, and TV enticing us with zillions of commercials. These disruptions and demands on our souls are unbearable! No man has the capacity to hear all these news reports without becoming callous.

Connectedness is the curse of our times.

The *tyranny of the urgent* requires our immediate attention. Fluffy stuff takes precedence over weighty matters. The need of the hour is silence in order to focus on the important things. Gravity must replace frivolity.

Silence is golden in the presence of God,

Yes I believe it is true, because in that golden silence, my thoughts are filled with You.

Habakkuk accused God of going *sub silentio* in regards to his prayer (1:2); but, the LORD commands him and "all faces" to be silent.

We need to find God, but we cannot find him in the noise of the city, or the rearranging of chairs at a school pep rally. He is in His temple as King and Judge. Court is in session. The Spirit whispers to us, "Shhhh! Hush! Silence in the gallery! Quiet in the courtroom! Turn off your cell phones. These matters are serious. Listen and learn!"

The idea here for "red necks" is slow down, shut up, shush, zip the lip, chill out, cork it, and get your ears on. But, the LORD is not this crude or rude. He simply posts His rule, "Silence. Court is in session!"

A fool is known for his many words, but a man of wisdom for his silence.

Proverbs 18:2-3 Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions.

When you are in the Divine Library of wisdom and knowledge the rule is, "Quiet Please!"

The great enemy of the Christian is the boom and buzz in the beehive of life. A broken wheel makes the most noise. A broken Christian has turned his back on silence. He is so busy running computers and punching buttons that he drowns out the voice of the Spirit. Busyness keeps him from prayer; noise deafens him to the sweet sounds of the Word of God.

Francis Bacon said, "Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom."

Listen to the sun, moon, and stars making their journey across the heavens. Without clamor, clangs, and clatter they bless man with light for his journey through life. As a well-mannered gentleman is known by the noise he doesn't make when sipping his soup, let us find a quiet place without all the noise. Turn off the radio, T.V., and computer. Stop chattering! Open up the Book. Pray! Listen! Think! Obey!

Likewise, a wise man is known by the lack of hullabaloo in his heart. Like a rainbow arches in the sky after the thunder claps of a storm displaying its glorious color, wisdom comes to men when silence surrounds the heart.

There is too much clamor in the world.

In His Presence, the mysteries of our being are solved . . . and . . . all the miseries of humanity can be attributed to the inability of men to be alone . . . silent . . . with Bible in hand.

Silence isn't empty; it is bursting with answers for the man who "keeps silent before Him."

The quieter you are, the more you hear.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

Moreover, the "Holy, Holy, Holy" LORD God is in His Holy Temple! Selah (Isaiah 6:1-6).

Barnes observes regarding the "repetition" of a name, or of an expression, three times, was quite common among the Jews. Thus, in Jeremiah 7:4, the Jews are represented by the prophet as saying, 'the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.

Thus, Jeremiah 22:29 : 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord;' Ezekiel 21:27 : 'I will overturn, overturn, overturn;' see also 1 Samuel 18:23 : 'O my son Absalom! my son, my son;' see also the repetition of the form of benediction among the Jews, Numbers 6:24-26. (Isaiah 6). In light of NT revelation regarding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, how can it be doubted that this is a reference to the Holy Trinity?

See the triple use of hashem in the Aaronic Benediction, the barakh:

*Numbers 6: 24-26 **The LORD (YHWH) bless (barakh) thee, and keep thee: **The LORD** make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: **The LORD** lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.***

Because Israel's **Great Lawgiver, Judge, and King** is in His holy temple, silence is the order of the hour (Isaiah 33:22).

As, Habakkuk sat silently digesting the Word of God, what did He learn about the LORD as Lawgiver?

As Israel's Lawgiver, the LORD was the nation's Source of law. The LORD announced His law to the nation, and the people accepted it; that is, they consented to be governed by the law of the LORD God.

Furthermore, His law formed the basis of His judgment (Exodus 20:1ff). His law is a product of His sovereignty . . . and His love for His people. Because the LORD God loved them, He gave them His law . . . not to save them but to create a safe, orderly society. The enacting clause reads, "*I am the LORD thy God (Sovereignty in action), which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt (love for His people), out of the house of bondage (for the love of freedom) . . . (1) Thou shall have no gods before me*" (Exodus 20:1-3).

His law or Torah is an indirect reflection of His character; Jesus is the Living Torah, the direct representation of His character. Because He is eternal, His law is absolute (Psalm 105:10; Psalm 119:42; Hebrews 1:1-3). Study His law and His gospel to know God's will for your life.

Habakkuk knew that God's law was not only good for Israel, but good for all nations -- not only good for him, but good for all men and all of man's institutions.

As, Habakkuk sat silently digesting the Word of God, what did He learn about the LORD as King? Let us consider the following texts.

As Israel's King, the LORD is the one and only Sovereign, subject to none. The temple complex was not only a religious center administrated by priests; it was the center of Israel's civil government where the King's court executed justice. Not only is the LORD **the King of Israel**, He is the **King of the Nations**. As the Spirit of God summons Israel to acknowledge the LORD's authority over them, so the Spirit calls the nations to acknowledge the LORD's authority over them. We hear much about the Christians duty to obey "God-ordained authorities" (Romans 13:1), but seldom do we hear preachers calling heads of State to obey Habakkuk's God.

Consider the following texts:

***Jeremiah 10:7** Who would not fear thee, **O King of nations?** for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.*

Deuteronomy 4:39 "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

***1 Chronicles 16:31** Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; And let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."*

1 Chronicles 29:11 "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all."

***Psalm 29:10** The LORD sat as King at the flood; Yes, the LORD sits as King forever.*

***Psalm 47:2** For the LORD Most High is to be feared, A great King over all the earth.*

***Psalm 135:6** Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.*

***Daniel 4:35** "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"*

***Psalm 2:6, 9-12** Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. **Be wise** now therefore, **O ye kings:** be instructed, ye judges of the earth. **Serve the LORD** with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

That the LORD is King of Israel means He is in control of all political events.

Though things seemed out of control to Habakkuk, silence taught Him that the LORD reigns. With mouth shut, and ears open, Habakkuk came to a place where he was content to know that he was not in charge of the world. The LORD reigns -- a tough lesson to learn for proud, liberal, independent, self-willed, ambitious, autonomous, Armenian men in hot pursuit of "self-realization" (Hinduism / psychology).

The prophet must have found rest in the following Scriptures:

***Psalm 46:1** "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."*

***Isaiah 41:10** "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

***Proverbs 16:4** The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

As Israel's Judge, He dispenses justice to the nations. He knows the facts; and, He judges justly. As Habakkuk waited in silence he learned that the LORD's Court is in session and never in recess. His judgment is without bias, without prejudice, without error, and without

flaw. All must appear before Him. As Israel's crimes came before the LORD's Court, so did Babylon's . . . and so do the sins of the United States. And, there are no appeals. (There is a difference between God's judgment on individuals and His judgment on the nations; Individually, all men must appear before Him after death (Hebrews 9:27). But, the sins of nations as a whole are judged in time.)

Psalm 9:8 And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.

Psalm 9:19-20 Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail; Let the nations be judged before You. Put them in fear, O LORD; Let the nations know that they are but men. Selah.

Psalm 110:6 He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.

Joel 3:12 Let the nations be aroused And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge All the surrounding nations.

Daniel 7:9-10 "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire. "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Jeremiah 17:10 "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.

*Psalm 103:19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom **ruleth** over all.*

God's kingdom is not of this world nor does he appeal to man-made jurisdictions to approve his rule on earth. His kingdom is based on His authority. It is not limited by time and space, He reigns over all of nature, all men, all the time, in every place. All governments, therefore, are responsible to acknowledge His authority and to surrender to it.

Psalm 135:6 "Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps."

His power and jurisdiction are universal. Unlike pagan deities which are confined by local customs, the Lord reigns unconfined over the seas, skies, land, and people.

The psalmist announces the supremacy of YHWH above the gods of the nations. *Nunc pro tunc*, the LORD created and formed those powers of nature which operate in the heavens, the earth, and the waters -- powers which creatures are so quick to attribute to "Mother Nature" and the ostensible laws of science.

Psalm 115:3 "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases."

Unlike idols made of earthen clay that can only be in one place at one time, the LORD is in the heavens. The dogmatics of the psalmist informs us that Elohim is not limited by time, space, and matter. There is no limit to God's knowledge, presence, or power. His pleasure controls the destiny of all mankind. What he wills blossoms in the garden of history. His will cannot be frustrated, stonewalled, or defeated. God runs the universe! Christ "upholds all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3)! Just as a dime cannot stop a turbine diesel Pacific Union Coal DTEL running from Chicago to New Orleans, all the nickel and dime schemes of rebels, renegades, and revolutionaries cannot derail the locomotives pulling the boxcars of God's will from eternity through time.

In conclusion, the message of Habakkuk is that the LORD is on His throne as King of the Nations. Court is in session. Take off your shoes. You are on holy ground. Be silent. The Judge knows the facts, He will render a judgment, and the gavel will come down on the side of justice against the wicked. Trust the LORD to do what is right. When politics becomes burdensome, trust and obey!

Golden Silence by Shelagh Bullman

Silence is golden in the temple of God, Yes I believe it is true; Because in that Golden Silence, my thoughts are filled with You.

Your throne is above the stars, that shimmer and shine; In this Golden Silence, I learn that I am Thine.

You are greater than the thunder storm, that causes me to quiver; No greater love than Calvary, that excites my heart forever.

You are my paradise, my oceans wide, My mountain standing tall, So in this golden silence, I understand Your call.

Silence is Golden in the temple of God, Yes I know it is true; I have riches greater than gold, As my thoughts are filled with You.

4.32 Where Will You Be When You Grow Up in Christ?

Matthew 5

Nine Stages of Development in Christian Maturity

Matthew 5 – The Beatitudes

◆ Before you begin a journey, you need to know where you are going.

The Christian life is a pilgrimage, and the Sermon on the Mount tells you where you are going and what you will be when you mature in Christ.

We want to look at the nine beatitudes from the point of Christian growth as they represent stages of growth in Christian maturity.

If we follow Christ, where do we start? Where will we end up? What is the final stage of development?

Those who begin their spiritual journey being poor in spirit will end his pilgrimage rich in Spirit.

The Christian life is not static. It is progressive. For the ones who love Him, the Father sends them to His training camp so they can compete in the race. He has a direction for their lives. And, the beatitudes show us the starting line as well as the finish line.

Matthew introduces us to Beatitudes which present the progress of development in the Christian life. For convenience sake, we shall call them “Stages in Christian Growth.”

Introduction

The major message of Jesus Christ was the arrival of the kingdom of God in history, and getting into it was the supreme objective.

Only the righteous enter the kingdom, and Jesus taught that unless your righteousness is greater than the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter into it (Matthew 5:20).

Many Jews thought they were righteous enough, but our Lord taught that they will be thrown into outer darkness (Matthew 8:20).

We have here, if you will, Kingdom Theology 101, or Requisites for Entering the Kingdom of God.

The first four beatitudes define the spiritual condition that characterizes those who enter the kingdom: spiritual poverty, grief, meekness, and hunger. Does this define you?

The difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God is the difference between a Hebraism and a Greek idiom.

Each of the first four beatitudes addresses a problem with mankind that prevents men from entering the kingdom which we could label as pride, resistance, defiance, and complacency.

Part I

Growth Towards Justification

Stage One: Poor in Spirit

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew begins the sermon with “Blessed are the poor in spirit;” Luke simply has “Blessed are the poor.” Both are true.

First, a Christian is not one who is born in a “Christian” country, but one who surrenders to the authority of King Jesus (Matthew 1:22; 11:28-29; John 1:10-13).

The world teaches us to think positive, to possess high self-esteem, to believe in the humanistic doctrine that men are born good, and that only the environment corrupts. Some psychologists go as far to infer that all of man’s problems are the result of poor self-esteem. However, this is far from what our Lord taught.

A man touched by God begins his journey realizing that his problems are not in the environment, but within him; that he is a poor sinner that has broken God’s law. This knowledge that one is a sinner in need of a Savior, and this feeling of shame connected with his wretched condition, removes the cloud of pride that prevents a man from entering the kingdom.

God’s Word acts like a mirror. Humility comes by looking at one’s self in the mirror of God’s Word and realizing how poor one is in relationship to the Creator.

Jesus pronounced a blessing on the man who feels poor in spirit. Because individuals are so full of themselves, it is a miracle when one recognizes his own depravity. Admission that one is not “a good person” is so rare, the angels rejoice when one comes to his senses and realizes that he is a transgressor of God’s law. When one wakes up and admits that he is spiritually bankrupt, that person is not far from the kingdom of God.

The pre-Christian reaches “first base” on the road to the kingdom when he realizes that he is spiritually poor and bankrupt in his relationship to Christ; that is, when he realizes he is a sinner in need of a Savior.

[Note: It would be an error in judgment to totally spiritualize this text as Luke says, “Blessed are the poor” (6:20). Economic poverty often goes hand-in-hand with being “crushed in spirit” and “broken hearted” because of the way poor people are treated sociologically (Isaiah 61:1; Psalm 34:18). Luke emphasizes economic poverty, while Matthew emphasizes spiritual poverty.)

Stage Two: Mourning over sin

Matthew 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

We don’t logically associate mourning with blessedness. Most men would rather go to a party than to a funeral, be happy than sad, sing than sob.

Love of self, happiness with self, and contentment with self mark the worldling and prevents them from seeking the kingdom. Over 5000 books have been written on self-esteem, and each one of them is a stumbling block to salvation. This sense of self-worth and worthiness may characterize self-promoting salesmen, but it doesn't characterize kingdom citizens.

If the first Stage is realizing that one is a sinner, the second Stage is the grief and sorrow that springs up within a man when he realizes he is a debtor and not a creditor before God.

It is good when men experience sadness of heart because they are not right with the Lord. Such a condition calls for handkerchiefs and the wearing of black. It is not good to sin, but it is good when transgressors cry and weep over their sin.

Anguish over one's wretched condition motivates the man to find a remedy for his guilt. For this reason, Jesus pronounced a blessing on the mourner: they shall be comforted at heaven's door.

Stage Three: Meekness

Matthew 5:5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

The world teaches blessed are the strong, the ambitious, the aggressive, the fighter, and the go-getter. There is even a song extolling the pride of self-achievement, “I Did It My Way.”

*I've lived a life that's full
I've traveled each and every highway
But more, much more than this
I did it my way*

*Regrets, I've had a few
But then again, too few to mention
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption*

*I planned each charted course
Each careful step along the byway
And more, much more than this
I did it my way*

Was there ever a more anti-kingdom song than this? Isn't “I did it My Way” the very definition of sin? The pronoun “I” is used 9 times in this godless song.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way . . .” — Isaiah 53:6

Because man is desperate for relevance, and will do everything to buffer his self-worth and to increase his wealth, Christ pronounced a blessing on meekness — a reference to Psalm 37:11 which says the meek (afflicted, humble, poor) shall inherit the land.

Meekness here is not weakness. It is not the same as apathy, passivity, being laid back, or contentment with one's wretched condition. It refers to the one who has a correct view of God and a realistic view about himself. He is not offended when the Spirit exposes his sin, because he knows that he is a sinner.

Meekness is that condition of mind which does not resist the convicting work of the Spirit; that accepts the truth that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;" that attitude which receives the Spirit's accusations that he is a sinner deserving hell; that conviction of soul which shuns fictions like "self-esteem," "I am great," and "I am a good person," or "I can do it." A meek mind accepts the ontological reality that he is made in the image of Adam.

The meek heart is a free heart because it has escaped the bondage of the self-esteem mantra, the religious belief system that teaches "it's your parents' fault," or "you are a victim," or "you are a good person."

Meekness is the opposite of the Victimization Movement which blames everyone else for their problems. A meek heart accepts responsibility and cries out to God, "Be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

Stage Four: Hungering for Righteousness.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Men are hungry for many things, but righteousness is not among them.

Men yearn to be rich and famous, but who thirsts to be blameless before God?

This is what we might call the stage of faith that grasps what God has done for sinners at Calvary.

A man who realizes that he is a debtor before God and seeks to be right with the divine Creditor, has a repentant heart. Sick men seek a physician. Sick souls seek the Great Physician. Knowing he has no righteousness of his own, he pursues a righteousness that comes from God alone, through faith in Christ alone.

The hungry heart will find a feast in Christ. For when one believes on Christ, God gives him the very righteousness of Christ.

The possession of righteousness is a pre-requisite to enter heaven. Eternal life awaits those who patiently do good and seek immortality (Romans 2:7).

But, what is a man supposed to do who has sinned and not been patient in doing good? (Romans 3:23).

Job asked the most important question a man can ask, "How shall a man be just before God?" (Job 9:2)

The good news is that God provides a righteousness through the gospel to men who trust Christ to be their Savior:

Romans 3:21-22 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from (one's personal obedience to) the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (an ablative) for all who believe (in Christ). For there is no distinction:

A man who investigates the gospel will find that He is saved by good works—not his works, but by the works of Christ. A man is not only saved by the dying of Christ, he is saved by the doing of Christ (the Source of the righteousness he needs to enter heaven).

The sinner is called to cease from his own performance-based acceptance program and to accept the performance of Christ on His behalf.

Theologically speaking, Christ took our debts to the cross (for our forgiveness), and in exchange, He gives His righteousness as a free gift to us who believe (for our justification). He first declares us just (justification), then proceeds to make us just (regeneration followed by sanctification).

This is **justification**—the day God declares a man righteous and treats him as such.

But, there is more. Not only does God justify the sinner by faith (Romans 4:5), he regenerates the man by the Spirit of God (Titus 3:5). This dual state of being justified and regenerated is the blessing which Christ promised to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

This is the day of salvation.

Justification is a judicial ruling whereby God declares a man right with the Court (Genesis 15) and treats him as such (Genesis 20). This is the central hope of Matthew 5:1-6.

The rest of the sermon concerns sanctification (Matthew 5:7-11).

Sanctification is the beautifying of the Christian by obedience of the man to God's Word (law-order) with the assistance of the Spirit. While a man is justified by "faith alone" without man's assistance, sanctification requires man's obedience while seeking the power of the Holy Spirit to make him holy.

In the 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church made justification dependent on regeneration and sanctification.

While the Reformers agreed that it is not totally possible to separate justification and regeneration completely, they insisted that the act of justification (judicial declaration) be logically separated from the work of regeneration (infusion of righteousness) and from the process of sanctification (being made holy).

Men are justified by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone; the justified are then regenerated (by faith); and, then for the sake of holiness, God requires the regenerated to obey His Word so they will become like His Son (sanctified).

So, where are you in the process of salvation? If you are poor in spirit, grieved over your wretched condition, humbly accept the fact that you are a sinner, and you thirst to be right with God, then look at Calvary. You are in the gateway of the kingdom of heaven.

Part II

Growth Towards Sanctification

A description of the Christian soldier

The first four beatitudes describe the condition of souls at the gates of the kingdom; the second five describe the condition of souls fighting for souls at the gates of hell.

A strong Christian is a soldiering Christian. The next five beatitudes describe God's training course for the militant Christian.

Stage Five: Growing in showing Mercy

Matthew 5:7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

When a person has been saved by the grace of God, they are inclined to show grace and mercy toward others who are in need. Mercy begets mercy.

A young believer may not know how to express his faith, but he wants to show his faith through little acts of kindness towards those closest to him. He does not love others to gain salvation, but because he has salvation. He is not better than other men, but he helps to better other men.

Because he is secure in the Father's love, he is able to show love through acts of mercy, service, giving, helping, and assisting with Christian ministry.

Mercy is the opposite of disdain, discretion, and a demanding spirit.

Because the Christian has received mercy without merit, he shows mercy to others without merit. He not only starts his Christian life with grace, he serves with grace, grows in grace, and finishes with grace. His daily prayer is, “Have mercy, O Lord; and help me to show mercy, today.”

Stage Six: Growing in Purity

Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The opposite of purity is defilement, compromise, contamination, double-mindedness, pluralism, hypocrisy, and inconsistency.

Purity is the fruit from the hardwood of holiness growing in the heart. Purity makes a man stately. It beautifies the man and makes him strong. The more he learns to love, the more he says “No” to sin.

This is the period where the trials of life refine the soul, unshackle the believer from habits of sin, and where the Spirit progressively works into the heart of the believer the desire to be a servant of Christ.

Soon after a man comes to know Savior, he learns that while sins have been taken off him, sin is still in him. He learns he has been saved from the penalty of sin, and that he must now be saved from the power of sin. His spirit is born again, but there are parts of him which are not yet regenerated. He is a true child of God, but he may not share the family resemblance . . . yet.

Being saved from the penalty of sin by the Savior is one matter (justification, forgiveness); being saved from the power of sin by the Spirit is quite another (sanctification).

God commands his children “to be holy as He is holy.” Personal holiness is not necessary to attain salvation, but salvation produces desires to obtain holiness. God has no need of our goodness, but we have a need for God’s goodness—to love more and to sin less. Holiness beautifies the man. Purity and humility are the sweet fragrances of a manly man. Holiness is the strength of the soul, and it comes to the man of faith by obedience to God’s laws and commands.

The more a man reads the Scripture, the more he understands how destructive sin is to him and to others. The more one understands the Lord, the more he desires to be like Christ free from sin’s defiling influence. The goal to give more replaces the old desire to have more. The desire to love more and to sin less is a gift from heaven—Christ’s home where there is no sin and lots of love.

A Christian may lack many talents, but no Christian should lack holiness. In the eyes of God, a pure man is a useful man (2 Timothy 2:19-21).

Stage Seven: Growing in Peacemaking

Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

A peacemaker is the opposite of a prickly, thorny, grouchy, touchy stepmother that heads a house full of wounded, angry, bitter, brawling children.

This is a stage of growth where God begins to use the man. Having grown in Christ-like character, He sends his soldier into the arena of conflict for the ministry of reconciliation in a good faith effort to bring peace to warring souls. The peace sought may be between God and man, or between man and man.

Not all is well in the world. Conflicts between husbands and wives, mothers and daughter, fathers and sons, men and women, bosses and employees, and political parties abound. And, where there are strife and struggles, there are needs for peacemakers.

We call this the ministry of reconciliation. People are at war with the Creator and His law-order. Thus, there is a need for evangelists who can help reconcile men to God.

People war against each other. Thus, there is the need for Christians with the gifts of exhortation and wisdom to assist people to be reconciled one with another.

As one grows in holiness, he will find himself in the middle of marital disagreements, family disputes, and community divisions.

The key to success is to not be alarmed or shocked by all the ugly head butting among God's sheep . . . and goats, but to accept the fact that God is training you to develop the skills of conflict management, reconciliation, and peacemaking. Those who embrace conflict will be called the "sons of God."

Stage Eight: Growing in Biblical Convictions

Matthew 5:10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

While God calls us to be peacemakers, He does not call us to be a nice, pettable pugs. He does not call us to ride sidesaddle through flowery meadows, but to clean out the barn.

God's man is less like a white-collar car salesman talkin' sweet, and more like plaid-shirted rigger wearing steel-toed boots and a hard hat with garlic on his breath.

Due to intense study of God's Word, this is a stage of development where the Christian soldier trains for war against foreign hostiles. You'll never see God's man dressed in white handing out flowers beggin' for money! Never!

Spirituality has to do with one's relationship to the Holy Spirit; Christian maturity has to do with one's relationship to God's Word, to doctrine, to truth. Because he is mature in the faith and against abortion, homosexuality, and feminism, he will be persecuted!

The word "persecuted" means "to make run." This is a stage of life where the active believer experiences opposition to His salty message. He is opposed, not because he preaches the gospel, but because he seeks to apply green herb principles churned by the gospel to the open sores of society. The blessing is not "persecution," but mature faith confronting the bloody power-brokers of idolatry.

The key word in this statement is "for righteousness sake." Most Christians in the West are not persecuted for preaching the gospel, but they are persecuted for asserting the law of the Lord God and applying it to the social ills of our time.

As a student of law, the Christian develops steel convictions about righteousness. Rejecting caramel Christianity and its honey-roasted, sun-kissed, passion-pecked sermons, he eats iron man Wheaties from God's Word for breakfast. *His riveted convictions put him at odds with the dreamy, impossible "equality" ideals of liberals.*

In this stage of growth, the believer will find himself soldiering against humanists, secularists, abortionists, lesbians, feminists, perverts, maskers, vaxxers, transvestites, social engineers, journalists, and politicians who force their perverted religious values of equality and moral relativism down the throats of Americans.

Because he no longer sees abortion as a women's right to control her own body, but murder; and, no longer sees living together as consensual sex, but fornication; and, no longer sees homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle, but sexual perversion; and, no longer sees feminism as social progress, but rebellion against God's law-order, the man of God may find that he is called a misogynistic, anti-Semite, homophobic racist. The more effective he is at articulating the truth and calling rebels to repent, the more he will be defamed and belittled.

It is a blessing, not because of the suffering incurred, but because the man has Biblical convictions which motivate him to address the decadence of his age.

"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!" (Luke 6:26).

Stage Nine: Growing in Reliability

Matthew 5:11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."

It has been said there are two kinds of people in the church: pillars that hold it up, and caterpillars that crawl in and out.

Before us is a rock, the reliable soldier — the stable, anchored, unwaivering, secure, poised, steady, fixed, enduring man of integrity. He is the opposite of crumb cake and a shooting star.

This is the final stage of maturity. It involves character of soul that is secure, persistent, and confident in the face of resistance. It is the ability to stand with joy for a righteous cause while one is being slandered and maligned. Not an easy place to be!

In this stage, the man walks alone with little support from family and friends. He has the ability to stand when others call for retreat.

The ultimate goal of the Christian life is not to sit on a cushion of strawberries, but to be a blood-splattered soldier with spear in hands piercing the dragon; not to be nice and marsh mellow-sweet, but to be a salty, briny soldier of the cross rescuing souls near the gates of hell. The goal is not to create conflict, but to boldly confront the decadence of our age with a golden tongue. And, when this happens, tempers flare. You can't avoid a street fight if you are opposed by bullies advancing the Devil's agenda.

Enemies change in life. The longer one lives, the more the militant Christian engages the fight against entrenched, well-organized political opponents composed of vigorous, satanically inspired antichrists.

In the final stage of Christian maturity, the man of conviction will find himself facing powerful, well-funded, well-connected adversaries: politicians, elected officials, local bureaucrats, cops, judges, lawyers, deacons, false witnesses, prosecutors, and churchmen. His fight may be political or legal, commercial or judicial, social or relational, ecclesiastical or civil.

Because his enemies are people of means including officers in the government, they may have the power to crush your reputation, fire you from your job, destroy your career, tax you into poverty, seize your possessions, and injure you emotionally and physically. This is true of Christians who served the gospel through the centuries, and it is true in the United States where the government promotes Islam, communists, socialists, feminists, transvestites, humanists, abortionists, and every other godless segment of society.

These bone-crushing enemies of militant Christians are not only in journalism and government, they are in compromised 501 c 3 church organizations.

The more you move away from caramel Christianity and the candy-coated desire of church leaders to be compliant with State policies, the more you will receive the right fist of Christian fellowship. When pleasing the government is more important than serving God, you cannot expect churchmen not to betray you. Even Jesus was betrayed by his own brethren. Why should you expect anything less? “Beware of the man who picks you up at the airport!” wrote one pastor.

There is a blessing here. You are blessed because of what you have become — a man of faith and conviction, an exhausted soldier on the battlefield, a competent spokesman on the right side of the issues standing for the Lord you love.

In Summary: What is the final stage of growth for the cross-carrying Christian?

- In the first stage of growth one is poor in spirit; in the final state one is rich in spirit.
- In the first stage of growth the man is useless to God; in the final stage exists a strong useful soldier of the cross.
- In the first stage of growth, one is insecure in faith; in the final stage, one is secure in his faith.
- In the first stage of growth, lights leads to sadness of heart, in the final stage of growth, light leads to unspeakable joy.
- In the first stage of growth everything about the man is shaky, but in the final stage of growth the believer is unshaken.
- In the first stage of growth is a revelation about one’s lack of spiritual character; in the final stage of growth, the steel character of the man is being tested against Satan’s warlords.

If you have taken up the cross, God will work into your heart deep convictions about truth and righteousness.

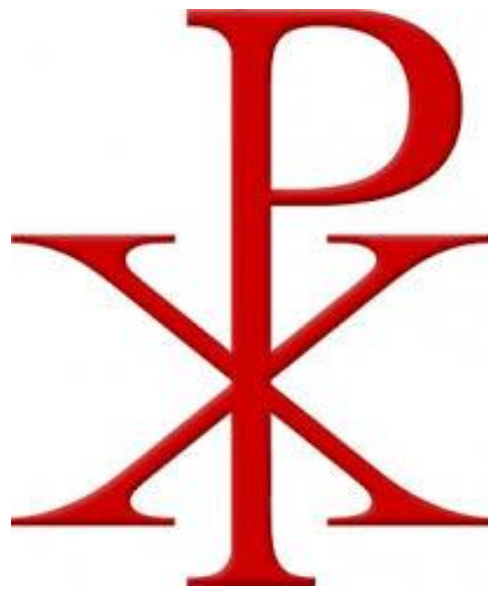
As you seek to apply the Word of Truth to a corrupt society, you will experience fierce opposition. It is not encouraging to be opposed, but it is a blessing to possess the faith, to exhibit courage in the face of conflict, and to be constant in the application of righteousness when surrounded by the wickedness.

May the Lord increase your convictions and give you a melody to sing when you experience the screeching sounds of opposition for doing what is right. You will be in good company. Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, and Paul went from being poor in spirit to being rich in spirit.

Part II

5 Theology of Piety

“You perform according to your theology whether it be right or wrong” - Tozer



5.1 Are you Roman Catholic or Protestant in your Theology?

1 Timothy 4:13

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

◆ Answer (a) or (b) whichever you think is most Biblically correct?

One:

(a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by mercifully accounting him innocent and virtuous

(b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by actually making him into an innocent and virtuous person.

Two:

(a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by placing Christ’s goodness and virtue to his credit.

(b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by putting Christ’s goodness and virtue into his heart.

Three:

(a) God accepts the believer because of the moral excellence found in Jesus Christ.

(b) God makes the believer acceptable by infusing Christ’s moral excellence into his life.

Four:

(a) If a Christian becomes “born again” (regenerate and transformed in character); he will achieve a right standing with God.

(b) If a Christian has a right standing with God by faith, he will experience a transformation in character.

Five:

(a) We achieve a right standing with God by faith alone.

(b) We receive a right standing with God by faith which has become active by love.

Six:

- (a) We achieve right standing with God by having Christ live out His life of obedience in us.
- (b) We achieve a right standing with God by accepting the fact that He obeyed the law perfectly for us.

Seven:

- (a) We achieve a right standing with God by following Christ's example by the help of His enabling grace.
- (b) We follow Christ's example because His life has given us right standing with God.

Eight:

- (a) God first pronounces that we are good in His sight, then gives us His Spirit to make us good.
- (b) God sends His spirit to make us good, and then He will pronounce that we are good.

Nine:

- (a) Christ's intercession at God's right hand gives us favor in the sight of God.
- (b) It is the indwelling Christ that gives us favor in God's sight.

Ten:

- (a) Only by faith in the doing and dying of Christ can we fully satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments.
- (b) We can satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments by the power of the Holy Spirit. (1)

Source: (Questionnaire: Are you Catholic or Protestant? Brinsmead, "Verdict Magazine," a.k.a. "Present Truth," circa 1972))

Warning:

Beware of the Catholic View of piety which teaches that one must be pious in order to be approved by God. The Biblical pious man is pious, not to be approved by God for salvation, but because He is approved of God because of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Catholicism and Justification

The first open challenge in the Church to salvation by grace was by Pelagius (about A.D. 400)(2), a British monk who denied original sin. He proposed that man was able to live a holy life by the natural powers given him of God, and thus obtain salvation.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) vigorously opposed Plagiarism and catechized the orthodox view of man's depravity and need of divine grace.

In a series of councils the Catholic Church (not Roman Catholic) united with Augustine. Augustine championed the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Within the Church, others arose to oppose Augustinian theology by proposing views which became known as semi-Plagiarism—a belief that man is tainted with sin but not to the point he cannot work with God to accomplish his own salvation; that is, semi-Pelagianism taught partial depravity. The councils of the Church even condemned semi-Pelagianism. Catholic authors cite these facts of history in an effort to demonstrate how the Church has always stood by the New Testament teaching of salvation by grace.

“St. Paul tells us that we are ‘justified freely by his grace, and that we are ‘saved according to the election of grace, and if by grace it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace’. To the Corinthians, he writes: ‘By the grace of God I am what I am’, and speaks to the Ephesians of ‘Christ, by whose grace you are saved . . . for by grace you are saved . . . and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God’. He reminds Timothy that ‘God has called me by his holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace’. And again: ‘To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ’. The same Apostle writes to Titus: ‘That being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of life everlasting’. and again to the Ephesians that God has predestinated us unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son’.” (Daujat, 1959).

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), in reaction to the Protestant Reformation, declared:

*“ . . . **if they (men) were not born again in Christ**, they would never be justified, since **in that new birth** there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace by which they are made just . . . “*

The editors of the Roman Catholic Douay Version make these footnote comments on Romans 3 and 4:

*“The justification of which St. Paul here speaks **is the infusion of sanctifying grace** which alone renders a person supernaturally pleasing in the sight of God But justification, **that is, an infusion of sanctifying grace**, cannot be merited by us; it is an entirely gratuitous gift of God.”*

In The Life of Grace, P. Gregory Stevens writes the following:

*“What is the reality of the justification accorded by God when man cooperates in faith? Is it merely like a statement of God declaring the sinner just? Or is it a divine act by which the sinner **is internally transformed and becomes a new reality before God?** (Roman) Catholic thought has always been that the justice bestowed on man is a gratuitous gift (Gal. 3.6ff), and a true justice which actually transforms man into a person pleasing to God.” (parenthesis mine)*

*“(Roman) Catholic doctrine on these questions, formulated in opposition to Lutheranism, was presented in full at the Council of Trent, as it had been previously by Pope Leo X in the Bull ‘Exsurge Domine’ of June 15, 1520. The teaching of Trent centers on two points of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Catholic doctrine on grace. First of all, **justification is a real and profound transformation of man, a genuine gift of sanctification to him. It can in no way be reduced to something purely external.**” (Stevens, 1963) (parenthesis mine)*

“In a clear, religiously profound statement the Council (of Trent) defines the inner nature and structure of justification. It does so in direct opposition to the extrinsicist position of Reformation theology. The heart of Catholic teaching is contained in this passage. First of all comes the assertion that “justification is not only the remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the interior man through the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, whereby man becomes just instead of unjust, a friend instead of an enemy, that he may be an heir in the hope of life everlasting.” The Council then details the causes of this inner transformation: its goal and purpose is God’s glory; it is brought about by God through the merits of our Redeemer, and communicated to man in faith and baptism.” (parenthesis mine)

Jesuit spirituality was a counter-reformation movement initiated by Ignatius Loyola who paid attention to divine voices inside him. He believed God is present within every man and man need only to listen to him . . . to experience him . . . to have a life changing experience in the heart.

Richard McBrien has written in *Catholicism*:

*To be "spiritual" means to know, and to live **according to the knowledge**, that there is more to life than meets the eye. To be "spiritual" means, beyond that, **to know and to live according to the knowledge that God is present to us** in grace as the principle of personal, interpersonal, social and even cosmic transformation. To be "open to the Spirit" is to accept **explicitly who we are and who we are called always to become** and to direct our lives accordingly.*

Jesuit (or Ignatian) spirituality mirrors that of Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus. It is a way of encountering ourselves and the world that encourages us to find God in everyone and everything (Jesuit website, Albuquerque, NM retrieved December 2013).

The Jesuits lead their followers into retreats and meditation wherein the God-seeker waits and listens for a voice within; that is, he seeks a spiritual experience that defines who he is and how he stands with God. This experience is more authoritative, more powerful, and more influential than the Scriptures or the gospel. It is the worst kind of subjectivism because it does not need the Bible. Who needs the Bible when God speaks to you directly?

See Bernini's Portrayal of the Ecstasy of Saint Theresa. Notice the arrow piercing her heart. Theresa has had a dynamic, sensual experience with God that has overwhelmed her soul—an experience more authoritative than the resurrection of Christ or his written Word. This is Catholicism: deeply subjective, sensual, experiential, emotional, orgasmic, intuitive and introspective . . . and it leads to hell.

A Summary of the Roman Catholic Position on Justification

- Justification is the internal renovation and renewing of a man, i.e., wretched subjectivism confused as human sanctification.
- Justification comes by an infusion of God's grace. Man is justified on the basis of what the Holy Spirit has done in him.
- Justification means that man himself is made just, made pleasing to God in his own person.

In common street terms, Catholic justification may be expressed this way: When God's acts on a vile sinner, God pours his grace into the heart of man changing him in such a way that he can be just before God.

A sincere Catholic may say:

"I am a sinner. I cannot save myself. I need Jesus to come into my heart to save me, change me, and help me to be good so I can be just in God's sight; that is, I need God's grace to make me 'born again' so I can change and please God."

Jean Daujat (The Theology of Grace) said it this way:

*"Sinful man cannot, of himself, be pleasing to God. For that, he must receive a gift from God which transforms him interiorly, cleanses him and sanctifies him by adorning him with qualities that render him pleasing to his Creator."
(Daujot, 1959)*

If we cannot see what is wrong with the above brief on the Catholic doctrine of justification by faith, then it is because we have become good Catholics.

Consequently, we need to develop a Biblical understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith and contrast it with Catholicism. Catholicism is all about the religious experience of man to the neglect of the sufficient, saving work of Christ at Calvary to save sinners. Catholicism is about the work "in me," and evangelical Christianity is all about the work of God "outside of me" in history through Christ.

(1) All the answers are A. except questions 4, 6, 7.

(2) Pelagius was a monk who lived in the late 300s and early 400s A.D. Pelagius taught that human beings were born innocent, without the stain of original or inherited sin. He

believed that God created every human soul directly and therefore every human soul was originally free from sin.

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

5.2 The Legal Effects of the Cross on Those Who Believe

Romans 3:21-31

◆ **Literary Genre:** The Book of Romans is a Courtroom Drama filled to the brim with principles of law.

Case: God v. Mankind (1:17-3:20)

Prosecutor: Paul, the Apostle of God (1:17-3:20)

Defense Attorney for Believers: Paul, the Apostle of God (3:21-8:32)

Note the legal language in this section. These are terms used in a court of law. In Romans 1:17 - 3:20, Paul assumes the role of a Prosecutor presenting God's verifiable claim against mankind which demands a "guilty" verdict.

In Romans 3:21-31, Paul assumes the role of a Defense Attorney for those who believe which demands a verdict of "justified" because of Christ's faithfulness to obey the law and to die as the believer's substitute for sin. This passage is the Rosetta Stone of the gospel.

Verdict: Both Gentiles and Jews are pronounced guilty in God's Courtroom (3:10-20).

Premise: One must possess righteousness in conformity to law to be accepted in God's sight (Romans 2:7-12).

Good News: God has provided a righteousness in conformity to law which is the faithfulness of Christ to all who believe.

The gospel is NOT about what we must do to win God's favor, but what God has done through Christ to secure salvation toward those who believe. Romans is a book of law expounding the legal aspects of the gospel and the righteousness (faithfulness of Christ) available to those who believe.

Take Notice of the marvelous effects of God's presentment at the cross in Romans 3:21-31.

21 But now the righteousness of God (dekaiosune) (opposite of sin and condemnation in v. 20) without the law (personal works-righteousness) is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets (Genesis through Malachi);

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith (pistis is a subjective genitive = the faithfulness) of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe (PAP): for there is no difference:

The term "*pistis*" can be translated "faith" or "faithfulness." Here it is a subjective genitive referring to the "faithfulness of Christ" and not our faith.

23 For all have sinned (aorist, active) (harmatia = like an arrow misses the mark), and come short of the glory of God (His righteousness as expressed in His law);

24 Being justified (diakioumenoi = PAP) freely (an adverb = free gift) by his grace (character of the Giver) through the redemption (setting free) that is in Christ Jesus:

The term "**justified**" refers to a judicial decision and it means "**to be declared righteous and treated as such**". The term justified is a **passive** verb meaning the action defined is happening to us, NOT BY US.

The term "**justified**" does not mean "to be made righteous;" nor does it mean to be "declared innocent." It doesn't mean "just as if I had never sinned." If it did, you could fall again into a state of condemnation.

The word "**justified**" is a present passive participle indicating that the verdict of "just" can be enjoyed and claimed now. It means "to declare righteous" and to treat one as such.

The word "redemption" (*apolutrosios*) means **to release from debt, to set free, and to release by a ransom** (blood).

25 Whom God (Theos) hath set forth (a legal term for presentment of evidence) to be a propitiation (mercy seat, satisfaction of justice. Think "Day of Atonement.") through faith in his blood (currency of the spirit world), to declare his righteousness (conformity to his own character or law) for the remission of sins (delay, suspension, suspended sentence, letting go, release, injunctive relief, res judicata) that are past, through the forbearance (patience, tolerance, delay, suspension of judgment, a stay or proceedings) of God;

Subject: "God" (*Theos*) is **the subject** of the sentence, not man! The gospel is about what God has done for men at the cross through the faithfulness of the Son, and not what men must do for God.

Propitiation comes from the Greek word *hilasterion*. It is translated "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5. It refers to the place blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement to pay the debt for Israel's sins. Blood on the mercy seat meant that justice had been satisfied . . . that the debt was paid . . . that God (the creditor) was satisfied with the debt payment by the debtor; that the debt was properly discharged.

Blood: God did not set believers free for nothing!! Jesus gave His life as a ransom so we can be delivered from condemnation in verse 20. The term "**redemption**" is used in Greek literature of slaves being set free by ransom. Moreover, blood is the currency of the spirit world. Christians are purchased by blood . . . not money . . . not good deeds . . . not good intentions. For this reason Hebrews says, "*and God commanded that all things be purified with **blood**, for **without the shedding of blood** there is no forgiveness of sins*" (Hebrews 9:22).

26 To declare (a formal presentment of proof, evidence, demonstration, sign), I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just (character of the judge, morally and legally right), and the justifier (judicial act disposing of the case before the court) of him which believeth in Jesus

The Greek word, "**declare**" (*endeixis*) means to present as evidence -- a summary judgment motion by the Court declaring the ruling of "justified" is in conformity to law and the rules of the Court.

The phrase "**believeth in Jesus**" is correct theologically but it is a bad translation of the Greek text. This is a subjective genitive "*ek*." It refers to the righteousness belonging to Christ not man's "faith." Yes, we have to believe, but man's faith is not what is emphasized here. This text refers to the fidelity of the Son, and not a response of faith by believing men.

The emphasis on the present time: The verb "**might be**" is a present tense indicating that the verdict of "just" can be enjoyed and claimed now in a first fruits way; that is the verdict of the Eschaton has been thrust into our present knowledge to be claimed and enjoyed now.)

27 Where is boasting (bragging rights) then? It is excluded (opposite of "include."). By what law? of works? Nay (a strong negation): but by the law of faith (a faith that sees and accepts the accomplishments of Christ on his behalf).

Note: There is no *antinomianism* in this text. The law of faith looks to the cross and receives God's work at Calvary on behalf of sinners for themselves. Grateful for salvation, the justified live out a life of obedience to God's law order.

28 Therefore we conclude (count, reckon) that a man is justified (declared righteous and treated as such) by faith (faith in the accomplishments of Christ) without the deeds of the law (without facts establishing personal accomplishments).

The term "**conclude**," (*logizomai*), is an accounting term which can be translated *count, reckon, calculate, credit, consider, think suppose, maintain, or think*. It is a mental act (a final decision of the mind; a conclusion following an investigation into the law and facts of the case. Here it refers to accepting the just discharge of debt to those who believe the blood of Christ satisfied the claims of law. The term is related to the first command in Romans. (See Romans 6:11-- that is, "reckon" (*logizesthe*) is a present imperative meaning to START THINKING THIS WAY!).

The term "**conclude**" means believers have listened to the evidence, found proof of claim with strict proof of claim, and agree to accept God's summary judgment motion before the Court based on God's righteousness in Christ.

29 Is he the God of the Jews only (ones with law)? is he not also of the Gentiles? (ones without revelation) Yes, of the Gentiles also (affirmative):

This discharge of debt through the substitutionary work of Christ is fair and just. Now, both Jews and Gentiles can be justified in this court by accepting this discharge of debt and believing the righteousness of Christ is credited to their account by faith.

30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith (Hebrews), and uncircumcision (the nations) through faith (faith in the accomplishments of Christ) 31 Do we then make void (abrogate, derogate, nullify, discount) the law through faith? God forbid (a denial that faith invalidates the law): yea (we affirm), we establish (validate, verify, exonerate, understand or stand under) the law.

NOTICE

(1) There is no command (imperative) in the above section. Paul is not calling for a response from us. He is informing us about what God has done. He wants us to know the facts before we trust.

(2) Terms like "repent," "obey," "receive Christ," "regeneration," "being born again," "follow," or "receive Christ into your heart" are not mentioned in this section.

(3) There is no mention of the "heart" in this passage. There is no emphasis on "personal experience." This passage is all about what God does at the cross, and NOT about what God does in the heart; what God has done through Christ, and not what God does through His Spirit.

(4) This passage is a presentment of evidence with proof of claim. Understanding this section **will deliver** men from "**wretched subjectivism**" - establishing religious truth based on human experiences . . . human feelings . . . human reasoning . . . personal existential facts. There is nothing "touchy-feely" about this passage. This passage is pure objective law about how God has disposed of the believer's case in God's Court. This judicial decision is *with prejudice*.

(5) The locus of salvation is **not** the human heart, human experience, human transformation, or human regeneration, BUT THE CROSS!

(6) This passage is **not** about "me," but about what God has done through Christ at Calvary. This passage is about the "righteousness" of God, not the goodness of man!

(7) This passage is about forensic theology, not existential theology; case facts, not human feelings; evidence, not presumptions.

(8) Translators have done us a disservice in translating "subjective genitives" in this passage as "faith in Christ" rather than "the faithfulness of Christ. Faith is not a substitute for "righteousness." The righteousness of God is the "faithfulness of Christ" to the law; that is, we are saved by the doing (righteousness) and dying (substitutionary work) of Christ for us.

(9) The main work iterated in this passage is "justification." Justification is a judicial term which means "to declare one righteous and to be treated as such."

There is NOTHING creative about justification. This is **not** an "infusion" of righteousness into the heart. Justification is **not** "creative righteousness" or "placing righteousness in the heart" so a person can be "born again." Justification is **not** regeneration. It is God's act of depositing the righteousness of Christ into Heaven's bank. The "righteousness of God" is external to us!!!! We are dealing with "forensic" righteousness, and not "subjective righteousness."

Moreover, justification does **not** mean "forgiveness." It refers to God crediting to your account the righteousness of Christ which gives you a right standing before God. Some call this **positional truth** as opposed to subjective experience. Our experiences differ, but our standing remains constant.

(10) A response of faith is necessary for salvation. Faith here is not a virtue of the heart. It is not Christian character. It is not faith in faith. Nor is it good happy feelings about the subject of religion. Faith examines the evidence. After a preponderance of the evidence, the man of faith agrees to accept God's offer of righteousness based on Jesus faithfulness to God on his behalf. He trusts the doing and dying of Jesus as his claim to Heaven.

After studying this passage, the pious should make a conclusion of the matter (3:28); that the believer "is declared righteous and treated as such;" that his case has been rightly disposed in God's court. The Christian who stands under the truth presented in this passage can rest. He experiences the "peace of God" mentioned in Romans 5:1. The believer can stop striving to be better so God will accept him. Believing souls rest because they know they are accepted in God's sight because Christ obeyed the law for them. Selah

5.3 The Ultimate Blessing of Justification

Romans 3:24-26

◆ When a man believes he inherits the blessings of the gospel: justification, forgiveness, eternal life, the indwelling of the Spirit, regeneration, reconciliation, and citizenship in the kingdom of God.

Justification is considered the ultimate blessing because it secures all others.

The gospel could have been explained in medical colloquy; pastoral provisions, military jargon, or even in agricultural jargon. But it wasn't. The apostle Paul built the gospel on a legal foundation (principles of law).

The question of the ages is, "How can a man be just (considered righteous) before God?" (Job 9:2)

The Book of Romans answers the question -- believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be justified (declared righteous).

The Meaning of Justification

The words "**justify**" and "**justification**" are legal terms closely associated with a trial court and judgment. To be justified means one stands before Heaven's Court where he has been declared righteous.

"**Justification**" is a legal term associated with law. Judgment is based on law that is holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12).

Justification means "to be declared righteous and to be treated as such" by the Court. Abraham obtained this standing in Genesis 15:6; 20:1ff)

In laying the foundation of the gospel, Paul declares, ". . . the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13).

The Means of Justice

The human dilemma is that no man can render perfect obedience that will satisfy the claims of law. Men can climb the Matterhorn of righteousness into the clouds and the law will say, "all have fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

If God were to ignore the demands of law and just forgive sinners with the snap of his fingers, He would be unjust.

A sinner is **not** justified by prayer, but by faith (Romans 3:22, 24-25; 5:1) – faith in the doing and dying of Christ for him.

God cannot just forgive sinners when they pray for forgiveness. Otherwise He would nullify His own law. If He could forgive men by the virtue of prayer, there would be no reason to send Christ to die for sins.

The glory of the gospel is that God not only saves men mercifully, *he saves them lawfully!*
Selah.

By sending His Son to obey his law perfectly for us and then die for our sins, He is able to save sinners justly and mercifully; that is, we are saved by the doing and dying of Jesus.

In dying for sin, Christ upheld the law. On the cross, Christ exhausted the penalty of the law and provided a pardon. Because God's law is just and true, Christ received Divine punishment designed for lawbreakers; that is, His death satisfied the claims of holiness. We call this the "atonement" or the act of propitiation (*mercy seat* in Hebrew). (Romans 3:24-25)

Justification and the whole Trinity

The justification of sinners is the work of the Triune God (Romans 8:33).

- Justification by grace reveals the love and sacrifice of the Father; and,
- Justification by Christ reveals the vicarious work of the Son; and,
- Justification by faith reveals the glorious work of the Spirit.

Romans 3:24-26 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Justification by works provides men with proof of claim that one has faith (Ephesians 2:10ff; James 2:14ff)

BY GRACE we mean God's unmerited favor in sending His Son. Grace is not a work in the heart of man that creates righteousness. It is the attitude of God that extends favor and mercy to sinners. It is unmerited and unearned. Grace means being accepted by God even though one's character and behavior falls short of perfection. He justifies the "ungodly," not the godly (Romans 4:5).

BY CHRIST we refer to the substance and character of declared righteousness. His doing and dying satisfies the claims of God's law in order that God could be declared just. In declaring the sinner just, he put his grace on display before the whole world. Justification is

not a standing earned by our imperfect attempts to keep God's law, but the very obedience of Christ to law that is credited to our account.

By means of substitution, our Lord endured the penalty for our sins at the cross, and God imputed to us His righteousness. Thus, justification is NOT something done to us or in us, but a judicial act outside of us and for us.

The Meaning of Sola Fide

By sola fide we mean that men are saved by faith in the accomplishments of Christ AND NOTHING MORE!

By faith we refer to a view -- an understanding of Christ's accomplishments at the cross -- an eye that looks outside of self to Christ as the hope of salvation.

Faith is not meritorious nor is it an ethic in men. It is a view of one's hope in Christ.

Faith is not a virtue in the heart of the pious, but a look -- a hope -- a trust in the Serpent who was lifted upon a tree that we might be healed (John 3:14).

Faith is created in the sinner's heart by the mighty work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. When the gospel is proclaimed, the Spirit opens the eyes of the sinner to see the awe and wonder of God's salvation in Christ.

Sola fide is **not** faith in faith, but faith in the faithfulness of the Son who obeyed God's law perfectly for us (Romans 3:21-22).

Because he was sinless, He died for our sins. Because He was faithful in keeping God's law, His perfect righteousness is given to us who believe so we can have a right standing before God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This righteous is **not** created in us by the Spirit so we can be justified, it is a judicial declaration that we have a right standing in Heaven's Court because we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and understand (stand under) the cross as our hope for salvation (Romans 10:9, 10).

This righteousness is **not** infused into us, it is imputed to our account (Romans 4:5).

This righteousness is not created in us. It is foreign to us; alien to us; and extrinsic to us. ***It is not here on earth or in our hearts, but in heaven recorded with the Clerk of the Court.***

Justification, therefore, is God's verdict of righteousness upon the fallen sinner for the sake of Christ in whom the sinner believes. It is the work God does for the sinner, and not a work the sinner does for God.

Thus, the great mystery of the gospel is that the righteousness that qualifies me to stand before God resides with a Person in Heaven and not in me on earth! Selah.

The grace that justifies is outside of us, wrapped up in the doing and dying of Christ and not inside us. His grace to justify frees us from condemnation, but it does not dissolve our sinful nature.

Change is **not** the grounds of justification. Yes, righteous men have been born again, but the new birth is **not** the basis on which justification is founded. Men are justified, then born again; that is, because they are “declared righteous” in God’s sight, He sends His Spirit to make men born again.

Thus, there is no room for boasting. We declare sola fide, sola Christo, sola gracia, and sola gloria.

5.4 Justification and the Holy Spirit

Titus 3:4-6

Q: Are men made right with God because (A) they change on the inside by the power of the Holy Spirit, of (B) because of the work of Christ outside of them at the cross?

Q: Is the locus of salvation (A) the human heart, or (B) the cross at Calvary?

◆ That early Christianity proclaimed the hope and realization of the Spirit as a tour de force at work in believers cannot be denied.

In the 16 century, the Reformers broke from the subjectivism of the age proclaiming *Sola Fide, Sola Christa, Sola Gratia, Sola Gloria, and Sola Scriptura*.

At the heart of the debate were the nature of justification and the role of Holy Spirit.

The Reformers did not deny the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, but they rejected the idea that justification was based on renewal that took place in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit. They interpreted Titus 3:5 and "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit " as referring to sanctification, not justification; as being "saved" from the power of sin, and not being "saved" from the penalty of sin.

Titus 3:4-6 "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior;"

Justification gives a man a right standing with God due to the work of Christ on the cross; and, it is the Holy Spirit that testifies to the accomplishment of Christ and enables a man to see the One who became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him -- a *hina clause* indicating purpose and not effect.

The Reformers did **not** confuse the regenerating work of the Spirit with justification. To the Reformers justification was a *judicial act of declaring a man right with God* based on his faith in Christ and not a *creative work of making a man righteous*.

Two things were at stake: (1) the glory of God, and (2) the remedy for a troubled conscience.

During the Counter-Reformation, Roman Catholic scholars doubled down on the Roman doctrine that *the regenerative work of the Spirit* was necessary for justification. To the Roman Catholic mind, being right with God meant a break from sin, faith working through love to cleanse the heart and purify the man. The problem, of course, was that the serious Roman Catholic plunged into wretched subjectivism -- an inner preoccupation with his spiritual achievements or lack thereof. Crawling up a mountain on one's bleeding knees became a means of pleasing God and achieving righteousness.

The question became, of course, "how pure do you have to be to be right with God?"

People who followed Roman Catholicism got bogged down in fasting, flagellations, denying the body the eating of meats, duties to prayer, purgations, and the like in order to achieve a purity worthy of being declared righteous by God. The problem was that men could not eradicate the sinful nature. Therefore, adherents to the Roman Catholic position became victims of a screaming conscience. No one seemed to have enough of the Holy Spirit, and no one seemed able to separate themselves from their sinful inclinations.

"God, harden me against myself, the coward with pathetic voice who craves for ease, and rest, and joy. Myself, arch traitor to myself, my hollowest friend, my deadliest foe, my clog whatever road I go." (Amy Carmichael)

Due to the rise of the Charismatic Movement (a prodigy of Roman Catholicism) and a weakening of the Baptist Faith and Message, we must revisit the Reformation and the Doctrine of Justification.

Pentecostal David K. Bernard, in his book, *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Justification*, binds Charismatics to Roman Catholicism and the Doctrines of the Counter-Reformation:

*"The contrast in Romans is not between mental acceptance of teaching and faithful obedience to teaching. Rather, it is between the works of sinful humans to earn salvation and the work of God's Spirit in human hearts, in response to their faith, to affect their salvation. Only the latter is sufficient to bring salvation. From this perspective, **justification is not primarily a legal transaction based on acceptance of propositional truth, but it is a work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who yield to God's grace.**"*

Clearly, Bernard aligns himself with the Roman Catholic Church teaching that justification is based upon the work of the Holy Spirit and not upon sola fide.

Such an error is not easy to untangle because it is delivered to us by preachers in holy garb accompanied by the ringing of bells and the singing of angels.

Unwittingly, Bernard returns us to Rome while turning the Holy Spirit into some kind of antichrist. Thus, his book is heresy, plain and simple.

James Buchanan in his work, *The Doctrine of Justification* (1876), said the following;

"There is, perhaps, no more subtle or plausible error, on the subject of Justification, than that which makes it to rest on the indwelling presence and the gracious work, of the Holy Spirit in the heart . . . nothing can be more unscriptural in itself, or more pernicious to the souls of men, than the substitution of the gracious work of the Spirit in us for us, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God . . . "

What is at stake? "Everything" said Martin Luther: the purity of the gospel, the remedy for sin, correct theology -- theology which is alive, positive, active, and powerful. Whatever is not in harmony with the doctrine of justification in practice or in spirit is NOT Christianity. If wrong here, it must be wrong everywhere.

Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

The beauty of the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith is that it places man's hope of being right with God not in his own, imperfect, incomplete spiritual experiences **but in the perfect work of Christ outside of us on the cross.**

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship has it correct:

"As the disobedience of our first parents resulted in our sharing their sinfulness, so did the obedience of Jesus Christ through his death on the cross result in our justification before God. But, it must be emphasized, his atoning death is only made effective in our lives when we trust in him alone as our Savior (John 14:6). When we believe that Christ's death on the cross was our death to sin, God no longer considers us guilty and deserving of punishment (Romans 3:21-26); instead, he embraces us as his children and as full-fledged citizens of his heavenly kingdom (Philippians 3:20). " ("The Remedy for Sin," July 27, 2017).

God justifies men, **not** based on their cooperation with the spirit in the process of sanctification, but based on the perfect obedience of Christ which is credited (not infused) to their account when they believe.

James Buchanan correctly observes,

*" . . . for if we are justified solely on account of what Christ did and suffered for us, while He was yet on the earth, **we may rest**, with entire confidence **on a work which as been already 'finished'- on a righteousness which has been already wrought out, and already accepted of God on behalf of all who believe in His name** . . . whereas, if we are justified on the ground of the work of the Holy Spirit in us we are called to rest on a work, which, so far from being finished and accepted, is not even begun in the case of any unrenewed sinner; and which when it is begun in the case of a believer, in incipient only, -- often interrupted in its progress by declension and backsliding, marred and defiled by remaining sin, -- obscured and enveloped in doubt by clouds and thick darkness, -- and never perfected in this life, even according to the low stand of a relaxed law, if that law is supposed to require any definite amount of personal holiness and life" (The Doctrine of Justification (1876).*

Each member of the godhead has a specific role in our salvation: The Father loved us . . . and sent His Son to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The Spirit is revealed as "proceeding from the Father," and sent by the Son to testify of Christ and to glorify Him. Buchanan adds,

"The work of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for Justification as the work of Christ, Himself; but it is not necessary for the same reasons nor is it effectual for the same ends," (The Doctrine of Justification (1876).

Q: Can a sinner trust Christ as his Savior without first being touched by the Spirit?

The Spirit leads the sinner to the cross, but the Holy Spirit did not die for our sins. He witnesses to the accomplishment of Another without demanding we confess the Spirit as our Savior. The Spirit is the Agent that unites us to Christ without Whom we cannot be saved. We must not confused either the two persons or their two works. The Spirit leads us to Christ that we might be saved from the penalty of sin (justification), and Christ gives us His Spirit that we might be saved from the dominion of sin (sanctification).

Q: Is justification (A) a making righteous by infusing righteousness into the heart by the Spirit, or (B) a judicial act declaring one righteous in the eyes of the court based on one's faith in the Son?

Justification is primarily a *declaring righteous* and **not** a *making righteous*. Righteousness is imputed to the believer, **not** infused into the believer. If being right with God depends on a man *being made righteous*, we must ask, "How righteous do we have to be to be right with God?"

The Reformers knew they could never achieve the righteousness God required even with the help of the Holy Spirit. How good do you have to be? They understood that mingling the work of the Spirit with the cross would evolve into the most sophisticated works program known to man.

The Reformers found peace when they understood that God declares men righteous when they believe. When men believe, God imputes the righteousness of Christ to their account at the moment of faith (Romans 4). Later, they discover the Spirit opened their eyes and gave them the ability to see.

Justification is completely outside of our experience. It is not something done by us, to us, or in us. It is a judicial act of God that gives a sinful man a right standing with Himself apart from the work of the Spirit which includes regeneration and sanctification.

A man doesn't become pious to be approved of God; because he is approved of God by faith, he seeks to become pious.

While it is true that regeneration follows justification, justification is not dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. Justification is singularly based on the vicarious suffering of the Savior on the cross on our behalf.

We are saved *sola Christo*, i.e., by the doing and dying of Christ, and **not** by mingling our works to live righteously with the perfect work of Christ.

DO NOT hear what is not being said. We are **not** saying the work of the Spirit is of little importance. We value the work of the Spirit who empowers us to break from the grip of sin. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables us to do good works, but those works contribute **nothing** to justification! The Spirit saves us from the power of sin, but not the presence of sin; from the control of sin, but not the condemnation of sin.

The Mediatorial Works of Christ are clearly distinguished from the internal work of the Spirit.

"By the former, all the blessing of salvation were procured; by the latter, all these blessings are effectually applied" (James Buchanan).

While we value the help of the Spirit to be holy in the process of sanctification, we cling to the fact that Christ was perfectly holy on our behalf as our Representative before the Throne.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

The verb "**being justified**" is an aorist participle – a fact and not an on-going process. But, "we have peace" is a present, active indicative verb indicating that peace with God is continual benefit of faith.

Consequently, we insist on the Biblical fact that justification is *a declaring righteous*, and **not** *a making righteous*. We do **not** base justification upon regeneration or confuse justification with sanctification. Those who insist the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary for justification have a different gospel that deserves Paul's condemnation of *anathema* (Galatian 1:8).

Sola fide! Sola Christo! Sola Gratia! Sola Gloria!

How Pentecostalism Nullifies Justification

The central premise of the Pentecostal Movement is that the baptism or filling of the Spirit is an experiential second blessing which follows conversion.

But, what saith Scripture?

Romans 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

Justification is the ultimate blessings of the gospel. It is an objective judicial decision by Heaven's Court declaring a man righteous and treating him as such when he believes the gospel.

It is **not** something that happen in us, to us, or by us. It is an act of God that qualifies a man to receive His Spirit.

The baptism of the Spirit is an objective act outside the experience of the believer wherein the Spirit "baptizes" (places) a man into the history of Christ to share in the benefits of His victory (Romans 6:1-6).

The word "baptism" seemly means "to place into." It is an objective, unseen act of the Third Person of the Trinity. The idea is that the Spirit identifies the man with Christ in such a way he able to participate in the benefits of his historical accomplishments including, but not limited to, the Spirit's residence within the believer. Thus, the Baptism of the Spirit is likewise an act of God and **not** A SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE!

Pentecostals, however, presume the "baptism of the spirit" as a touch-feely experience within the life of the believer additional to conversion that is determined by the believer's willingness "to let go" or "to absolutely surrender to the Spirit," or "to be totally emptied of self" or to have a "heightened inner awareness that the body's energy fades away and the person collapses to the floor" (Margaret Poloma).

First, this Pentecostal / Charismatic post-conversion baptism of the Spirit implies that God's act of justification is not sufficient to produce an infilling of the Spirit in the life of a new convert.

If God's gift of righteousness is not sufficient to qualify the new believer for the baptism of the Spirit, what else is?

When Paul met certain people at Ephesus who claimed to be followers of Apollos, he asked, "*Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed and were justified?*" (Acts 19:2).

If Paul asked us, "*Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed and were justified?*" and, we said "No", Paul would reply, "Then you are not saved (justified)." He would not give us instructions on the "higher life" or "how to be filled with the Spirit." He would take us back to the fundamentals of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-12).

Second, the Pentecostal teaching implies that the Charismatic ecstatic experience of being "baptized" is something greater than justification.

Luther believed justification was the chief jewel of gospel blessings, but Pentecostals feel that their ecstatic "second blessings" is greater than conversion, greater than justification, and greater than being declared righteous in the sight of God.

Q: How can the ultimate standing of being justified by faith be superseded by a sensual, emotional experience?

Like the ocean that surrounds a little shell is greater than the water in the shell, the *grace above us* is always greater than the *grace in us*.

The Spirit is the earnest given as assurance of full blessings to come. But, in listening to Pentecostals, you get the idea that the down payment is greater than the kingdom blessings to come.

Third, Pentecostalism presents an unfortunate dichotomy between receiving Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit.

These preachers leave us with the impression the Holy Spirit gives greater and more substantial blessings than the risen Christ; that Christ gives us stones while the Spirit gives us diamonds.

Since all the wisdom and power of God is given to Christ, to possess Christ is to possess the full inheritance of the Godhead. Amen! Thus, the gospel of salvation in Christ is the full gospel. Amen! Everything else preachers offer besides Christ is pixie dust from Never, Never Land.

Fourth, Pentecostals divide the body of Christ.

In the mind of Pentecostals, there are "carnal Christians" (non-Charismatics) and "spirit-filled Christians" (Pentecostals and Charismatics).

But, there are **not** two classes of citizens in the kingdom of God. There is only one class of citizens in this spiritual nation - those who believe in "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). Moreover, carnality has to do with one's thinking, not one's nature. Those "in the flesh" are non-Christians; those "in the Spirit" refer to Christians. All Christians are in the Spirit though many think carnally. See the two classes of humanity in Romans 8:1-16.

The Bible teaches that Christian baptism is the baptism of the Father, the baptism of the Son, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

In proposing another baptism, the Pentecostals not only preach a false gospel, but divide the body of Christ into the "Haves" and the "Have nots."

Such a false teaching is "**another gospel**" that nullifies the doctrine of justification and not the one preached by the apostles. This serious perversion of the gospel demands we shout "anathema" (Galatians 1:5-6). It is a false gospel.

Thus, the pious while seeking holiness do not confuse justification with sanctification. They pursue piety knowing they are accepted because of the doing and dying of Jesus for them at the cross.

5.5 A Theology of Sanctification

1 Corinthians 6:11

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Definition

♦ The verb "**sanctify**" (*hagiazō*) means "to make holy" or "to set apart." The noun *hagiasmos* is the Greek word for "sanctification." To be holy is to be separated and devoted to God (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

Holiness is renewing the whole man in the image of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:4ff For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication..

1 Thessalonians 4:7. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Extensions of Sanctification

Sanctification is also a pre-conversion work of the Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). Every person who believes in Christ, comes to Him because the Spirit has plowed the field of the heart making it ready to receive the seed of life. Sanctification is a present completed state at which men enter through faith (Acts 26:18). The term "sanctified" is a perfect, passive participle indicating that once a person places their faith in Christ, they are sanctified; i.e., sanctification is the immediate result of faith. It is a positional truth.

Sanctification is also an unfinished work because the believer is called to presently, continually separate himself from evil (1 Thessalonians 4:3). It is the present will of God for every believer. He is not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2) nor to his former lusts (1 Peter 1:14). The Greek participle “conforming” (*suschmatizo, menoi*) is in the present tense indicating the immediate need to resist former lusts that pull and tug at the heart.

Meaning of the word “holy.”

Theisson (1992):

God is absolutely separate from and exalted above all his creatures . . . separate from all moral evil . . . the perfection of God in all that he is . . . (p. 84).

Hodge (1992):

This is a general term for the moral excellence of God (I Samuel 2:2).

New Bible Dictionary (1987)

Holiness is not so much a relation of the creature to the Creator as of the Creator to the creature . . . it is the holiness of God that underlines that separation of life and distinctiveness of character that belong to God’s people . . . It is basically a term for the moral excellence of God and his freedom from all limitation in his moral perfection (p. 487).

Unger’s Bible Dictionary (Unger, 1980 edition):

By the holiness of God, it is not implied that he is subject to some law or standard of moral excellence external to himself, but that all moral law and perfection have their external and unchangeable basis in his own nature (p. 494).

Stockton:

When the Scripture says God is holy, it seeks to communicate at least three facts about God: (a) that God is independent and absolute, not being subject to any law or principle outside Himself; that is, He is the standard of all that is good. His law defines what is good; (b) that God is so transcendent in his position, so exalted in supremacy, so pure in His perfection, so luminous in His glory, so flawless in his character that He is in a state of such pure perfection the best of men are not able to approach Him. The strongest among us is completely disqualified from seeing the pure light of his presence. Coming in contact with such purity of holiness insures their destruction if possible to do so; and (c) that God is gloriously pure and perfect: that is, He is unsoiled, unspotted, unblemished, unadulterated, untainted, and uncontaminated by evil.

Illustrations of Holiness

A high voltage wire: God is like a high voltage wire, that if a man (who is grounded) would seek to grasp with his bare hands, he would be burned to a crisp. Like men are unable to seize high voltage wires without being burnt to a crisp, to be in God's presence for a single second would result in immediate destruction.

Light: Light, according to Einstein's theory, is so constant in the universe, that any attempt to alter light would change the structure of every existing thing.

Holiness and Men

Things and people can be made holy; that is, they can be *set apart* for a special use of God. What is given as an act of devotion must be *clean* and *noble*. For example, housewives often set apart beautiful plates for display on a living room wall. The plates are set apart from everyday eating utensils. Things dedicated to God, whether people or things, must be separated from the common and the corrupt for a spiritual use.

Jonathan Edwards said: "I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ. The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness." (Quoted by E.M. Bounds, 1913).

The Standard of Holiness

God Himself is the standard of holiness (Leviticus 11:44, 45). The measuring stick of what is right or wrong is neither how we feel nor what other men may do or say. "Everybody is doing it" is not the standard for man's behavior. Rather, God's law is the objective standard of what is good, what is right, what is normal; and, Christ is the subjective standard of holiness.

Leviticus 20:26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy.

1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

The verb "so be ye holy" is an aorist, passive, imperative. The passive informs us that we must cooperate with the Spirit who leads us to be holy. The aorist imperative demands that we initiate the process at once. The standard for all our actions and behavior is the character of God as revealed by His Commands. Note that holiness begins in the home (Leviticus 19:2-3). The command to "be holy" is followed by a series of commands in Leviticus; that is obedience to God's law is the means to holiness. Sanctification is in obedience to law and the exercise of grace to our fellow man.

Tattoos are the product of an idolatrous spirit and are the exact opposite of God's holy calling (Leviticus 19:2, 28).

Scope of Holiness

Holiness includes the setting apart of man's spirit, soul, and body for God's use. God is interested in the sanctity of our minds, emotions, thoughts, desires, intentions, hopes, dreams, actions, and including flesh and skin. Offering up of one's body as an instrument of holiness is a most difficult challenge for believers. We are physical beings in a material world. Christians have not been comfortable pursuing holiness in a body full of fleshly desires. Christians resorted to all kinds of deprivations in the pursuit of spirituality. But, these mortifications have never been effective or lasting. Neither a weak mind nor a weak body make a strong spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and (I pray God) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Effects of Holiness

Holiness touches our habits, our character, our thoughts, our speech, and our relationships.

James 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

Duration of Holiness

Holiness is only relevant to this life.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Value of Holiness

Holiness cannot save us, but it can beautify us. Holiness is esthetic, not meritorious; i.e., it does not add to our salvation, but it does demonstrate and verify salvation. Holiness is not accomplished through psychological therapy, or rejecting the material world, or poverty, or employment of a set of spiritual gymnastics. Holiness is accomplished by fellowship with the Savior. ***Holiness is not achieved by looking inside to discover our imperfections, but by looking outside of ourselves to discover the perfections of Christ.***

*2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face **beholding** as in a glass **the glory of the Lord**, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Necessity of Holiness

Holiness is a benefit, an effect of our salvation.

Hebrews 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Agent of Holiness

The fruit of holiness is produced by the Holy Spirit but it also takes the effort of Christians; that is, holiness involves the work of the Spirit as well as the cooperation of men (Romans 15:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

Human Factors in Holiness

Unlike justification, holiness is **not** substitutionary. Man must participate in the process by obedience to God's laws.

In salvation, *God does it all*. Men are brought into a right relationship with God, not by obedience to law, but by the obedience of faith—faith in Christ.

In sanctification, however, believers are called *to cooperate with God in the sanctification process*. While it is true man can do nothing to earn salvation, there is much he can do to develop sanctification. Holiness is not achieved by surrender alone. We are **not** called "to let go and let God;" that is, "let go" and plunge in to wretched subjectivism. Rather, sanctification demands that believers "trust and obey."

1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers (resident aliens) and pilgrims (temporary travelers), abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

Means of Holiness

Holiness is accomplished by interacting with the truth. Man is **not** sanctified by archaeological journeys into one's past or by psychotherapy or just by "making the right choice." Sanctification comes when the believer seriously interacts with the Word of God, believes it, and obeys it. Obedience is the means; law is the objective. We live in a twisted, sinful world, sin within and sin without, and life involves choices between good and evil,

between the good and the greater good, between a lesser evil and the greater evil. Only by a devotion to truth and the discovery of truth can any man hope to be holy.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; Thy Word is truth.

Fruits of Holiness

Holiness produces good works in and through us. But, what is good? Only God has the authority to define “good.” When man defines “good,” man protects sins and redefines crime in relation to the State; e.g., terms like “therapeutic abortion” disguise the murder of innocent, unborn children. The subjunctive verb in the following verse holds out the possibility of being fully qualified to serve. The Word of God is totally sufficient to equip men to live holy lives. Christians do not need “self-help” books or psychotherapy. They need God’s Word. It is good to love. Love is a fruit of holiness, but indiscriminating love is a product of the poisonous tree.

2 Timothy 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Psalms 119:6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

Psalms 119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Standards of Holiness

Holiness is epitomized in one standard, one model, one paradigm: Christ. Our Sovereign is the subjective standard of holiness; i.e., the visible, tangible, historical example of what it means to be devoted to the Father. The law, on the other hand, is the objective practice of those devoted to God.

1 Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

Ephesians 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Colossians 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Foundation of Holiness

Holiness can **only** be built upon justification. While justification contains holiness, holiness does not contain justification. *Only just men can practice true holiness.* Pure law points to sanctification, but does not supply the means of sanctification; but grace contains sanctification.

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Walking Towards Holiness

Holiness is a life style and can be achieved in part by the following:

Know the facts of the gospel (Romans 6:1-9): Knowledge of what God has done for us in Christ is a prerequisite for maturity. There is a tendency today to deemphasize knowledge as something “heady” and unnecessary. Nothing can be further from the truth as the following verses attest

Romans 10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Romans 15:14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

*Ephesians 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the **knowledge** of him:*

*Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:*

*Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in **knowledge** and in all judgment;*

*Philippians 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the **knowledge** of Christ Jesus my Lord:*

*Colossians 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the **knowledge** of God;*

Reckon the facts as true because they are true (Romans 6:6-13). The term *reckon* is a mental term meaning “to count as true.” The first command in Romans is to act on the knowledge that one is justified, regenerated, identified with Christ, and alive to God.

Resist sin and yield your body to God (Romans 6:6-14). By standing on one's position in Christ, the believer now has the power to resist sin. The second duty next to reckoning is to put up a fight. Begin to resist sin's inroads, temptations, and charms.

Avoid legalism as the means to holiness (Romans 6:14). Legalism is not the same as obedience to God or perseverance in moral principle. Legalism is looking to daily works as meritorious, something to commend one to God. There is always a temptation to judge our relationship to God based on our performance in time rather than upon the accomplishments of Christ for eternity. Legalism is proud. Resting in God's justification produces humility.

Be filled with God's Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The command "be being filled" with the Spirit is the key to sanctification. Sanctification comes from a combination of the believer's submission to the Spirit as well as the Spirit's infused power. When a man believes, he is graciously given the Holy Spirit as a gift of grace. Thus, grace supplies the means and power for being holy. Man is not left alone to struggle in his own weak way to be holy. To be filled with the Spirit (subjectively) is to be filled with the Word objectively (Colossians 3:15-16).

Walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:18ff). This verse means "to keep on keeping on keeping in step with the Spirit." Pictured here is the believer as a soldier marching in step with the commands of a drill sergeant; that is, the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth, to obedience to the law of God—the law as opposed to inward journeys, self-originating impulse, wretched subjectivism, and antinomianism.

Obey the Lord (Romans 6:16). Sanctification is not substitutionary. It demands positive obedience, an act of the will by the believer.

Preach against sin (Isaiah 58:1): Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins.

Righteousness by Faith and Sanctification (Romans 1:17)

Two problems exist: (a) a failure to separate root and fruit; to separate justification and sanctification, and (b) a failure to link faith-righteousness with holiness. Luther broke the synthesis by putting the righteousness of faith outside of men. He called it *passive righteousness*--a heavenly reality. He called earthly righteousness *active righteousness*. Rome included righteousness in holiness: the Reformers included holiness in righteousness. Rome included justification in sanctification; the reformers included sanctification in justification (Brinsmead).

Justification is *sola fide*, but not so with sanctification. The righteousness by faith is vicarious righteousness completely outside the believer. It is entirely outside the believer's experience. One ruins faith-righteousness by mingling it with the necessity of obedience for holiness. One cannot add to the finished work of Christ upon which justification rests, but one can add to unfinished work of the Spirit upon whom sanctification is dependent. Sanctification includes human responsibility; justification does not. Sanctification depends

on the continuous work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer; justification depends on the completed work of Christ in history at Calvary.

The *passive* work of justification is based on the active *substitutionary* work of Christ; *active* sanctification requires the believer's cooperative *participation* in the Spirit's objective for holiness.

Sanctification involves man purifying himself (1 John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1). God does not act upon man as if he were only a machine. He does not live in the believer in such a way that He does the obeying *for* him. Sanctification is not substitutionary. To "let go and let God" is not Scriptural!

"To confuse (fuse) the action of God and the action of the believer is actually a form of pantheism" (Brimsmead)

To inject sanctification into justification is pantheism. When we say, "God is all that is" or that "Justification and sanctification are one in the same," we plunge into theological pantheism. If sanctification is fused into justification, then we are partly saved by Christ and partly saved by the Holy Spirit; partly saved by Christ's obedience, and partly saved by our own obedience; partly saved by His works; partly saved by our works.

The problem with this view is that it truncates the gospel. It weakens the gospel by adding man's works to that of Calvary. It lacks power to save and to save completely.

Warren Wiersbe says...

"Do not confuse justification and sanctification. Sanctification is the process whereby God makes the believer more and more like Christ. Sanctification may change from day to day. Justification never changes. When the sinner trusts Christ, God declares him righteous, and that declaration will never be repealed." (Warren Wiersbe, *W: Bible Exposition Commentary*. 1989. Victor)

A healthy saint believes that he was so sick he could only be made whole in Christ. The best saint believes he is so sinful, that he can add nothing to the work of Christ; when saved, he believes the gospel is so powerful, that he can be delivered from the strength of sin. The life of the Age to Come has broken into history in the person and work of Christ. The eschatological creation has been planted in the life of the believer. The blessings of the covenant have been secured. ***The life of the kingdom has been planted into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, not to justify us, but to beautify us; not to save us from the penalty of sin, but to sanctify us in relationship to the power of sin.***

All the blessings of the Age to Come was won for humanity in Christ and are available to be enjoyed now by the believer who walks by faith in obedience to God's Law-word—the obedience of faith for justification, and obedience to the Holy Spirit for sanctification.

The Nature of Holiness

- Holiness does **not** secure salvation, but it does enhance our fellowship.

- Holiness is inherent to justification; but justification is **not** included in holiness.
- Holiness is a highway upon which only believers have a right to travel. A person who has not entered into the gate of justification has no power to walk on the highway of holiness.
- One is **not** saved by holiness, but they are saved to it. They are not saved by it, but they cannot be saved without it.
- Holiness is won by those with life; justification is a gift to those who are dead.
- Obedience to law is a product of sanctification; justification is a product of Christ's obedience to law.

Facts on Holiness

Holiness is eschatological: Since justification is an eschatological gift of the Age to Come and holiness is contained in it, then sanctification is the beginning of glorification now.

Holiness is a now/not-yet concept: Sanctification has begun now; it will be completed later--the not/yet of glorification. It is the first fruits of glory. Since the Holy Spirit is the gift of the eschatological age, and we have the Holy Spirit; then we participate in the work of the Age to Come now in advance of its cataclysmic entrance into history. Holiness is the fruit of the present work of the eschatological Spirit. Just as the Spirit will transform the dead in the Age to Come, He has begun transforming corruption into incorruption (spiritually) now in this present evil age. Since holiness is the beginning of eternal life, and eternal life is a gift of the Age to Come, then we enjoy the first fruits of the eschatological age now by participating in the call to be holy.

Holiness is for beautification, not justification. It does not save the soul, but it does beautify the whole man.

Holiness is holistic: Just as salvation includes the whole of man; sanctification includes the whole man: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). All work and labor, therefore, is to be considered a sacred matter.

Holiness is practical conformity to law: While man's obedience to law does not contribute to justification, obedience to God's law contributes to the sanctification of the man.

Holiness is temporal: It begins now, but will become completed at the resurrection from the dead.

Holiness is communal: It not only involves the individual, but the whole community of God's people: "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

Holiness is not racial: God wants all his children, rich and poor, black or white, European or Brazilian, male or female to be conformed to His image. God's law is not parochial, it transcends race, sex, age, status, and culture.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Justification v. Sanctification

SUBJECT	JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
Need	A right standing with God as Judge (cleansing)	A right walk with God as a Father
Category	A legal term	A moral term
Time	Eschatological (futuristic)	Temporal (This life)
Nature	Judicial (legal rights)	Esthetic (beautifies us)
Meaning	To declare righteous	To be made righteous
Necessity	The Obedience of Christ	Man's obedience
Agent	Christ	Spirit
Basis	Substitutionary	Participatory
Qualifies	The believer for heaven	A believer for service
Guarantees	Eternal relationship	Present fellowship
Means	By Faith	By obedience
Cleansing	By blood	By the Word of God

Result	Peace with God	Peace of God
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The Meaning of “Wash” in John 13

At the Last Supper (John 13), Jesus arose from the triclinium, and washed the feet of his disciples. His act was not only one of great humility, great hospitality, and great teaching. It not only instructed the twelve to love and to serve, but it taught a great lesson on sanctification. The disciples were clean because of their faith in Christ, but they needed to perfect that cleansing in order to have continual fellowship with their Savior and Lord. The washing of the disciple’s feet is a lesson on sanctification and the necessity of perfecting holiness.

Greek	LOUO	NIPTO
Verse	verse 10	verse 8
English	bathe or washed	wash or washed
Contextual Meaning	A complete Mikvah (bath)	Feet washing only
Theological Meaning	Justification	Sanctification
Practical Application	Trust Christ for relationship.	Confess and judge sin to maintain fellowship.

Common Errors Surrounding Sanctification

Errors regarding holiness abound with just men plunging into impulsive, self-driven rituals and carnal men plunging into wretched subjectivism such as flaming tongues, holy laughter, and vigorous spiritual projections.

These errors include the following:

- Beliefs that applications of law expired with the Old Testament dispensation; and,
- Beliefs that God’s law only applies to Christian men and not the State; and,

- Beliefs that grace is opposite of law; and, that that the opposite of law is grace.
- Beliefs that obedience to God's law is legalistic, formal, and unrelated to life under grace; and,
- Beliefs that restrict holiness to private piety to the exclusion of public duty; and,
- Beliefs in psychology, introspection, and archaeological journeys into one's past; and,
- Beliefs that sanctification is associated with emotional binges as in the Pentecostal Movement; and,
- Beliefs that sanctification involves wild, spiritual gymnastics that prove the existence of God; and,
- Beliefs that seek spiritual experiences apart from the guidelines of law; and,
- Beliefs that judging actions and behavior as sinful are opposed to true spirituality; and,
- Beliefs that result in irrational behavior motivated by a G-d experiences; and,
- Beliefs that non-discriminating love is acceptable spirituality; and,
- Beliefs in radical antinomianism; and,
- Beliefs in radical re-installment of Judaism and the practice of Jewish customs; and,
- Beliefs in man-made good works; .i.e., good as defined by modern, humanistic man; and,
- Beliefs that that redefine godliness to include same-sex marriages; and,
- Beliefs that create a dualism that rejects the world, the material, and the body in order to achieve a higher spirituality.

In Summary, holiness is a path of obedience to God's law. While obedience does not save the man, obedience does sanctify the man. Being holy is no easy task as there are many pseudo-religious paths to holiness including but not limited to antinomianism, wretched subjectivism, tongues, impulsive self-devised devotion, dualism that separates the physical from the spiritual, inward journeys by means of psychological models, hyper-sensationalism, ritual church practices, and self-imposes spiritual gymnastics. Holy people obey, but are not self-righteous. Holy people love, but not indiscriminately. Holy people are good as God defines goodness.

5.6 The Reckoning that Counts

Romans 6:1-11

Your Identification with Christ

◆ Romans 6 is perhaps the most important chapter you need to study in order to live a holy life.

This passage must be thoughtfully considered, examined, studied, and investigated, and not hastily read!

You can be a victorious Christian by grasping what it means to be identified with the Christ in Romans 6 . . .

and if you fail to comprehend the wonder of your union with Christ you will be trapped into an Armenian performance-based way of living.

PART I

Who are You: Sinner of Saint?

The Question. “Who am I?” has been touted as one of the most fundamental questions of man. Even more difficult is the question, “What is a Christian, saint or sinner?”

Some preachers want Christians to know that they are sinners through and through.

Every week these poor Christians endure loud, pulpit pounding diatribes against sin. “I am just a sinner saved by grace,” says another. A well-meaning saint touts, “I am just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” Others want us to know that God saves sinners, but not completely. “We have two natures, an evil nature and a good nature,” they say. “You have a white dog and a black dog living in side you. Whichever one you feed the most wins.”

The doctrine of the “two-natures” the believer has created more problems than it solves. Further, it has a tendency to produce introspective spiritual schizophrenics— Christians that see themselves as a Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde. No wonder Christians are so defeated. They do not know who they are!

Furthermore, we hear phrases like “self is on the throne,” “crucify the flesh,” or “you must die to self” as if “self” is an ugly beast living inside the Christian’s black, sin-stained heart.

Another challenge is the phrase “positional truth.” What is meant by *positional truth*? Positional truth was strongly advanced by the dispensationalist, Keswick mystic, Miles Standford, who sought to counter the legalizing of the gospel and the pseudo spiritual

Charismatic Movement. His focus on “Christ crucified” was honorable. But, there is an upside and a downside to this view.

The upside is that positional truth takes a high view of Christ and the believer’s identification with His history by faith.

The downside is the language used is a transcendental mixture of sense and nonsense. This view advances the idea that you are “righteous positionally” but “sinful conditionally.” It sounds like double-talk: “It’s really not true, but you need to believe it is true anyway.” This kind of rhetoric has confused many sincere seekers of truth—at least on the subject of sanctification.

Consider this supposition: a regenerated man has only one nature, a righteous nature with a powerful desire to please God.

Every statement in the New Testament about the nature of Christian is extremely positive. God’s Word calls Christians “saints” (1Corinthians 1:2), “new creations” (2 Corinthians 5:17), “children of God” (Ephesians 5:1-3), “sons of God” (1John 3:1), “children of light” (Ephesians 5:8), “in the Spirit” (Romans 8:9), and a “sweet fragrance of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:15).

While a believer may have “carnal thinking” (2 Corinthians 3), he cannot have a carnal constitution. All believers are declared to be “in the Spirit(1)” constitutionally and all non-believers are declared to be “in the flesh(2)” constitutionally (Romans 8:9Ro).

You can soar with the eagles in the clouds of righteous by “counting as true” your identification with Christ as taught in Romans 6.

Two Dynasties

Paul discussed the history of **two dynasties(3)** (Romans 5:12-21). The *Dynasty of Adam* which is characterized by the reign of sin, law, condemnation, and death; and, the *Dynasty of Christ* which is characterized by obedience, grace, justification, and life. There are two races of men, those *in Adam* and those *in Christ*. Christians are said to be “in Christ.” In Christ, the Christian is justified(4) (5:1), regenerated(5) (5:5), reconciled(6) (5:10) identified with his glorious history (6:3-5), adopted (8:13-16), and glorified (8:30).

Dead to Sin

In the book "Born Crucified" by L. E. Maxwell, he tells this story:

"During the Civil War a man by the name of George Wyatt was drawn by lot to go to the front. He had a wife and six children. A young man named Richard Pratt offered to go in his stead. He was accepted and joined the ranks, bearing the name and number of George Wyatt. Before long Pratt was killed in action. The authorities later sought again to draft George Wyatt into service. He protested, entering the plea that he had died in the person of Pratt. He insisted that the authorities consult their own records as to the fact of his having died

in identification with Pratt, his substitute. Wyatt was thereby exempted as beyond the claims of law and further service. He had died in the person of his representative. There we have the truth of identification in a nutshell. God's way of deliverance is through death--through identification with our Substitute in His death and resurrection."

Believers are born crucified legally and no longer obligated to respond to sin's beckon and call. They are no longer in sin's jurisdiction and do not have to respond when drafted!

But, it is more than this. You have been "born again" and your spirit, the essence of who you are, no longer wants to sin. You are in Christ, and Christ is in you. You identified with Christ, and in a spiritual sense, you are still born to sin.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith (faithfulness) of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

F. J. Huegel, in *Bone of His Bone*, rightly summarizes our failure thus:

"We have been proceeding upon a false basis. We have conceived of the Christian life as an imitation of Christ. It is not an imitation of Christ. It is a participation of Christ."

Paul declares that Christians are dead to sin: "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (6:2). The answer to Paul's question is, "It is impossible!" This is like asking, "How shall they who died in New York City still be walking around alive in New York City?" This too is impossible.

The word "dead" is an aorist Greek tense indicating that the Christian died to sin at some time in his past. It is a completed action. By "dead," Paul means "unresponsive," "cut off," "unable to respond."

"Shall live" is a future tense implying that a future relationship with sin is impossible. The *work of redemption* has set the Christian free from the power of sin.

This is not just "positional truth!" He really is free!

A transformation occurs in the believer's internal constitution when he is united to Christ. When God regenerates a man, he changes the man in such a way that His "new creation" is unresponsive to sin; that is, the seed(7) of Almighty God is in him so that he does not want to sin. Paul is not saying believers cannot sin. What he saying is that the believer's identification with Christ grants him benefits that make it possible for him to live a genuine righteous life.

If we regard the doctrine of perfection a heresy, then we must regard contentment with sinful imperfection a greater heresy.

Consider the wise words of Dr. A. J. Gordon:

"Divine truth as revealed in Scripture seems often to lie between two extremes. If we regard the doctrine of sinless perfection as a heresy, we regard contentment with sinful imperfection as a greater heresy. And we gravely fear that many Christians make the apostle's words, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," the unconscious justification for a low standard of Christian living. It were almost better for one to overstate the possibilities of sanctification in his eager grasp after holiness, than to understate them in his complacent satisfaction with a traditional unholiness. Certainly it is not an edifying spectacle to see a Christian worldling throwing stones at a Christian perfectionist."

But what saith the Scripture? "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid" (Romans 6:1-2).

The believer is born again . . . but not all of him is born again. Sin still dwells within the body . . . but, the regenerated spirit is under no obligations to obey the flesh.

Baptism

Paul declares that the Christian is "baptized into" the history of Christ; i.e., the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (6:3-4). The word "baptize" is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*. It is an aorist indicating completed action. It simply means, "to be placed into."

The believer is "placed into" Christ and identified with his victorious history so completely that he is said to be "dead unto sin."

This baptism is not water baptism, but an operation of the Spirit whereby He takes the believer out of the Dynasty of Adam to place him into the Dynasty of Christ. This happens at the moment of conversion.

An illustration may be helpful. When an immigrant leaves his country of origin and becomes a United States citizen, he no longer has a duty to his mother country. Further, all the benefits of being an American are now his. He is dead to his motherland, but alive to his new country. Being physically present in America and having legal status as an American Citizen, he can now enjoy a new life.

This act of "placing" a believer into Christ's victorious history is effective and efficient in two ways: (a) positively, the believer is radically identified with the virtues of Christ's accomplishments; i.e., he is permanently alive to God (Romans 6:11); and negatively, (b) the believer is permanently dead to sin, i.e., completely severed from sin (*harmatia*) (Romans 6:1-2).

The Literary "We"

Who or what does Paul mean by "we?"

By “we,” Paul means “we Christians.” It is a literary “we,” a narrative of inclusion because of Christian brotherhood. But this is not just a broad generalization. Paul intended the individual to personalize this truth. “I” am baptized into Christ and “I” am dead to sin! That is, because “YOU” (singular) have been baptized into Christ, “YOU” are dead to sin!

By “YOU” (or “we”) Paul does not mean “the physical body” or “the body of sin” referred to in verse six. By “YOU,” Paul means the *essence of your being*, the *inner-most “YOU,”* the *core of your being*, *your living born-again soul*, *your inner matrix* or that part of your personality that is truly “YOU!” “YOU” have been taken out of Adam and placed into Christ.

This baptism is radical identification with Christ.

“YOU,” the essence of who you are as a regenerated being, has been so completely identified with Christ so that “YOU” are “dead to sin and alive to God.” What was true of you in Adam is no longer true of “YOU” in Christ. What is true of Christ is now true of “YOU.” Since Christ rose again, He is not impacted by sin and death. Since “YOU” share in the virtues of his history by radical identification with Him, “YOU” are “dead to sin and alive to God.”

Another illustration may be helpful. When a man gets married, he is no longer single, he is a married man (lawfully); but, he may struggle for weeks or months because he still thinks like a single man. But, in time, his mind will adjust to his new legal status and accept the role of husband in the marriage . . . and if he doesn’t I’m sure the little wife will have a tactic or two to remind him of his change in status.

Likewise, with Christ! At one time the unsaved man lived like a man in Adam doing what the sons of Adam do (sin), but upon his conversion to Christ, his legal status changed. He is no longer in Adam, but “married” to Christ. The sooner he stops thinking like a man in Adam and starts thinking like a man in Christ, the more positive his Christian experience will be, and the more he will take on family characteristics.

Destruction of the Body of Sin

There is a reason for this radical identification with the history of Christ as indicated by the purpose clause in verse 6, “in order that” (*hina* clause) “the body of sin might be destroyed.” It is important to correctly identify the terms here. “The body of sin” is not the “sin nature” as the Kewicks taught. It is not “the sin principle” at work with in us. The “body of sin” refers to the physical body (*soma*). Your soma is your body, your members(8), that physical, flesh and blood, mental and emotional part of you which is unregenerated and unaffected by conversion. While “YOU” are a “new creation,” your body (*soma*) is still part of the old creation. Your body is still subject to being an instrument of sin(9).

The subjunctive verb, “destroyed” (*katargeo*), does not mean “annihilated.” *Katargeo* means “to render inoperative” or “to make unemployed” or “to put out of business.”

In using the subjunctive, Paul is pointing out the real possibility of reducing the power of the body (*soma*) over the soul.

Now who is the “old man” (ὁ παλαιός) of verse six?

The “old man” is **not** the sinful nature. It is **not** the sin principle at work in the believer. It is **not** “self.” *The “old man” is all that you were in the Dynasty of Adam apart from the Dynasty of Christ.* It is your old identity, your old standing in fallen humanity, the sinful, unregenerated you under the power of *harmatia* before “YOU” were “placed into” Christ.

Let us put it together. When you placed your faith in Christ, the Spirit took “YOU,” the essence of your being, and identified “YOU” with the virtues of Christ’s accomplishments so that “YOU” are constitutionally regenerated, connected with God, and disconnected from the power of sin. Though the born-again “YOU” is still living in an unregenerated body that is capable of being used as an instrument of sin, YOU are righteous by nature and capable of taking charge of your body in such a way as to discharge it for the Savior’s use.

Note that in Romans 12:1, Paul does **not** ask the believer to surrender himself (the “YOU”), but to place his “body” on the altar of service. “YOU” are already surrendered. “YOU” want to please God and to serve him. “YOU” want to do what is right, but “the body,” the unregenerated part of your constitution needs to be commandeered and inducted into service by an act of your will.

It is true that justification is inefficient and positional.

The Keswicks were correct. Justification is legal and forensic in nature. One’s status before God changes from condemned to justified!! But, justification is not the same action as being “born again,” nor does justification transform the character of a man. But, regeneration combined with the “baptism” of the Spirit is efficient resulting in a change in one’s spiritual constitution.

Paul asserts his proposition once more, “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (6:7). The “he” is the “YOU” we have been talking about. Because of YOUR radical identification with Christ the regenerated “YOU” is “dead,” and therefore, “freed from” the reign of sin.

Let’s look at another illustration. Have you seen the movie, “Shawshank Redemption?” Do you remember the scene when Red was out of prison and started working in the grocery store? In this scene, Red politely asks permission to use the boy’s room, but his boss reminds him that he is free and that he no longer has to ask permission to service his human needs. Red, though free, still thought like a prisoner. In time, however, he adjusted and used his freedom to find Andy and to start a new life. The same is true of a Christian. He has been freed from sin, but he may still think like a prisoner. A little reflection of the Christian's change in status will empower him to think like a free man.

PART II

Paul continues, “*Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him*” (Romans 6:8). Paul restates his proposition that if “YOU” are radically identified with His death, then “YOU” are radically identified with His life. His life now reigns in “YOU” and through “YOU.”

A bottle can be in the ocean, and the ocean can be in the bottle. “YOU” are in Christ(10) and Christ is in “YOU.”

In verses 9 and 10, Paul rehearses the history of Christ. Having died, he died unto sin once. Having been raised from the dead, He has a perpetual, living relationship with the Father. Likewise, if “YOU” are connected to Christ, “YOU” are dead to sin, and “YOU” are permanently connected to God!

The First Command for the New Christian

Reckoning

In verse 11, we come to the **First Command** in the Book of Romans . . . and, perhaps **the MOST IMPORTANT COMMAND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**.

The reason Christians have so little victory in their Christian life is because they do not understand or grasp the importance of the first command in the book. If they don't know it, they can't obey it. If they don't obey it, they will live in chaos and confusion thinking like a son of Adam.

“Reckon yourself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God” is the first command in Romans.

“Reckon” (logizomai) is a frequently used word in Romans four and it means “to think,” “to compute,” “to credit,” “to act on,” “to calculate,” and “to weigh carefully.”

Reckoning is a mental operation! The believer is not asked to do anything . . . but to think correctly! The command appeals to the new “YOU” who is created in righteousness.

Paul is saying that since “YOU” are regenerated and identified with Christ, “YOU” are dead, cut off, severed from sin, and “YOU” are “alive to God.” “YOU” are connected to a vital, dynamic living relationship with your Heavenly Father. Therefore, **START THINKING THIS WAY!**

Stop thinking that you are just a sinner saved by grace! Stop thinking that you are a “sinner” struggling to do the impossible! Stop thinking like a beggar! Stop thinking like a spiritual schizo that has a black dog and a white dog living inside of you! Stop thinking that you have two spiritual natures . . . that you are some kind of spiritual schizo with multiple personalities!

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8)

Start thinking that “YOU” are a regenerated being, a “new creation,” a “child of God,” a “sweet fragrance” with only one nature, a righteous nature! Start thinking that “YOU,” the inner most part of your personality is a righteous person who wants to do what is right—“You are dead to sin . . . and alive to God! *Think like* this says Paul!

When you do what is right, you are living consistent with who “YOU” are; and, when you do what is wrong, you are living inconsistent with who “YOU” are! —not the other way around!

You will never fly in the clouds of righteousness until you are able to say, “Sinning, is no longer who ‘I’ am and what ‘I’ do!”

For this reason, Paul urges the believer to renew his thinking!

The “mind” (*tou nous*), **not** the nature needs to be renewed (Romans 12:2). That is, the mind needs to catch up with the believer’s existential transformation . . . like Red in the Shawshank Redemption. Every married person can probably remember the days following his or her public wedding. How easy it is to be married and still think like a single person. Though married, it takes time to “think married.” Likewise, though one is “alive to God,” it takes time to think, “I am alive to God.”

Paul is not teaching sinless perfection here. Remember, “YOU” (a regenerated being) still lives in a “body of sin” (an unregenerated instrument). “YOU” will struggle with sin in this life, not because something is wrong with “YOU,” but because “YOU” still live in a “body” easily supplanted by sin. “YOU” are born-again, but your body has not yet been born-again. “YOU” are dead to sin and alive to God, but your body is not dead to sin or alive to God.

Therefore, take charge of your body and all its unregenerated parts and start resisting sin (6:12-13; 12:1-3).

Sin remains in your body and your members, but sin cannot reign over “YOU!”

Look at Romans 6:14 -- "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Paul reminds the Hebrews of the difference between law and grace. While the law educates a man about what is right and wrong, it does not supply the power to keep the standards it espouses, but grace not only acknowledges the righteousness of the law but transforms the soul to keep the law of the LORD God (Romans 8:4).

Paul is **not** pitting law against grace.

The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness; likewise, the opposite of grace is not law, but licentiousness (Jude 1:4; 1 Timothy 1:9; 2 Peter 2:8).

One mature in grace will keep the law (John 15:14, Romans 8:4, 13:8; 1 John 5:1-3).

An illustration of grace thinking may help.

Pneumatikos

I once heard a story about an eagle found by Farmer Brown.

The baby eagle fell out of its nest. Farmer Brown took the eagle home, put it in his chicken coop, and called him *Pneumatikos*.

However, the chickens called him *Sarkikos*.

The eagle grew up and noticed he was bigger than the other birds in the coop. Furthermore, he had an urge to fly. *Pneumatikos* went to mother hen and asked, "I have a desire to fly. What am I?" Mother Hen said, "Stop all this non sense about flying. *Sarkikos*, you are a chicken, and chickens don't fly."

Weeks went by and *Pneumatikos* was very unhappy. Inside of him was a big heart with a desire to soar above the clouds. So, he went to the head rooster and said, "Mr. Rooster, I am unhappy. I have this desire to fly, but mother hen told me I was a chicken and that chickens don't fly. What am I?" The rooster said, "Son, you got to understand you are different than the rest of us chickens. *Sarkikos*, you are a chicken-eagle! You want to fly because part of you is an eagle. But, you can't fly because part of you is a chicken. You'll just have to learn to live with it?" Confused and discouraged, *Pneumatikos* just flapped around the barnyard pecking for corn.

One day, *Pneumatikos* saw Farmer Brown, "Farmer Brown, I am unhappy. I want to fly, but Mother Hen said I was just a chicken, and then Mr. Rooster said that I was a chicken-eagle. Who am I?" Farmer Brown said, "*Pneumatikos*, 'YOU' are not a chicken, and 'YOU' are not a chicken-eagle. 'YOU' are a pure bred eagle. 'You' were born to fly, and if you'll just keep on flapping your wings, you'll sore like an eagle." Delighted, *Pneumatikos* started flapping his wings and within a few hours, *Pneumatikos* soared above the farm and never lived with chickens again.

Pneumatikos was flight-challenged, not because of his nature, but because he was mentally handicapped by chicken theology!!

Pneumatikos was born to fly. Inside him was a powerful heart designed to pump huge amounts of blood to his muscles so he could soar above the clouds. Likewise, believers are "justified" (Romans 5:1), "regenerated" (5:5), "reconciled" (5:10), and "identified" with Christ (6:3-4), and proclaimed "in the Spirit" (Romans 8:9). Believers have a powerful heart to do what is right. How many *Pneumatikos* Christians (and all are) have failed to sore above because they have been bound to the chicken coop below by chicken theology?

Who are you?

If you are a Christian, "YOU" are not a sinner at the core of your being. "YOU" are not a saint-sinner at the core of your being. "YOU" are a **saint** with a powerful desire to live in the heavenlies (Romans 1:7; Ephesians 2:1-10).

It is not improper to say you have a spiritual nature (the regenerated part of you) and you have a physical nature (the body and the unregenerated part of you). But, it is improper to say that you two natures, a black dog and a white dog, inside of you. "YOU" are not a spiritual schizoid.

“You” are a child of God who wants to please your Heavenly Father.

You may stumble and you may sin, but if you sin, you sin because you are **living inconsistent with your righteous nature**. But, when a sinner sins, he sins because he is living consistent with his sinful nature!

Sanctification, the process of becoming holy, is dependent on three factors in Romans six:

- (a) the fact of the believer’s radical identification with Christ and His accomplishments,
- (b) the “knowing” and “understanding” the fact of what it means “to be placed into” Christ, and
- (c) obedience to Paul’s command to “reckon” or “count” these facts to be true.

“YOU” are not a chicken, and “YOU” are not a chicken-eagle. "YOU" are an eagle. “YOU” are a saint. “YOU” are dead to sin and alive to God.

Reckon this to be true! THINK THIS WAY! “Now flap those wings and begin to fly,” argued Paul.

Grace empowers us to live righteously (Romans 6:14).

Notes

- (1) The term “spirit” in Romans 8 refers to justified, born-again, reconciled believers in Christ; i.e., saved men.
- (2) The term “flesh” (sarkos) refers to the unregenerated, unsaved man or all that man is apart from Christ.
- (3) Adam and Christ are often referred to as two Federal Heads, one of fallen man, the other of saved men.
- (4) Justified is a legal term meaning “to be declared righteous and treated as such.”
- (5) Regenerated is a theological term referring to spiritual transformation of man when he believes in Christ. This is called being “born again”; that is, the day God saves a man and places the Holy Spirit within man wherein he becomes a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- (6) Reconcile is the operation of God whereby he restores His relationship to fallen sinners—sinners who were at one time hostile to God’s law order; that is, reconciliation means the believing sinner has been restored to a right relationship with his God and Creator due to the propitiatory work of our Lord Jesus at Calvary.
- (7) Seed means the “Holy Spirit” and his work of creating a new being in Christ.

(8) The term “body” refers to all of man’s capacities as an earthly being: mind, emotions, feelings, conscience, hearing, seeing, touching; that is, the body has “members” (melos) connected with the physical body. For example, when a man becomes a Christian he is a new creature (in his spirit / soul), but his “memory” does not change. Memory is a capacity of our earthly body: See Romans 6:13, 19; 7:5, 23.

(9) With a regenerated soul and an unregenerated body, there is conflict. It was from this conflict between the righteous soul and his unrighteous members that the early “brethren” conceived the concept of the “two natures” of the Christian. Yes, there is dissension and struggle in the Christian, but this is not the same thing as saying the believer has two spiritual natures, a white dog and a black dog, a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, inside him. The former helps us understand the tension we all feel, the latter turns us into spiritual schizophrenics.

(10) “In Christ” refers to our change in status; our change in position; i.e., from being condemned in Adam to being accepted before God due to the redemptive work of the Savior. “Christ in you” does not refer to his divine being a the right hand of the Father, but to the work of the Spirit transforming the believer into the image of the Savior; i.e., his changed, regenerated condition.

5.7 You are Not Carnal Sold Unto Sin

Romans 7

◆ This brief discussed the question, "Who is the man of Romans 7 that is "sold under sin?"

Is this Paul, Christians, or unregenerate Jews?

Supposition

As a Christian, you may be carnally minded, but you are not carnal in your nature. You are not a slave to sin.

Romans 7 should not be interpreted existentially, but historically. Paul is not discussing his personal history, nor is he speaking typically as a Christian of Christian experience. A transition from Law to Grace occurred in history.

Romans 7 is a parenthetical development in Paul’s argument regarding sanctification where he addresses the question of law in relationship to Jewish believers struggling with their Jewish training on the place of law.

All of Romans 7 is addressed to Jewish believers and **not** to Gentiles. Paul says in verse one that he speaks “to them that know the Law (Torah).” Jews are addressed all through chapter 7. To change audiences at verse 14 is an artificial interpretation.

Paul’s “I” is not autobiographical, but a literary device meaning “Israel” or “We Jews.”

Paul's argument is designed to show how the through the gospel a Jewish believer has moved out of Law into Grace by participation with Christ.

Jewish life under the Old Covenant was frustrated because the Jew faced the claims of Law with only the resources of nature leaving him defeated. Paul’s good news is that through the gospel, God has provided resources by His Spirit to defeat the law of sin and death and to empower righteous living.

When Paul says “I am carnal sold under sin” he is **not** speaking of himself as an Apostle or a Christian. The struggle is **not** the struggle of a Christian, but the struggle of an unregenerate Jew facing Torah without the resources of the Spirit. If one insists the present tense verb refers to Paul the Christian, then we must conclude the author of Romans was “carnal” and “sold under son.” This is ridiculous.

The use of the present tense in verse 14 does not refer to present time, but to present condition. Every Jew who faced the law without the resources of grace found his condition was “carnal” and “sold under sin.”

In contrast to Jewish’s defeat under law is the victory of a Christian under grace. Because the Christian is free from law and in possession of a regenerate life by the power of the Spirit, he is also free from the power of sin. Paul sets up a dualism between Adam and Christ (5), those under law and those under grace (6), between the dead and the alive (7), and between the “flesh” and the “Spirit” in chapter 8. All Christians are “in Christ” and “in the Spirit.” All unsaved people are said to be “in the flesh.”

The Man of Romans Seven

For centuries Bible scholars have wrestled with the interpretation of Romans 7:14-25. Is this passage a description of Paul’s experience before or after his conversion to Christ?

There are those who regard Romans 7 existentially by applying it to the believer’s struggle with intrinsic sin. They interpret the phrase, “I am carnal sold under sin” as referring to a Christian struggling with sin in his personal life. Unwittingly, this view normalizes failure in the Christian life and denigrates the power of the gospel.

Another view of Romans 7 is that Paul is addressing the **unbeliever’s** struggle with the tyranny of sin. They interpret the phrase, “I am carnal sold under sin” as referring to the plight of unregenerate men facing the demands of law. The challenge with this view is that it fails to address the believer’s struggle with sin in this present evil age.

Consider interpreting Romans 7:14-25 as referring to the plight of unregenerate Jews facing the demands of law without the Spirit for the following reasons:

Historical Context

Most treatments of Romans 7:14-25 do so either in light of their own personal experience (multiple moral failures) or in light of modern psychology (the introspective psychological Christian culture) rather than in light of the historical context. We error if we are too quick to read our personal experience into Romans 7. We must interpret Romans 7 in light of the historical context.

Paul's letter was written to a Roman community containing both Jews and Gentiles. The friction between the Jews (vegetarians) and the Gentiles (meat eaters) surfaced in chapter 14. Each ethnic group had its own challenges. At times in Paul's letter he addresses the issue facing each party. For example: Paul addresses the historical Gentile problem in chapter one—their total debauchery. In chapter two, Paul addresses the historical Jewish problem—total hypocrisy. The different issues facing the two communities is brought out again in Romans 9, 10 and 11.

The Literary Context

The Book of Romans is a legal work; i.e, he discusses the gospel in forensic terms. The subject of justification, freedom from the guilt of sin is discussed in Romans 3:21-5:11. The subject of sanctification, freedom from the power of sin is addressed in Romans 5:12-8:4. In Romans 5:12ff, Paul discusses the history of two heads, Adam the head of the human race, and Christ, the Head of God's new creation. In Adam's family, sin reigns. When the Law entered, sin increased.

In Christ's family, righteousness reigns because men are no longer under law, but under the resources of grace, i.e, the Spirit of God, by virtue of the believers identification with Christ (6:1-10). In Romans 8, the members belonging to these two federal heads are introduced as "flesh" (unregenerate men) and "spirit" (regenerate men).

The History of Adam & Christ

Two headships	Adam	Christ
Two acts	One trespass	One righteous
Two judgments	Condemnation	Justification
Two reigns	Sin & death	Life reigns
Two kings	Law (Jewish problem)	Grace

Two effects	Many died	Many made righteous
Two principles	Wages (6:23)	Free gift
Two states	Slaves of death	Slaves of righteousness
Two classifications	Flesh (Romans 8)	Spirit (Romans 8)

The Immediate Context:

In Romans 7:1, Paul is obviously addressing Jews and not Gentiles. “Know ye not, brethren (Jewish brethren), for I speak to them that know the Law (Torah), how that the Law (Torah) hath dominion over a man (Jewish man) as long as he liveth? He is addressing Jews exclusively from chapter 7:1 through 7:25.

Romans 6	Romans 7	Romans 8
Applies to Jew & Gentile	Applies directly to Jews	Applies to Jew & Gentile

Parenthetical Nature of Romans 7

The Book of Romans has a series of parenthetical thoughts wherein Paul addresses Jewish concerns: 2:1; 6:14ff-8:3; 9-11, and chapter 14.

Romans 6:14-7:4 is Paul’s second great parenthetical thought in the book where he stops to address the place of law in Jewish life. His third parenthetical thought is in Romans 9-10 where he addresses the place of Israel in God’s gospel plan.

Romans 6	Romans 7	Romans 8
Freedom from sin	Freedom from Law	Freedom from sin

The Need to Address the Place of Law

When Paul said, “sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace” (6:14), every Jew listening to Paul’s letter being read in the Roman assembly would have “hit the ceiling.” Can’t you hear them say, “Paul, what do ya mean ‘sin shall not have dominion over us’ because we are not under law? If the law has no place in our

sanctification, why did God give it to us anyway? Why are you betraying our Jewish faith with your antinomian teaching?”

This was no small issue to the Jewish mind. Romans 7 is Paul’s answer to the Jewish struggle.

Paul has another parenthetical argument in Romans 9-11 where he addresses another Jewish problem. Because Romans 9 is parenthetical, Romans 12:1 should follow Romans 8:39 logically. Likewise, Romans 8:1-4 should follow Romans 6:14 logically.

The Critical Questions

A key to sanctification and the topic addressed in Romans 7 is freedom Torah.

The word “**law**” is mentioned 29 times between 6:14 and 8:4. Paul declared all Jews free from the law (Romans 6:14:7:1-10; Galatians 5:1ff). The critical questions being answered in chapter seven is peculiar to the Jewish mind: “If freedom from sin is related to freedom from law, is something wrong with God’s law?” And secondly, “If freedom from sin is due in part to freedom from Torah, how then can a man be righteous apart from instructions of Torah?”

Every Jewish boy was taught the Torah by his parents and attended synagogue school to learn about Torah. At 12 he became a ben-Torah, that is, a-son-of-the-law, responsible to the Law. He learned to read, quote, love, and honor the Torah. Now, Paul appeared to contradict the very faith which Jews loved. These questions had to be answered in the Jewish mind if the Jews were going to completely embrace Paul’s gospel.

The Gentiles in the congregation were never under Torah. Galatians 3:4 makes this clear: “Wherefore the Law was our (Jews only) schoolmaster to bring us (Jews) unto Christ, that we (Jews) might be justified by faith.” By “law,” Paul means the Jewish Torah with all its regulations, ceremonies, codes regarding circumcision and the keeping of feast days. To Paul, the Torah served God’s purpose between Moses and the time of Christ. When Paul uses the phrase “our schoolmaster” (ονόμος παιδαγωγός ημών γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, τῆς λαῶν βεχάμε οὐρ σχολιαστὴρ ὑπο Χηριστ) he does not mean “we Gentiles.” He means “we Jews” i.e, those Jews living between Sinai and Calvary.

Paul’s point is that Christ, the Living Torah, has replaced the old *paidagogos*. Torah was an imperfect objective expression of righteousness and a cultic tool to isolate the Jew until Christ arrived in history. Christ is the perfect, subjective expression of God’s righteousness that embraces both Jew and Gentile into eschatological family. No longer would Torah be the guide.

Christ is the Word, the bread, the life, the shepherd of God’s people. All that the Torah meant to the Jewish community, Christ means to new covenant community. God never intended for Torah to be placed as yoke on the neck of Gentiles, and Paul fought fiercely to free the Gentiles from the bondage that formerly shackled the Jewish nation (Galatians 5).

In summary, Romans 7 addresses a Jewish problem relating to the law during the transition period from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant in the first century. The issue being addressed was not a Gentile bone of contention, though the Gentile had much to learn from this historic transition.

In Romans 7, Paul addressed the Jewish believers in the church at Rome: **“I am speaking to men who know the Law (the Torah).”**

Before Christ lived and died, the Jewish people were married to the Law. The Torah was like a husband who had dominion over them. But since they shared in the benefits of Christ death, burial, and resurrection, their relationship to Torah ended. Married to Christ, they were “released from the Law to serve in the new way of the Spirit” (7:1-6). Note the Greek dualism being created between Adam’s family, those in the “flesh,” and Christ’s family, those “in the Spirit.”

Use of the pronoun “I”

The “I” (, ego) of Romans 7 should not be taken in an autobiographical sense, but in a literary sense.

He identifies the “I” as one who is “carnal” and “sold under sin.” Surely, this is not Paul the Apostle! Paul’s use of “I” is representative of what was generally true in the experience of all Jews under Torah. (Personally, Paul learned at the feet of Gamaliel, the great doctor of law, and felt himself blameless when he measured himself by the Law—Philippians 3:4-6). The “I” is representative of unregenerate Israel. This is not Paul’s experience, not is it the “normal Christian experience.” The normal Christian experience is freedom of sin (8:2-4).

“I” is representative of what is generally true of all Israel. “I” is Israel.

The virtue of Torah (7:12, 14): Torah was “holy,” “just,” “good,” and “spiritual.” If there was a problem with the Law, it was this: *The Law could tell a man what was right, but it did not supply him with the power to do what was right.* Every Jew faced the demands of the Law with meager resources—the resources of fallen, unregenerate human nature. When Paul says, “We (Jews) know the Law is spiritual: but I (representative of “we Jews”) am carnal, sold under sin,” Paul is stating that the problem with the dominion of sin in the life of Jews was not due to inadequacy of the Law, but the inadequacy of fallen humanity.

By using the term “I am carnal,” Paul is not discussing his Christian experience. He is not speaking as “born-again” Christian who cannot escape from the tyranny of sin. He is not discussing his personal gestalt, but the historical Jewish dilemma. As a Christian, Paul declared “freedom from sin” (6:1, 11) freedom from law (6:14), and freedom from condemnation (8:1) to all who are “in Christ” (8:1, 9).

When Paul uses the verb “I am” (εἰμι), a present, active, indicative, 1st person, singular, he uses the *present tense* to describe the *present condition* of every Jew at the time he was facing the Law with the resources of unregenerate flesh. He uses the present tense because in verse one Paul’s audience are ones that presently “know” (γινώσκουσιν, present participle)

the law. It is much easier to speak in the present tense about a general experience in an undefined past when the argument is complicated. The problem of verbal-noun agreement in matching the “was” and “is” and “shall be” with the “I” “they” “we” and “them” can certainly be understood. One can see the difficulty verbal-noun agreement in Paul’s discourse when one sees that

Paul uses the Greek present, aorist, perfect, imperfect, and future tense in the course of his argument in 7:1-13. Paul did not use the aorist, the historical tense in section 7:14ff because Paul’s argument is not autobiographical, but theological. He argues from first person using the present tense as representative of what was or is that “is” generally true in the pre-conversion experience of the Jew.

If we take “I am,” a present tense, which means an act or condition that is durative in the present isolate it from the context, we must conclude that Paul was writing his masterpiece to the Romans in an “unspiritual” state. Is Paul really saying that at the moment he was writing Romans, “I am carnal” that the apostle Paul was actually in a carnal, defeated, unspiritual state?

There is no justification to for Paul to switch his address from discussing the failure of unregenerate Jews under law to discussing the supposed failure of Christians under grace. What kind of gospel is that?

When Paul says, “I delight in the Law of God after the inward man” he is speaking as a Jew who learned to love and honor God’s Law, something, by the way, many non-Christians do today. However, the chasm between respecting the Law and obedience to law was great. Paul adds about the Jewish experience, “I (representative of Jews) find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me (the unregenerate Jew).”

When Paul says, “Oh wretched man that I am” he is not describing his Christian experience. He is describing the plight of all Israel. The plight of Israel was wretched because they faced a pure, true, holy law with only the resources of human nature.

In Romans 8:1-4, Paul describes the condition of regenerate men in reference to the Jewish problem. What the Law could not do, i.e, empower men to keep it, the Spirit of Life does when men participate in Christ. In Christ, men not only know what is right, they are empowered by the regenerative powers of the Spirit to reflect God’s character. Two states are discussed: “the flesh” representative of all unregenerate Jews (and unregenerate Gentiles), and “the Spirit” representative of all those who participate in Christ (regenerate Jews and Gentiles).

Paul finishes his argument in by saying, “You (Jews in Rome) are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, it the Spirit of God dwells in you (regeneration). Now if any man (Jews or Gentiles) have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not *in the family of Christ (Spirit)*, but still a *member of the family of Adam (flesh)*.” It is impossible for a Christian to be “in the Spirit” and “in the flesh” according to Paul’s argument in Romans 8. All Christians are “in the Spirit” regardless of the degree of their sanctification.

All non-Christians are “in the flesh” regardless of the degree of their wretchedness. In using the terms “flesh” and “Spirit,” Paul is not addressing a man’s individual immediate spiritual state but the locus of his being—“in the flesh” (unregenerate in Adam) or “in the Spirit” (regenerate in Christ). Historically speaking, God’s new eschatological community, His new humanity, was being created through gospel proclamation. Two classes of people emerged: Adam’s kindred and Christ’s kindred, or members of the old creation or members of the new creation, or the “flesh” and the “Spirit.”

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE “IN THE SPIRIT” OR “IN CHRIST.”

ALL NON CHRISTIANS ARE “IN THE FLESH” OR “IN ADAM.”

A Little Theology

What is true historically, the tension between flesh (unregenerate men) and Spirit (regenerate men), between Jews and Christians, can also be seen in one’s personal gestalt (Galatians 5:16-22). While the believer is “born again,” he is only half born again, i.e., his inner man is united with Christ but his “body” or “members” is still unregenerate.

Sin remains, but it does not reign.

Neither justification nor sanctification removes sin completely from the believer. There is a tension between the unregenerate and regenerate part of the believer. For this reason, Paul command the regenerate Romans to offer their unregenerate bodies on the altar of worship in Romans 12:1.

However, Paul is not addressing the individual’s personal gestalt in Romans 7. He is addressing the larger issue, the **historical transition from law to grace** taking place in the first century and the rule of life which is to characterize God’s new society (those “in the Spirit”), God’s eschatological people who share in the blessing of God’s eschatological Spirit in a first fruits way. *Fulfillment* is now (justification); consummation (glorification) is *not yet*. The tension between the Age to Come and the This Present Evil Age is present in the believer’s personal experience because he is a “new creation” living in the body, the “old creation.”

In conclusion, Romans 7 is one of three parenthetical thoughts in Romans where Paul digresses to discuss the historical transition taking place in history between life under the Old Covenant and life under the New Covenant. All of Romans seven addresses the plight of the unregenerate Jews facing God’s Law without the resources of the Spirit. The passage is not autobiographical nor is it typical of the Christian experience.

Paul’s good news is that in the Gospel of Grace, the Spirit unites men to Christ to participate in the life of Christ. This means freedom from sin, from law, and from condemnation. Because Jews were no longer under Law seeking to produce righteousness with their own resources, but under grace and the resources of a victorious federal Head, the Jewish believer could experience freedom from the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14).

When Paul says, “I am carnal, sold under sin” Paul is not speaking autobiographically. Personally, Paul saw himself as “blameless” in reference to the Law (Philippians 3:6). Nor is Paul speaking autobiographically as a Christian.

Can anyone take seriously the idea that at the moment he was writing to Romans he was “carnal, sold under sin?” Remember, he uses the present tense, “I am.” Rather, Paul uses the literary “I” to represent what was generally true of all Israel who faced the demands of holiness in the power of their own resources, and he uses “am” a present tense to discuss the state of being that all Jews felt when they honestly faced the demands of law sometime in an undefined past.

Application: In Romans, Paul the Attorney, presses his argument about the virtues of the Gospel in contrast to vices of paganism and Judaism. Alien righteousness outside the man is available in the gospel when it is received by faith (justification). But, practical righteousness is possible because the Spirit of God takes a man out of Adam and places him into Christ to participate in blessing of grace (sanctification).

Paul was not saying that defeat was his normal Christian experience until he found “the deeper life truths.” Paul is saying that deliverance from the tyranny of sin is possible because the believer now participates in the victorious history of Christ. Paul is not teaching perfectionism, he is teaching that believers are indeed “dead to sin and alive to God.”

Secondly, while we regard the doctrine of “sinless perfectionism” a great heresy, we must regard contentment with sinful imperfection a greater heresy. Defeat is not standard. Being “carnal” is not the normal Christian experience. Victory over sin is proclaimed in Christ when the gospel is believed.

Unlike justification, there is something efficient about the Spirit regenerating men (Romans 5:5) and “placing them” into Christ’s victorious history. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17), a child of God (Ephesians 5:1-3), and a member of God’s new humanity (Ephesians 2). Dead to sin, he cannot be sin’s slave any longer (Romans 6:14). In the gospel men have all the resources they need to live a victorious Christian life—resources Jews did not have under Torah. Victory, not defeat, is the normal Christian experience. Think it. Believe it. Live it.

Lecture presented to a forum of seminary students and faculty at Trinity Seminary working through unresolved issues related to theology circa 2001-2002.

5.8 What is the “Faith of Christ”?

Romans 3:22

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. unto all and upon all them that believe (τοὺς πιστεύοντας): for there is no difference.” What does the phrase “faith of Jesus Christ” mean? (Greek fonts may not be available).

The Contextual Argument

♦ Paul’s treatise on the Gospel in his letter to the Romans is explained in legal terms. It is a courtroom drama with Paul acting as both a prosecutor of mankind and a defense attorney for believers. Prior to this verse, Paul, acting as a prosecutor in the case *God v. Mankind* (Romans 1-3), pronounced all men guilty of breaking God’s law (3:10-20). But, in verse 21, Paul crossed the aisle and put on the wig of an English barrister in order to argue the case for the justification of the believer.

Paul’s forensic argument is as follows: To be justified in God’s Court, a man must possess righteousness (Romans 2:1-13).

First, the bad news: all men are guilty of breaking God’s law (3:10ff).

Second, the good news: There is a righteousness that comes from God that enables men to possess what the Court requires. But, what is this righteousness, and where does it come from?

Semantic Argument

Semantically, the phrase, “faith of Jesus Christ,” is usually interpreted as “faith in Jesus.” But, if this is so, why did Paul say “unto all that believe?” Why a reference to two responses of “faith” in the same verse (3:22). Could it be that the phrase “faith in Jesus” is a poor translation and should be translated “faithfulness of Jesus” instead of the “faith in Jesus?”

Theological Argument

Theologically, it is my contention that Paul is saying that sinners are declared “guilty” in His Court; that in order to stand before a holy God, a man needs real righteousness—substantive righteousness, not synthetic righteousness; that in the gospel, substantive righteousness is available to the believer, even the righteousness of Christ; that faith is not a virtue required by God, nor is faith a substitute for substantive righteousness; that faith is the confidence that Christ lived a righteous life on behalf of His elect and that God gives the believer Christ’s righteousness when he trusts Him. For example there is a big difference being paid a hundred dollars in gold bullion and being paid a hundred dollars in FRNs. When God justifies a man he gives him substance-- the silver and gold of Christ’s righteousness, not synthetic paper notes.

Linguistic Argument

Linguistically, the phrase “faith of Christ” should be translated “faithfulness of Christ” for the following reasons:

First, the phrase “faith of Christ” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is either a subjective genitive (indicating origin or source), not an objective genitive. A genitive defines and limits the substantive. It asks the question, “What kind” of righteousness?” Subjective genitive is very personal. In this case the righteousness offered is the righteousness of Christ.

The term “**faith**” (πίστεως) is a feminine noun which can also be an ablative of agency. Genitives and ablatives employ the same case form (ως φεμί οὐ μὰς)

While faith (πίστεως) can be translated “faith,” it can also be translated “faithfulness.” Since “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is in the genitive / ablative form, this “faith” or “faithfulness” must be coming from Christ. The righteousness offered has a source. It is in Christ. Furthermore, because this righteousness comes from Christ it behaves like an ablative indicating something separated from him and given to believers.

Obviously, Paul is not talking about Christ’s faith, but his acts of “faithfulness.” Paul is not calling for an exercise of faith from the believer at this point in his argument as much as he is informing us that the “righteousness from God” that is available to the believer by faith is none other than the “faithfulness of Christ.”

Second, Romans 1:17 states: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: “As it is written, the just shall live by faith.” The phrase “faith to faith” (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστι) contains two prepositions and is difficult to translate. The first (ἐκ πίστεως) appears to be an ablative of source, or that which is produced by a person. Is this “faith” produced by us or does it refer to “faithfulness” produced by Christ? Surely, our faith is based on the obedience of Christ to God’s law; i.e., the faithfulness of Christ.”

The second prepositional phrase (εἰς πίστι) is either an accusative of purpose or accusative of result.

This phrase could be saying that “our faith produces faithfulness,” or it could be saying that Christ’s *faithfulness is the foundation of our faith*, or God’s righteousness comes from Christ’s faithfulness to produce man’s faith.

Third, Romans 3:3 says, “For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” The phrase “faith of God” (τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ) indicates that the “faith” comes from God. “From God” is a genitive indicating the source. Obviously, this does not refer to “faith” being produced by God but the “faithfulness of God.” That is, man’s unbelief does not nullify God’s faithfulness.

Paul uses the term “ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ in Romans 3:26: “To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, faith of Jesus).”(1) Again, is Paul calling for man to exercise faith in Christ or

is he referring to the faithfulness of Christ? This seems to be saying that God justifies the one who stands on the fidelity of Christ.

(1) See John 17:15 on the preposition “ek:”I do not ask you to take them *out of the world* ,εκ – indicating separation) but that *you keep them away* (εκ – indicating separation) from the evil one.

Fourth, Romans 4:16 discusses the “faith of Abraham” (τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ). Does this refer to Abraham’s response of faith to God or does it refer to faithfulness resulting from his faith? Here it appears to refer to Abraham’s response of faith and not his faithfulness. Because Abraham trusted God’s faithfulness, God was faithful to justify him.

Fifth, the phrase “ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ **is used twice in Galatians 2:16:** “know that a man is not justified by (his own) observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (evk pi,stewj Cristou).”

The phrase “**faith in (ek) Christ**” is another ablative and can be rendered “faithfulness of Christ.” So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστο, faith of Christ) and not by (our) observing the law, because by (our) observing the law no one will be justified.” It appears best to render “ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ here as the “faithfulness of Christ.” Paul taught we are not saved by our personal observance of the law. We are saved because of Christ’s personal observance of the law. We live because Christ was careful to do all that God requires so the believing man can be justified in His sight.

Sixth, Galatians 2:20 also uses the phrase “faith of (ek) Christ” (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of (ek) the Son of God (ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεο, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The title “**Son of God**” is in the genitive indicating that “the faith” comes from Christ (a subjective genitive or ablative, not an objective genitive). Paul is not saying that “I” continue to live my Christian life by faith, but that I live before God because the Lord obeyed the law perfectly on my behalf.

Seventh, Philippians 3:9 says, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ (διὰ πίστεως Χριστου) the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God being one who is justified by my faith?” or, is Paul saying, “I want to stand before God, not having my own righteousness, but having the faithfulness of Christ credited to my account which comes by faith?” It appears this is a genitive or ablative of source modifying “righteousness,” and therefor referring to the faithfulness of Christ.

The Legal Argument

The word “**justification**” is a forensic term having to do with the courts. In God’s Court, only a man who keeps the law can be justified (Romans 2:13). Christ was “born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). He obeyed the law (Philippians 2:9-12), and He was the end of the law (Romans 10:4). Consequently, He was “justified” (declared righteous) by the Spirit when He was raised from the dead (1 Timothy 3:15-17).

Even in God’s Court, faith is not a substitute for righteousness. A man must possess real, substantial righteousness if he is to stand before an all-holy God. The good news of the gospel is that the substantial righteousness of Christ is given to the one who believes.

Even in God’s Court, faith is **not** a substitute for righteousness. A man must possess real, substantial righteousness if he is to stand before an all-holy God. The good news of the gospel is that the righteousness of Christ is given to the one who believes.

An Argument from Substitution

When we say, “**Christ died for our sins,**” we are saying He became our substitute. If Christ took our sins, then we must take His righteousness. If sin was imputed to him, then his “faithfulness” is imputed to us. In other words, we are saved by works — HIS WORKS! We are saved, not only by his death, but also by His life of obedience.

In summary, while it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between “faith” and “faithfulness,” it is at times important to do so. It would be incorrect to always interpret *pistis* (faith) as objective—something being demanded of man. Sometimes, it is subjective and can refer to that which is produced by an agent—in this case something produced by Christ; i.e., His faithfulness.

It is important to understand the phrase “faith of Christ” (πίστεως Χριστου) as the “faithfulness of Christ.”

I once asked a Catholic neighbor (Mary) if she had any hope of eternal life. She said she did. So, I asked, “Mary, why do you think you will go to heaven?” Pounding on her heart, she said, “I have faith!” For 10 minutes she discussed her great faith and how much she believed in God. Mary did not believe her works could save her. Her hope rested in her faith. However, not once did she mention Christ, His life, His death, His atonement, His redemptive accomplishments or His resurrection. It was all about faith in her heart . . . and because she had subjective faith, God was somehow obligated to take her to heaven.

A few days later, it dawned on me what she was really saying. To her, “faith” was a virtue and she had this virtue that God honored dwelling in her heart. She expected to enter heaven because she had what God required, “faith.” But, I asked myself, “Where was Christ in her testimony?” And, if faith is all that is required to go to heaven, why did Christ have to live and die?

Peter Kreef, a Catholic apologist, has this to say:

But many Catholics to this day have not learned the Catholic and biblical doctrine (of justification). They think we are saved by good intentions or being nice or sincere or trying a little harder or doing a sufficient number of good deeds. Over the past twenty-five years I have asked hundreds of Catholic college students the question: If you should die tonight and God asks you why he should let you into heaven, what would you answer? The vast majority of them simply do not know the right answer to this, the most important of all questions, the very essence of Christianity. They usually do not even mention Jesus! (Catholic Educator's Resource Center, Kreeft, 1988)

The answer lies in our ability to understand the phrase “faith of Christ” (πίστεως Χριστοῦ).

Our personal faith is not the basis of our salvation. *The faithfulness of Christ is the basis of our salvation.* What men need in order to be saved is substantive righteousness, not virtuous faith. The good news of the Bible is that this righteousness is given to those who believe as a free gift. This “righteousness” is none other than the faithfulness of Christ (πίστεως Χριστοῦ). As a Judahite, Jesus was born under the law. His obedience was tested and the Spirit declared,

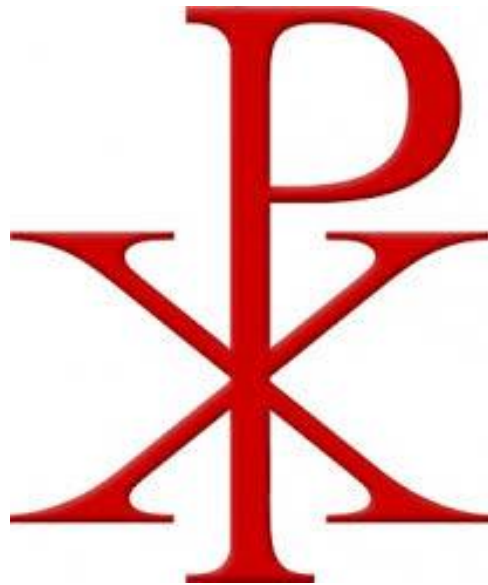
“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Because He obeyed perfectly, we can be justified perfectly. We are saved by works—not ours, but His. We are saved by obedience—His obedience, and when we believe, His “faithfulness” and His “works,” His “obedience” is credited to us (believers) as a gift of God (Romans 5:15ff).

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theolog

6 The Practice of Piety

If we regard the claim that one can achieve sinless perfection a great heresy, we regard satisfaction with sinful imperfection a greater heresy. Selah.



6.1 The Standard of Piety

Psalm 15

◆ Once one is justified by faith and has the peace with God, he can begin the process of sanctification.

Sanctification is the process of becoming like Christ. It involves a life time effort.

The law is the objective standard of piety; the Lord Jesus Christ is the subjective standard of becoming a holy man (or woman).

One is first justified by faith, and then learns righteousness through obedience to His Word.

A Description of a Righteous Man – Psalm 15

We have here an objective description of a righteous man.

Only God has a right to define righteousness. Many feel righteous who are actually wicked. When humanistic men define righteousness, they broaden the definition to include even the most despicable behavior.

A Profound Question

Psalm 15:1 A Psalm of David. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

The term “tabernacle” is a reference to the earthly dwelling place of the LORD God of Israel. The term “holy hill” corresponds to the temple mount in Jerusalem. The term “dwell” pertains to acceptance in God’s presence.

We have a profound question: Who is welcome or accepted in the presence of the thrice Holy God of Israel? This is a deep question seeing that angels cover their faces crying out, “holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty” (Isaiah 6:1-7).

The answer is “only the righteous!” Thus, we have a description of the righteous.

A Profound Description of a Righteous Man

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

1) **A righteous man seeks righteousness.** The word “walk” refers to the ways of a man—his conduct, principles, and habits. The adjective “uprightly” (*tamiym*) means “whole” or “complete” in regards to God’s law. He is whole in regards to the Ten Commandments. He accepts the authority of Scriptures and does not pick and choose what commands to obey.

He is not fractured or divided in his affections. Fully devoted to God's law, he stands head and shoulders above the common man.

The words "integrity", "innocent", and "unimpaired" complete this description. The Ten Commandments are his moral compass. He is faithful to God's law, but he may not be regarded as always keeping the whims and wishes of men or the State. David laid hold of righteousness, yet was considered a fugitive from justice during the early years of his life (Psalm 4:1 & 1 Samuel 20-26).

2) **A righteous man works righteousness** (*sadek*); that is, his walk matches his talk; his profession matches his confession. He does not say one thing and do another. He is repulsed by hypocrisy and is not duplicitous or double minded. He is not one way in public and another way in private. The righteous man lives out his duties to God and his responsibilities before men on the marketplace and in the closet.

3) **A righteous man speaks the truth** (*emeth*); that is, his words are faithful and true. His testimony can be relied on in a court of law. In the open market, He does what he says. He is reliable because he keeps his promises and fulfills his contracts. He does not say bad things about good people, nor does he say good things about bad people. But, he is not all sugar and no salt. He says what needs to be said and restrains knowledge. Knowing when to speak the truth, he is often silent.

3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4) **The righteous man is careful about what he says.** He is the opposite of careless. In politics, slander has become the weapon of choice to murder a candidate. It need not be true, it need only to ruin the opponent.

But, the righteous man is not given to "backbiting", "gossip", or "slander" his neighbors. He does not try to rise up by putting others down. He is not a liar nor does he over promise his customers. His speech is governed by God's Word. He believes in freedom of speech but freedom is not absolutized. He is not overly sanguine with his tongue tied in the middle and flappin' at both ends.

Further, he does not hesitate to tell the truth about a man when the truth must be told; i.e., he does not disguise the truth about an evil person nor sugar coat hard truth. He will tell the truth, but he may not tell the whole truth all the time. He is a private man and guards secrets. He is not a bootlicker, sycophant, or charmer. He does not over promise, exaggerate, plagiarize, or intentionally make misleading statements. He is believable because he seeks truth.

5) **The righteous man injures no one.** He is a trustworthy man. Because he is deeply committed to the Ten Commandments, the neighborhood is a safe place. He is careful to injure no man and to protect the property rights of others. He pays for mistakes and makes restitution where necessary. He is guilty of no crime because he has malice toward none.

6) **The righteous man does not defame a neighbor.** The term “reproach” means “to shame”, “defame,” or “scorn” a neighbor. Simply put, he does not join a gossip circle where there is a conversational feeding frenzy around a neighbor. He walks away and often eats alone.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

7) **The righteous man hates evil men.** The word “contemned” means “to despise.” He is known not only by what he loves, but what he hates. He not only hates evil acts, he hates evil men.

Biblically, man is a unit. It is impossible to separate the fruit from the root or the man from his actions. Actions expose the man. While the righteous refuses to slander a good man, he does not refuse to tell the ugly truth about a bad man.

A “vile person” would include the likes of abortionists, homosexuals, liars, deceivers, wife abusers, drunks, thieves, murderers, drug users, and fornicators. That is, he hates professional criminals.

He does not believe love is the answer to all things because he knows God’s justice is the cure for many evils.

8) **The righteous man loves the fellowship of God’s people.** The righteous man goes to church and is keenly aware of the difference between sheep and goats. His friends are genuine, sincere Christian men who love God’s Word and keep His Law-word. He honors true believers and avoids hypocrites. He is tolerant of imperfect men, but intolerant of evil men.

9) **The righteous man keep his promises.** Swearing to one’s own hurt means that once a man makes a promise, he keeps his word -- even though his promise may be difficult to keep! He keeps his word even when it is expensive and time consuming to do so. We have here a man that fulfills his contracts. His word is his bond. Unforeseen circumstances arise in every man’s business, but the man of integrity completes his duty even when profits decrease.

Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more, you should never wish to do less- Robert E. Lee

5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.

10) **The righteous man is not a thief.** He is not an opportunist who loans money at interest to the needy around him with the ulterior motive of making slaves out of the poor. He is in business to make a profit, but he makes it honestly. He helps his neighbor in a time of need by making loans. But, he does not try to make a profit off other people’s misfortune.

He is the opposite of a greedy, covetous man. He is the kind of man you want to do business with because you know he is not going to change the contract or scam his customers.

11) **The righteous man cannot be bribed.** He is in business for a profit, but He is not for sale. His principles, his pride, his reputation come before profit. His vote cannot be bought and he is careful with whom he does business. In political matters, he does not receive "kick backs" or "funds" from lobbyists in an off shore account. He pays taxes he lawfully owes, but may not pay taxes he does not lawfully owe.

A Profound Outcome

5 "He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

What is the outcome of the righteous? It is very simple: he shall not be moved or shaken. He is not shaken by his circumstances or his adversaries. He is stable, unmovable, resilient, secure, and at peace with God and His law. He holds his head high and has no reason to cower before corrupt men. This does not mean he has no troubles. His afflictions are many, but he has an anchor in heaven and is welcome in God's house.

Ultimately, there is only one righteous man and that is Christ, the second Adam, and all who come to him by faith.

Righteous men know they are sinners. Their hope is in the righteousness of Another. The righteous know they are not saved by their own works, but by the works of Christ. Having obtained a righteous standing by faith, the justified are deeply committed to God's law—not to be accepted, but because they are accepted in His presence they keep His law (Romans 4:5; 5:1, 8:4; 13:8).

6.2 Motivation for Piety

2 Peter 3:11-12

◆ One of the benefits of studying "end time" events is that it enhances holiness in the lives of believers. Furthermore, the more holy the church becomes the sooner the Day of God will come.

2 Peter 3:11-12 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

The participle "**dissolved**" (luo) means "to loose, break, pull down, break up, or destroy."

The things that shall be broken up are "**the elements**" of "**the heavens**" and "**the Earth**" in verse ten.

The word "**conversation**" refers to one's manner of life – his ambitions, habits, and character.

Since the material things we hold so dear are so temporal, Peter urges men of faith to follow holiness and godliness. These two adjectives describe the kind of behavior men are to pursue in light of the collapse of civilization.

Holiness refers to a separated life that is devoted to God; that is, allowing the cross and its benefits to have its intended effect in our mind, habits, ambitions, and values. It does **not** mean "be religious;" rather, it means "to be consecrated" to His purposes. The opposite of holiness is ordinary; waking up everyday thinking one has a choice about good and evil.

Godliness refers to the kind of character a reconciled man possesses. It is God-like. Holiness refers to following the law of God; Godliness refers to imitating the God of law. Both call for *coram deo*, "to live one's whole life in *the presence of God*, under God, and to the glory of God."

Judgment Day is called "**The day of God.**" God created the heaven and Earth, and God will destroy them both. The instrument of destruction is fire--the exothermic chemical process of combustion which could be a simple reference to a rapid release of energy from a high-speed nuclear reaction. In God's first judgment, he used water to asphyxiate life on Earth; in God's second judgment he will use heat to destroy the heavens and the Earth.

The two passive accusative participles "**looking**" and "**hasting**" measure the verb "ought" in verse eleven.

The participle "**looking**" does **not** refer to a function of the human eye, but to the focus of a soul. The man of faith regards the Day of Judgment; i.e., he lives responsibly knowing the Day of God is coming and that his behavior makes a difference to the Lord even speeding up the time of judgment.

"**Hasting**" (hurry or speed) places a duty on Christians. This verse links human responsibility with divine sovereignty; that is, the Day of God moves closer to reality by other causes such as the sanctification of His people. Judgment must begin at the house of God. The more the church judges its slackness and the more holy it becomes, the sooner the Day of God will come.

Source: Stockton's "Towards Exegetical Eschatology."

6.3 Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God

2 Corinthians 7:1

◆ Perfecting holiness ought to be the intense concern of every Christian. But, how can we do it?

To answer this question, we must go backward from 2 Corinthians 7:1 into chapter 6 and into chapter 5.

One: Holiness begins with a volitive act.

KJV 2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The participle “**cleanse**” comes from the Greek words *karthirizo* which means “to purge.” We get the word “*cartharsis*” from this term which means “to purify” or “to cleanse.”

The Greek participle is a volitive aorist referring to a completed action in the past and not an ongoing, moment by moment process; that is, holiness refers to the character of a decision to separate from “unclean” matters in this life and to devote one’s self wholly and totally to the will of God.

“**holiness**” is an attribute of God that refers to His righteous and unique character (5:21).

“**holy**” is an adjective describing one’s separation from sin’s corruption and one’s devotion and nearness to God or being Christ-like.

“**perfecting holiness**” comes from the present, active participle “*επιτελεο*” which means “to complete” or “to finish” — to arrive at the goal line of holiness. It carries the idea of being totally consecrated and devoted to God and His purposes for Christians.

Perfection is the opposite of a glass half-filled with water.

“**to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit**” is the negative side of holiness; that is, the phrase references what we must separate ourselves from. “filthiness” refers to all those things that defile and dirty a man morally and spiritually. But, the positive side of holiness is drawing near to the Lord.

“**in the fear of God**” describes the motivation for holiness . . . the fear of displeasing him . . . and, his love to draw us to Christ while saving our souls “reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ” (5:18-19).

Two: Holiness seeks the fulfillment of His promises.

“Having therefore these promises is a reference” back to 2 Corinthians 6:17

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The pledge “**I will receive you**” refers to the Father’s promise to accept, love, and provide for His holy ones. He is a Father to His children, but to enjoy Him, one must fulfill three conditions of the promise:

Condition one: “**come out from among them,**” that is, a man must separate himself from the impious and their idolatries.

Condition two: “**be ye separate**” refers (negatively) to building a fence between yourself and the faithless as well as (positively) dedicating one’s self to the Lord.

Condition three: “**touch not the unclean thing.**” The word “**touch**” (hatomai) is an imperative commanding the believer to not “embrace,” “fellowship,” or “make a commitment” to enjoy the unclean (akathartos) “pleasures of sin” for a season (Hebrews 11:25).

Three: Holiness avoids worldliness and the unequal yoke.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Background: This verse is often used to warn Christians about marrying a non-Christian, but it involves other applications.

Corinth was a major commercial center. To be a business man and to sell a product or service, one had to be a member of a craftsman’s guild — a commercial corporation. Each guild had a “god” or an “idol” that allegedly helped partisans to build and sell their crafts to clients. These guilds set up conventions, exhibitions, and expos not only to market their products but to honor the “god” or “idol” allegedly giving them success. Feasting, drinking, and celebrating these gods involved intoxication, frolicking, and debauchery. Many Corinthians participated in these festivals for commercial gain and to build rapport with other merchants. In their compromise, they became a stumbling block or “an offence;” i.e., they hindered the progress of the gospel (See 5:3).

Paul pounds the hammer of truth on these compromisers: “. . . what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” Separation was the order of the day.

Herein lies a principle: Christians are in the world, but not of the world. They can interact with and interface with unbelievers, but believers cannot join in what infidels do; say what they say; or go where they go without compromising the faith. *Holiness is not contagious, but worldliness is.* Therefore, the Christian must avoid certain social conditions in order to carry out his calling to be holy. “Others may, I cannot.”

Four: Holy people do “not receive the grace of God in vain.”

2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

“**as workers together with Him (Christ)**” means that Paul’s missionary team was in the harness pulling the gospel plow. They were Christ’s co-workers (eugernountes – 6:1) co-servants (doulos) and co-minsters (diakonos – 6:4); that is, they were ministers that gave up certain rights in order please God and to serve Him.

“**We beseech you**” glows from the sunshine in Paul: “beseech,” (parakeleo), expresses the tender warmth of Paul’s love. He pleads with them to perfect their calling (7:1) and not to receive the grace of God in vain (6:1).

The word “**vain**” means without complete effect or impact on the soul; i.e., . . . uselessly, fruitlessly, pointlessly. It is like a man being bootless in the jungle. A Christian who understands the love of God in Christ gives Him his all. He doesn’t hold back. He yields his mind, will, emotions, and body to Him. Fans of a football team will cheer after a win. Something is wrong if fans don’t shout and smile. Likewise, something is wrong if believers don’t yield their precious all to Christ after discovering the marvelous benefits of being reconciled to God.

The Corinthians, however, woke up every morning feeling like they had a choice to serve God or not serve God; to obey His law or not to obey His law; to do good or to do evil. Ellicott explains,

*“Those to whom he wrote had believed and been baptized, and so they had
“received the grace;” but the freedom of the will to choose good or evil remained
. . .”*

A true minister of Christ has no choice in life in regards to good and evil; that is, he knows the Lord has already made that choice for him; and, he is obligated to obey.

Five: holiness requires the man has been totally reconciled to God in his spirit, soul, and body.

2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

One of the problems with the Corinthians was that they were fond of the Lord, but not in love with the Lord; i.e., half-baked, cursory, superficial, and slipshod in their devotion to the Lord.

The inexplicable love of God for us is compressed into the text, “. . . all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. . . . to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. “

The word “**reconciliation**” in 5:19 comes from the Greek word “katallage” which refers to balancing the books, of enter-changing currency to give the correct change; that is, to make things balance or right. In punishing Christ for our sins, God’ balances the books, delivers us from debt, forgives our sins, and makes it possible for us who were once enemies of God to become reconciled to Him. God did the reconciling, we need only to receive it . . . and let it have its full impact on our soul.

Think of a man on death row: accused, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death when suddenly the judge appears, announces a pardon, pays the debt, and sets the man free. How should the free man respond? The beneficiary of such grace falls on his knees in thankfulness and offers his precious all to the benefactor. Any other response is insane.

Paul exhorted the Corinthian church to be totally reconciled to God in their minds, emotions, and will; to respond correctly to this grace and be totally devoted to the Lord in the home, at work, and in the church; to have no will, but His will.

The true mark of carnality is one that believes he still has choices in life. The true mark of a Christian impacted by such grace is that he surrenders his precious all to the will of God: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done!”

Holiness does not involve “speaking in tongues,” jumping up and down in a pew, or waiving one’s hand in the air trying to touch this holy God. Rather, holiness involve separation from the world, and total devotion to the will of God — the road less followed.

6.4 Guard Your Spirit

Malachi 2:15

“take heed to your spirit”

◆ Q: What does it mean to walk with God in your spirit.

Pious people who walk with God are rare. While many people know the LORD, only three men are credited with walking with God in the Scripture: Enoch, Noah, and Levi.

Genesis 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah

Genesis 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

Malachi 2:6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he (Levitical Priesthood) walked with me in peace and equity (mishear = level place), and did turn many away from iniquity.

According to Malachi, fellowship with God is a privilege that involves being at peace with God (on His terms), being upright (following His law-order), and challenging sinners to turn away from iniquity (confrontation of sin). (Note: John the Baptist was a Levite who was martyred over his definition of marriage – Mark 6:18).

The crux of walking with God involves guarding the spirit (Malachi 2:15-16; Zechariah 3:7).

Twice in Malachi 2, the LORD orders His people (men) to guard their spirit (the inner sanctuary of the heart where God meets with men).

Malachi 2:15-16 “And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hated putting away: for *one* covers violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore **take heed to your spirit**, that ye deal not treacherously.

Forgetful of the goal of producing a godly seed, many Israelites treacherously (without probable cause) divorced their Hebrew wives to marry seductive idolatresses. So serious were these perfidious divorces, the LORD ordered those so tempted “to take heed to your spirit” twice (2:15-16); that is, this type of sin endangered the whole man by staining his garments with sin:

“For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts” (2:16).

The word “**violence**” refers to that which is wrong and hurtful. Divorcing a wife without probable cause multiplies pain and increases suffering for the innocent wife and children involved in the marriage.

“**And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit**” is a difficult verse to translate. Who or what is “**the one**” in this passage is? Some interpret the word “one” as referring to the man. The Hebrew text states, “No one making or having the Spirit . . .”

No one acts as you have done because a man of conscience does not treacherously divorce his lawful wife; or No man having a residue of the Spirit treacherously breaks his covenant with his wife; or, No man seeking godly seed (children) would divorce his wife and marry an idolatress.

Many interpreters believe the word “one” refers to marriage: “Has not the LORD made them one, having a portion of the Spirit? And why one? Because He seeks godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not break faith with the wife of your youth” (the Berean Study Bible).

Some sins are so serious they breach the spirit of a man, derail God’s good purpose, and invite the judgment of God. In this case, the purpose of marriage is to raise a godly seed . . . and to divorce a faithful wife brought death to the family and tomb-like death to the man’s relationship to God.

When the text says “**take heed to your spirit**” it refers to guarding the holy place — the place where God meets with man — the human temple. Consider the following:

- God is a trinity of being: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19-20).
- Man is a tri-part being of spirit, soul, and body.

“God said, Let us make man in Our image” (Genesis 1:26).

“I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The tabernacle / temple had an outer court, a holy place, and a holy of holies. Armed Levitical guards were stationed at various locations to prevent a breach of holy protocol that would arouse the wrath of God against the trespasser . . . and the nation (Numbers 3:38; 8:19); that is, they were ordered to kill all trespassers. For example, when King Uzziah presumptuously entered the temple to offer a sacrifice, God struck him down with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26).— Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit wherein your spirit is equivalent to the Holy of Holies. It is where God meets with you. Therefore, guard your spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and prevent your spirit from embracing something unlawful.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Put this another way: In order for the nation to enjoy the blessings of a holy God, the LORD ordered the Levites to police the temple and to “put to death” any who violated temple protocol. When a profane Israelite brought a Moab temple prostitute into the camp during the time of Moses, a plague broke out among the people. Only the quick thrust of a javelin into the bellies of the offending couple by Phinehas the priest stopped the endemic (Numbers 25:6-9).

Guard your spirit!

The New Testament application to these Divine instructions is that all who want to walk with God in the temple of their heart must diligently slay everything that offends a holy God as a means to sanctification. Slay profane habits or be slain

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

1 Peter 4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin

Some sins, like fornication / adultery, are so serious they effect the whole man to the injury of his walk with God. There are sins that breach the inner temple and overthrow the man.

1 Corinthians 6:17 “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body (his whole being).”

Deep sins call for deep repentance. Forgiveness, says Isaiah, is only available to those who pulverize their stone idols into dust (Isaiah 27:9).

*“Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be atoned for, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when **he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces**, no Asherim or incense altars will remain standing.”*

Don’t hear what is not being said. These passages are **not** talking about losing one’s salvation, but about stained garments in the sanctification process and the danger of deliberate assassination of fellowship with the Spirit.

Walking with God involves setting up sentinels to shield one’s spirit against breaches of fellowship — ruptures that derail holy communion with the Christ — trespasses that grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

Malachi 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

6.5 Fight the Good Fight'

1 Timothy 6:12-14

Timothy's Good Profession Before Many Witnesses

1 Timothy 6:12-14 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

◆ **"Fight"** (*agonizomai*): Using the metaphor of a Greek athletic contest (wrestling or running), the apostle urges his disciple to run the race -- to rise above the petty enterprises of earth that perish, and to pursue the eternal, imperishable prize of heaven. This fight is contrasted with the race for wealth.

"These things are placed in strong contrast with "the struggle of the covetous" and its "miserable, perishable crown." (Ellicott)

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (6:10).

"Beware of over concern for money, or position, or glory. Someday you will meet a man who cares for none of these things. Then you will know how poor you are" – Rudyard Kipling.

1 John 5:4 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory (nike) that overcometh the world, even our faith."

There are many mediocre causes to which believers can invest their time and talents, but Paul urges his timid student to fight the good fight of faith -- for the faith, by faith, in the strength of the faith.

CONTROVERSY is not necessarily an evil. It can produce issues that are divisive and hurtful. But for those who desire the truth that makes men free, fair, intelligent debate can be stimulating and profitable – Herald of Holiness.

"Lay hold of eternal life:" This text is NOT saying to "serve God in order to obtain eternal life." In view is the grand prize, "eternal life" -- a metonym for the kingdom of God, salvation, heaven and heaven's rewards for faithfulness (Luke 18:18-30).

The verb **"lay hold of"** (*epilambonomi*) means to seize or invest one's precious all in the kingdom of God, to know God better, and to serve His interests; that is be "faithful unto death" (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).

"Professes a good profession before many witnesses" refers to Paul calling the young disciple to pursue the gospel ministry -- a call that was ratified by presbyters in the Church of Lystra -- and, may include his practical, missionary testimony to the unregenerate populations of the Roman world. This confession has official connotations in that Timothy's confession was a legal declaration or contract of loyalty to Christ -- a "pledge of allegiance" to the Savior. Paul understood that Timothy's profession would be further tested in corrupt Greek / Roman courts devoted to Rome.

Christ's **"good confession"** is not His whole ministry, but his courtroom testimony before the malleable tribunal of Pilate -- a reminder to all Christians that many leaders in the church will face criminal prosecution based on manufactured charges by hostile accusers in government power-courts presided over by limber power-judges.

Paul furnishes two motivations

Runners and wrestlers need motivation. Look at this text as Coach Paul's pep talk before the big fight. Political winds shifted and the Roman Empire became hostile for these gospelers. In such acerbic times, Christian men must stand strong and tall.

First, Paul invokes the presence of the living God, the Author of all life Who **"quickeneth all things"** (*zoopoleo*), to remind Timothy of his clear duty to pursue "the faith" that offers eternal life to believing men. One does not invoke "the Name" of the Lord or His presence but for significant, consequential matters. The Christian ministry is a battle, and the true disciple is not permitted to resign or quit. He must finish the marathon in honor to please the Father and the Son. We must continue the fight until the final bell (death) or **"until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Second, Paul reminds this pastor that his Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, fought the good fight; that He was faithful to the end in providing a remarkable witness to the Roman Governor: **"who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession."** This is the only time that Pontius Pilate is mentioned outside the gospels --- a reminder of the importance of supplying careful, accurate answers before magistrates.

"He bore His witness with a terrible death awaiting Him" (Ellicott)

The word "**professed**" (*homo-legeo*) means "to agree with" or "to say the same thing;" that is, to live and speak in conformity with truth . . . with Christ . . . with the Holy Scriptures. Jesus differs from other religious teachers who propound on morals and religious principles.

Our Lord's message contained morals and religious principles, but the essence of His message was about Himself being the Son of God, very God of God, the Messiah, "the way, the truth, and the life." Moreover, He was not only the Truth, but He spoke truth, and was Himself a Witness to the truth of His divine nature. He was either the most egotistical person that ever lived, or He was Who He claimed to be, the Son equal with the Father, the King-Priest-Prophet-Redeemer of God sent to be the Savior of the world (Matthew 1:21).

*"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. **He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice**" (C. S. Lewis).*

Every contest has rules

1 Timothy 6:14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Further, Paul nudges Timothy to follow the rules of the contest: to "**keep the commandment without spot**" -- a reminder his service is a holy race where one must avoid sinful tangents that stain a man's holy calling which can disqualify him for holy service (See Leviticus 13-15); that he must run clean before God and free of self-imposed hindrances and actions repugnant to men (Hebrews 12:1-3).

"The whole Gospel is law, and the testimony is commandment, and we have to keep it, as well as to confess it" (MacLaren).

"to preserve that doctrine unchanged and unalloyed till the coming again of the blessed Master" (Ellicott)

Hebrews 12:1-3 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Our Lord's "**good profession**" involves two movements: one before the Chief Priests and the other before Governor Pilate.

See Christ's Good Confession Before Pontius Pilate.

See Christ's Good Confession Before the Jewish Priests

The End of the Fight

1 Timothy 6:14 . . . until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The word "**appearing**" is the Greek word "epiphany" which is one of the terms for the Second Coming of Christ.

Every contest has a "finish line." The "end of the bell" is the Parousia of our Lord. He will come. The archangel shall blow the trumpet and call an end to the contest. We win! Until then fight the good fight and follow the rules.

1 Timothy 6:15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

The noun "**times**" could be translated "seasons." In Paul's mind there is no uncertainty about the *epiphany* of our Lord, but he expresses no certainty about the seasons of His coming (Parousia) -- a time determined by the "mysterious counsels from on High" (Ellicott). Every Christian in every age has the hope that our Lord might appear in their life time. But, no man knows the hour.

"**Until**" the appearing (v. 14), we "fight the good fight" by faith. In this now time, we contend that Christ is the sovereign King (Acts 17:6-7) and that if men want to enter kingdom of God they must acknowledge His authority and surrender to this invisible King in now time. We preach that He is the Supreme Ruler, and the world doubts, disputes, mocks, and attempt to create their own view of utopia. Madmen rush to accumulate wealth jockeying for political power in order to create a sinner's paradise on earth.

The gospel that turned "the world upside down" taught there was another king other than Caesar (Act 17:6-7).

In his time (future), He will be revealed as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and show Himself to the world as the "**only Potentate**" (dunates) -- the only "**blessed**" (mararious) good virtuous power, ruler, king, or monarch.

There is an interpretative matter of who the title "**king of Kings**" and only "Potentate" belong -- to God or to Christ. Barnes and Ellicott believe it is "God." But, the same appellation is applied to Christ in Revelation 17:14:

"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Timothy 6:16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be and power everlasting. Amen.

The subject is "**God**" with a lesson on Theology.

Who only has "**immortality**" (*athanasia*) means "a" (without) "*thanasia*" (death). God is eternal; man is temporal; Man is mortal, but God is immortal. He has no beginning and no end. Only He has life within Himself. He is dependent on nothing; we are dependent on everything. Man's body will die. He will never die. To have eternal life, one must be in relationship with this Eternal Being: "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me, shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:26).

"**which no man can approach**" is tutorial on the unique, holy character of God; on His unapproachableness, untouchableness, inaccessibleness, unfathomableness, and unsearchableness -- a lesson on man's inability to approach this invincible, impenetrable fortress where God dwells. It would be easier break into the White House than to enter the presence of God. In truth, if man is to know God and have a relationship with Him, He must take the initiative and reveal Himself to man. And, this is what He has done in and through His only Son.

His Dwelling in light is a metaphor for perfect holiness and righteousness -- a contrast to men who dwell in darkness.

"**Whom no man hath seen or can see**" is a lesson on holiness. Holiness is compared to the brightness of the Sun. Stare at it and you will go blind. Likewise, no man, Christian or non-Christian, can look at God directly or reach out and touch Him who is the everlasting Light. To do so would be instant death. Think of Uzzah the Priest and the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:7). Darkness yields to light, but light does not surrender to darkness.

Even the best nun, monk, pastor, or priest among us is not qualified to see His essence. So called "Christians" attend rock-band hyper-churches where people raise their hands and sway back and forth as if they are trying to touch the Almighty is totally despicable and contemptible because it exposes their ignorance of the holiness of God and their own contaminating wretchedness.

1 Timothy 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

"**Charge**" (*paraggello*) means solemnly "to order" the rich (1) NOT to be "**highminded**" (*hupselophroneo*) or arrogant; that is, to think they are better than or more valuable than the poor.

(2) "**nor trust in uncertain riches:**" The danger of wealth is to trust in it. Riches are "uncertain" (*adlotes*) meaning that riches have wings that fly away. Rather, Paul orders the rich to trust in the living God who never ambles away from those who rely upon Him.

1 Timothy 6:18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

(3) to do good as God defines good; (3) to be rich in good works as God defines "good works;" (3) "read to distribute" or to be generous in giving to the needy; and "to communicate" (*koinonikous*) which refers to giving to ministers and the gospel ministry.

1 Timothy 6:19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

"**foundation**" refers to investments in the building on the other side of the veil; that is, to invest in those ministries related to the kingdom of God or eternal life the main gift of those under His reign.

1 Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

"**O**" is a Pauline interjection that expresses emotion -- a heartfelt concern for the future well-being of Timothy's ministry.

There are two main commands in this section: The first is to "**keep**" (*pulasso*) which means to guard or protect;" and, the second is "**to avoid**" (*ektrepo*) which means "to turn away from." The former is an offensive command demanding positive energy to carefully and accurately teach the gospel. The latter demands defensive energy to resist intellectual , political, and social opposition to the gospel.

"**that**" is a reference to the gospel. Paul speaks as a Grantor to Timothy who is a trustee of the gospel. The duty of a trustee is to guard that which has been entrusted to him. His job was to prevent its adulteration by critics and to pass on the gospel intact to his congregation.

The man of God faces opposition in the form of (1): "**profane and vain babblings:**" "Vain babbling" (*kenophoneo*) is the accusative meaning "foolish, empty talk," and the adjective "**profane**" (*bebelos*) refers to the common street nadder of ungodly people: frivolous chatter about food, sex, fashion, and featherbrain triviality. This would include turning from gossip, jabber, philosophical nonsense, expletives, gutter language, and the use of mince words.

The man of God also faces opposition in the form of (2): "**oppositions of science falsely so called.**" The word "**oppositions**" (*antithesis*) refers to ideas that directly oppose the gospel: denying the virgin birth, the sinlessness of Christ, His Sonship, humanity, deity, the effects of the cross, His resurrection, the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. The man of God must also resist disturbing trends in Judaism, Zionism, Charismatic extremism, pseudo spirituality, and the power cults.

The words "**science falsely**" (*pseudonumos gnosis*) refers to **pseudo knowledge**, fake science, and the fictitious theories of Plato, the "Big Bang," "evolution," a "four billion year old earth," "spinning ball earth," "dinosaurs," "gravity," "uniformitarianism," ufology, astrology, space travel, gender-bender deceptions, genetic imagineering, climate change activism, certain pro-vaccines programs, questionable virus and disease theories, and any

hypothesis that can't be duplicated or proved in repeatable scientific process that opposes Biblical values. This would also include pseudo knowledge in social sciences like psychology, sociology, and feminism with its ugly offspring: abortion, transgenderism, euthanasia, and LGBTQ madness.

1 Timothy 6:21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

The word "**erred**" (*astocheo*) means **to deviate from or to miss the mark**. Paul acknowledged these antichrist forces were present in his time causing many to leave the road to the Celestial City.

Men need to be strengthened by grace and Paul wishes Timothy to be fortified by the grace of God as opposed to fighting the battle in his own strength.

In summary, these two trials of Christ not only shows us our Lord's courageous confession that He was the Messiah-King, but His judicial skill to avoid legal entrapment and to expose the corruption of these two courts -- simply stated as "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession."

Application: Every mature Christian standing for the truth will face frivolous, capricious charges by adversaries in some corrupt court. Consequently, one would do well to prepare for that day by prayerfully studying our Lord's "good confession." No one owes the truth to those who abuse the truth.

6.6 Know Your Enemy

Matthew 13:25

**“Know yourself and know your enemy.
You will be safe in every battle” - Sun Tzu**

The Battle is Real

◆ The Rutherford Institute explains:

“Life in America has become a gut-wrenching, soul-sucking, misery-drenched, demoralizing existence.

We have managed to survive crackdowns, clampdowns, shutdowns, showdowns, shootdowns, standdowns, knockdowns, putdowns, breakdowns, lockdowns, takedown, slowdowns, meltdowns, and never-ending letdowns.

We've been held up, stripped down, faked out, photographed, frisked, fracked, hacked, tracked, cracked, intercepted, accessed, spied on, zapped, mapped, searched, shot at, tasered, tortured, tackled, trussed up, tricked, lied to, labeled, libeled, leered at, shoved aside, saddled with debt not of our own making, sold a bill of goods about national security, tuned out by those representing us, tossed aside, and taken to the cleaners . . . We've been sodomized, victimized, jeopardized, demoralized, traumatized, stigmatized, vandalized, demonized, polarized and terrorized, often without having done anything to justify such treatment . . . We've had our schools locked down, our students handcuffed, shackled and arrested for engaging in childish behavior such as food fights, our children's biometrics stored, their school IDs chipped, their movements tracked, and their data bought, sold and bartered for profit by government contractors, all the while they are treated like criminals and taught to march in lockstep with the police state . . . **Take your stand now**—using every nonviolent means at your disposal—while you still can” (Rutherford Institute).

The Enemy Within.

Amy Carmichael, a missionary in pursuit of piety, identified the enemy:

*God, harden me against myself,
The coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease and rest and joy.
Myself, arch-traitor to myself,
My hollowest friend,
My deadliest foe,
My clog, whatever road I go.*

Who was Amy Carmichael?

“Amy Carmichael was an Irish missionary to India. She is known for opening a safe house called Dohnavur Fellowship after rescuing children from being trafficked in the Hindu temples. She served in India for fifty-five years without a furlough, and in the last twenty years of her life, she remained bedridden and wrote several books and poems about her deep love for Christ. Her dedication to serving God has inspired many Christians to become missionaries and to remain steadfast in their faith.” (Source: <https://bethanygu.edu/blog/stories/amy-carmichael/>)

The Enemy of Doubt

Doubt is the mother of all sins. The world's megaphone begs all to doubt God and plunge into sensuality.

“Relying on God has to start all over every day, as if nothing has yet been done.” – C.S. Lewis

Reading the Holy Scriptures inspires faith because faith comes by hearing and believing Word of God (Roman 10:17). God is most glorified when we believe Him.

Just the presence of faith in a sea of doubt is the victory (nike) that overcomes the world. It is not our deeds that commend us to God, but the presence of active faith burning in the hearth of our hearts that pleases Him.

Therefore, we fight the fight of faith by faith and for faith.

“If you believe in a God who controls the big things, you have to believe in a God who controls the little things. It is we, of course, to whom things look ‘little’ or ‘big’.” – Elisabeth Elliot

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

St. Augustine said, “Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.” Yes, this needs to be done.

But, we are not fideist that believe in faith for faith’s sake. True Christian faith is based on the facts of historical Christianity. We believe because the evidence supports the claim that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

Faith stands on evidence. We don’t just believe blindly. True faith is grounded on proof of claim that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave. Because we have historical, legal, eye-witness evidence of how God has moved in history, we have courage to trust him for our future . . . for what we cannot see. Faith never knows where God is leading, but it knows and trusts the goodness and wisdom of the One who leads.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

Faith produces encouragement. We know that our brothers and sisters may fall into fits of doubt, as we have. During these times, we help lift one another up and remind each other of God’s good promises.

Stop inspiring fear in those around you by listening to dark news and inspire courage by standing in the light of the Word through faith. God has been good and He will continue to manifest His goodness even in these depressing times. Let us approach these days expecting to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Enemies in the family

“And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” – Matthew 10:36

The Enemies in the Church

The church in America has been infiltrated, penetrated, frustrated, abbreviated, deprecated, violated, recreated, subjugated and dominated by political forces.

*“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed **tares** among the **wheat**, and went his way.” – Matthew 13:25*

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God (the church), shewing himself that he is God” – 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

Enemies in Theology

The gospel has been attacked and redacted so it is hardly recognizable. It has been robbed of its morality, integrity, dignity, simplicity, purity, and spirituality and remolded into a Jesuit / Zionistic tool for conquest and power.

Catholicism, Liberalism, Zionism, Pope-ism, Social Gospel, psychology, anti-nomianism, modernism, permissiveness, Judaism, communism, spiritualism, Armenianism, Charismatic / Pentecostal detours and more are enemies of truth and therefore enemies of true devotion to Christ. Any intellectual movement without Christ, the cross, and the Holy Scriptures are an enemy of the gospel and holy living.

Enemies in Organized in Groups

But, enemies also include institutions within and without “Christianity:” The Catholic Church, Jesuits, Pentecostals, Free Masons, Charismatics, Congress, Notre Dame, Prager University, the Anglican Church of England, and many others.

Enemies Historically

Enemies of holiness include people heading religious orders such as the Popes, White Popes, Black Popes, Billy Graham (33 degree Mason), Jimmy Carter (33 degree Mason), Psychologist Sigmund Freud, B.F. Skinner, Robert Shueller of Crystal Cathedral, Pat Robertson (33 degree Mason), Queen / King of England, Joel Osteen, Hal Lindsey, Jack Hyles, Norman Vincent Peale the Power of Positive Thinking, Paula White, Dennis Prager, Joyce Meyer, Martin Luther King, James Dobson, Kenneth Hagin, John Hagee, John Wimber, Kenneth Copeland, all women so-called “pastors,” all reputed “Christian psychologists,” and many more too numerable to name.

Never forget the Roman Catholic Church along with the Jesuits never repented of the inquisition and the pope’s order to eliminate Protestants.

Enemies in the State

Any state agency or officer that seeks to press gang Christians into service, to demand obedience to the laws of the Municipal Corporation in the District of Columbia, and demands you surrender 30+% of your income to support power mongers is an enemy of the Christian and his ambition to live a “quiet and peaceable life.”

Friends of the Gospel

These would include the Reformationists, Dispensationalists, the Puritans, D.L. Moody, A.W. Tozer, George Eldon Ladd, R.C. Sproul, Miles Standford, John McArthur, many Orthodox monks, John Rushdooney, Anthony Hoekema, Bill McDonald, Jean Gibson, Jim Wright, John Walden, Marion Michaux, John Weaver, Jim Elliot, Steven Collins (ABQ), J. Oswald Sanders, John Warwick Montgomery, Dwight Pentecost, many pastors and unknown Christians.

See John Whitehead’s excellent legal briefs.

6.7 Passing the Tests of life

Exodus 15:25

◆ Passing the tests of life is the gateway to spiritual power. Private piety with an undivided heart is the mark of a true man. Beware of being double minded. Having two lords, two masters, two ambitions, two loves, two lives – one public, the other private.

God tests men, but men are not permitted to test God. To become a better man, one must pass the tests God's puts in front of him. Those who pass the tests are rewarded by the court with strength and power.

In other words, one key to the Christian life is to pass the tests of life, and to live a pious life under pressure in word and deed.

Exodus 15:25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute (choq) and an ordinance (mishpat), and there he proved (nacah) them,

The word “**statute**” (*choq*) refers to a law or ordinance or a code.

The word “**ordinance**” (*mishpat*) refers to a judgment or decision of the court -- a verdict by a judge. It is a ruling based on law; a decision after a trial; a ruling of the court on a specific case.

The word “**proved**” (*nacah*) is our word "test." "Proved" is not a judgment nor a law, but the actual trial where the truth of a matter is examined. Trials bring out facts so a jury can decide (*misphat*) the truth or falsity of a claim. A trial or *nacah* is *the actual process* of a trial.

All of life is a testing ground for spirituality where the facts of our sin, or our righteousness, comes under examination.

Exodus 15:26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments (mitsvah), and keep all his statutes (choq), I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

The word “**commandment**” (*mitsvah*) refers to an authoritative directive. According to rabbis, God gave the Hebrews 613 *mitsvahs*. Modern Jews consider any "good deed" a *mitzvah*.

The terms "**hearken**" and "**do**" and "**give ear**" to all my commandments regarding His *mitsvahs* is the fundamental *choq* in God's judicial process (the *nacah* or trial). If the nation passed the test (the *nacah*), the *mishpat* would yield *freedom from disease and healing from Jehovah-Rapha*.

Our Lord rewards simple obedience that comes from a pure heart . . . for “*the pure in heart shall see God*” in their spiritual minds (Matthew 5:8).

Do not hear what is not being said. We are not saying that men are saved by keeping the law. Men are saved by faith alone, and sanctified by faith plus obedience. There is all the difference in the world between justification by faith and sanctification by faithfulness. The former gives one a right standing in the court; the latter assures the reward of the court; the former secures freedom from the guilt of sin; the latter secures freedom from the power of sin.

6.8 Do You Love Jesus?

John 21: 15-17

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith

unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

◆ One might wonder if such an imperfect man could ever serve God.

Our Lord tested Peter, not to humiliate him, but to make him a better man. Peter failed, but Christ restored him to honor. Look at this section as Peter’s re-commission.

He asked Peter, “Do you love me?” And, if you do, “feed my sheep.”

He did not ask Peter if he was fond of Jesus, but “Do you love me?”

He did not ask Peter if he admired Jesus, but “Do you love me?”

He did not ask Peter if he felt like he had a good theological education, but “Do you love me?”

He did not ask Peter if he felt good about Himself . . . or his past . . . or his parents, but “Do you love me?”

He did not ask Peter if he was strong enough to take on Christian ministry, but “Do you love me?”

Likewise, the Lord is not asking you if you are fond of Him, but “Do you love me?”

Loving Jesus is the most important requisite of holy service.

6.9 Think Grace

Romans 6:11

Likewise reckon (think this way) ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Titus 2:11-12 "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age"

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then approach God’s Throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

◆ Appropriating grace sweetens relationships and changes the Christian forever. Add grace to every conflict, and the chance of restoration becomes hopeful.

How does a person impacted by the grace of God at Calvary think?

As a justified, regenerated man, I am dead to sin. Baptized into Christ, I am alive to God. Identified with Him, I share in the benefits of His death, burial, and resurrection. Think position. Claim your status in the family of God.

I come to a throne of grace. Because it is a throne of grace I trust Christ will overlook the many defects lingering within my soul, and the defects of my weak prayers. Grace is the incense that makes my prayers acceptable to God. Hear my prayers and interpret my groans, O God of grace.

Law is good. I am saved in order to have power to keep the law. Grace is good. It is not permissive. Life under grace teaches me to say "No" to ungodliness.

But, what if I fail?

- When I fail to imitate Christ in all things, I must rely upon grace to restore my soul: grace to confess my sin, grace to fully repent, grace to make restitution to those I injure, grace to apply the blood of Christ and the washing of His Word to my troubled conscience, grace to walk in peace and love again.
- I am loved, not because of who I am, but because of Who He is—a God of love (1 John 4:8ff).
- As to my past life, it does not exist before God: I died with Christ at Calvary, and I am now alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:6-11). My future is glorious because I now share in the life of Christ.
- I am not on probation: I am not out on parole. I am not in danger of losing my freedom because freedom is not conditioned upon my performance.
- Grace once extended to me will not be retracted because of me. God knows all about me. He loves me, not because of Who I am, but because of Who He is—a God of love.
- Even if I give God my very best, I am still unworthy of His grace. His grace is independent of me, and it is not dependent on what I do or do not do.
- His grace is not bestowed because of human merit, nor is it withdrawn because of human failure. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.
- My enjoyment of grace is totally dependent on my faith. When I believe, I really enjoy God's grace. When I am humble and consent to be love, I am enjoying grace; when I am proud and demand a reason to be loved, I am despising grace (Romans 15:13).

- I must not look within for reasons why God loves me. I must look outside of myself, at Calvary, to discern the reason why God loves me. The reason I am loved is within the heart of God, and not because of some talent or virtue within me.
- Because I am enriched by grace, I have stopped trying to do something to earn God's love. The great secret of the Christian life is to allow myself to be loved knowing that I am unworthy of His love!
- Because I am enriched by God's grace, I have stopped looking *inside* myself for reasons why God should love me. The deepest theology that I know is that, "*Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*"
- I am learning that God's work *outside* me at the cross is the reason God loves me. My greatest need is to look at Calvary to understand the height, and length, and depth of God's infinite love; that is, "to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19).
- Because God always loves me, I have *stopped judging circumstances* as evidence of His love. His chastisements are not indicators of a change in God's disposition toward me, nor are comfortable circumstances indicators of His acceptance and approval. Both His chastisement and comforts are evidence of his attentive care toward me (Hebrews 12:5ff).
- God's love is not defined by my circumstances. His love is defined by Who He is—a God of love. What He does flows from His character. I must not judge God by my present condition, but by His eternal revelation -- the Word of God.
- Because I am under grace, I must stop seeking God's blessings. I must identify them and begin to give thanks for them. I cannot be more blessed because He has already blessed me with every spiritual blessing I heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). I will not be more blessed if I obey more; but, if I obey, I will enjoy His blessings more. If I am going through a difficult time, it does not mean that I am loved less. I must learn to believe God loves me even though trials surround me.
- Afflictions are good for me. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray" (Psalm 119:67).
- Because I am graciously loved, I must stop looking for material blessings as the sign of God's love to me. God's blessings in the age of grace are spiritual (Ephesians 1:3). Having physical things is not an indication of God's favor any more than a lack of material things is an indication of His disfavor.
- Because I am smothered in grace, I can stop worrying about myself; however, I have many concerns about others.
- Because my life has been so richly impacted by grace, I must serve God, not because it is imperative that I do so, but because it is what thankful people do. Every response rendered by me must spring from my acceptance before God or it quickly degenerates

into legalism—efforts to be accepted. It is not a necessity to serve God (legalism). It is a privilege to serve God (grace). Charity, not the command, is my primary motivation for service. Thankfulness inspires my actions. Because thankfulness did not inspire ancient Israelites, many rabbis consider service without gratitude to be the greatest sin of all.

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you” – Deuteronomy 28:47-48.

- Legalists serve out of necessity; gracious souls serve out of generosity. Legalists are obliged to produce good deeds because God is the Judge. Souls impacted by grace obey God’s law because they understand His commands originate from His sovereignty and love. Jesus is our Lord and Savior. If I serve narrowly out the imperative, I am motivated by the fear of punishment. But, perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). I need to hate sin more, and I need to esteem Christ more. If I love Him, I will obey Him. If I obey Him out of love, grace fuels the fires of devotion.
- Service must spring from a grateful heart or it is not grace.
- Because God loves out of His character, I must love out of my character. Just as God loves from Who He is and not because of who others are, I must learn to love others, not because of what they can do for me, but because of who I am—the one whom Jesus loves. I love out of who I am and what I am becoming, a person of love.
- I seek to be a pious, holy man, not to be justified, but to be sanctified; not to be right with God, but because I am right with God (in grace). I keep the law, not to be saved, but because I am saved. Because God has given me His Spirit, I now have the power to obey the law and do what is right. If I fail, His grace at work within restores my soul.
- I now serve the Lord with humility, not because I am better than other people, but because His love has not been withdrawn because of my many failures. Service is not a necessity for me. It is a great privilege for me. By the grace of God I have a ministry.

6.10 Seek Not Great Things for Thyself

Jeremiah 45: 5

Q: Are your expectations too high?

◆ This message to Baruch occurred in the 4th year of Jehoiachin 605-604 B.C. (son of King Jehoiakim) as he was beginning his career and his Levitical scribe service to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 45: 5 And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

This passage was addressed to Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, circa 605-604 B.C. - the first year of the Babylonian conquest over the Levant.

Baruch was charged with the duty of writing Jeremiah's prophecy and then delivering it to the people on the special "fast day" in the 9th month of the Hebrew calendar (Nov-Dec). The scroll announced the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. When Jehoiachin heard the reading of the scroll, he ordered it to be shredded and burned it in the fire -- an inexcusable act that sealed his doom (Jeremiah 36).

Baruch suffered two afflictions: (1) the sorrows of impending implosion of the nation he loved - "The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land" (Jeremiah 45:4); and, (2) the sorrows connected with his personal struggles . . . even forced into hiding from the king's police force - "Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest" (Jeremiah 26 and Jeremiah 45:3).

It was during this time, the Lord commissioned Jeremiah to deliver a message of comfort and warning to Baruch: "And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek *them* not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

We are not told what "great" things Baruch sought for himself, only that his expectations were not appropriate for the times.

From this we learn the following:

(1) Baruch became discouraged when he had to hide from Jehoiachin's arrest order.

Likewise, we are easily discouraged by our first encounters with overt oppression from government:

"Young beginners in religion are apt to be discouraged with little difficulties, which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God." (Matthew Henry).

Those who expect much from government will be disappointed in government. Where government is god in the minds of God's people, you cannot expect them not to betray you . . . and they did betray Baruch.

(2) Baruch suffered from a stoked furnace of ambition.

Likewise, we often suffer from too high of expectations of people, government rulers, and churchmen. We must lower our expectations of our fellow-citizens and church members or we will be forced to endure a fettle of frustration (Hebrews 12:13ff). Ambitions must be tempered for the times.

(3) Like Baruch, we are often over ambitious and self-seeking.

We might ask Baruch, "When the whole nation is being driven to destruction, do you expect to be exempt from difficulty?" As Baruch had too high expectations in his doomed generation, we also may suffer from too high of expectations in our world . . . in our marriage . . . in our church.

(4) It is foolish to seek wealth and pleasure in a world devouring itself with indulgence and excesses.

Normally, ambition for a young man is good. But, it was ill-timed of Baruch to expect great things for himself when God was judging the nations around him. Likewise, we should not expect security in a world where everything is amiss and nothing is certain.

(5) If we have the necessities of life, let us therewith be happy:

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8).

(6) The message to Baruch was not only for Baruch, but for Jeremiah ((Jeremiah 12:1-5; 15:10-18) -- a common affliction of the saints in every age.

The message was designed to make Baruch better and not bitter, glad and not mad, content and not malcontent, alert and not distracted.

(7) God's message to Baruch was not designed to relieve him of responsibilities.

He had duties that needed to be discharged. But, climbing up the career ladder was not in the forecast.

The grand lesson in this chapter is that we must adjust our expectations (not our standards) based on the trammels of our times. God's man must adapt to his circumstances, lower his expectations, and focus on his God-given assignment. Piety is always in style in every generation.

There is a time to study, and a time to stop studying.

There is a time to start a business, and a time to retire from business.

There is a time to start get married and a time not to get married.

And, as Solomon taught us,

*"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up*

that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (Ecclesiastes 3).

Study your ambitions. Discern the times in which you live, and where you are in the seasons of life. Discern God's will for you and do it with all of your heart . . . and, His will involves holiness and devotion to His Son.

6.11 Swearing Allegiance to Christ

Abraham's Allegiance

Genesis 14:18

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him (Abraham) . . . “

◆ Before us is the first communion in Scripture.

After defeating five kings in Syria near Mt. Hermon, Abraham meets Melchizedek who brought bread and wine to refresh the exhausted rescuers.

Melchizedek, the mysterious king-priest, brightened Abraham's day by refreshing his body and soul with bread and wine. At this simple feast, the King of Salem formally blessed Abraham and the LORD for giving the patriarch victory over five Bedouin kings. At this moment the Spirit moved.

A unique and special communion took place between the Melchizedek, Abraham, and the LORD that only the three of them could fully appreciate; *that is, this is the first communion between God and men recorded in the Bible.*

Genesis 14:17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered

thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. 21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. 22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, 23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.

Note the following facts

Sodom followed Abraham.

Melchizedek stood between Abraham and the King of Sodom.

Abraham defeated five marauding kings in an effort to rescue Lot and the captives of Sodom. Exhausted and fearful, he was met by the king of Sodom who trailed the captives. Melchizedek king of peace brought supplies (bread and wine) to feed the weary army and the captives; that is, he intervened between the king of Sodom and Abraham. The king of Sodom came to take, not to give; to control, not to make whole.

Melchizedek held two offices: that of king and that of a priest. He administered justice as king; and, the result of his priestly duties favored peace. No other person in the Bible held these two offices except our Lord.

Melchizedek was not a self-proclaimed priest, or a priest, but a "High Priest." He was not a priest of just any god, but the High Priest of God (Elohim) -- **a de jure High Priest of the Most High God**, Possessor / owner / creator / "holder in due course" of "Heaven and Earth" (14:19-22); that is, he was a genuine, valid, bona fide High Priest of the one, true, infinite, virtuous, personal triune Spirit who is the God of Creation, the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, and the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is uniquely-called the priest of the Most High God who got the will of God done on earth and not the will of man (Hebrews 7:1).

Melchizedek ministered to Abram and his "posse" after his arduous chase of the five kings and the recovery of Lot by providing them bread and wine. This supply provided food for energy and wine to quench thirst -- the most fundamental of all human needs. But, it was more than this. It was the First Communion -- a mystical fellowship that took place between Melchizedek, Abraham, and the Most High. The bread and wine remind us of Jesus exhortation, "Do this in remembrance of me" -- a holy communion honoring Him as the Savior-King-Priest-Sacrifice.

At this communion, Melchizedek "blessed" Abraham the Patriarch and Father of the Hebrew nation (14:19), not the other way around. This means that Melchizedek was greater in status than Abraham.

This blessing was not a cursory, “high-five” blessing, but a holy, authoritative seal of approval with Divine effect. He blessed, honored, and proclaimed the name of the Most High God for giving Abraham victory in his war against the five tyrants.

Though some time elapsed, Abraham tithed 10% of his assets to Melchizedek -- a formal declaration that this king-priest was greater in importance, status, and character than Abraham, the Father of Israel.

The intervention, mediation, and blessing of Melchizedek gave Abraham the strength to reject Sodom's contract offer to the patriarch. Still beaming from the sunshine of communion with Melchizedek and the Most High God, Abraham lifted up his hand to the Most High God, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth, proclaimed his devotion and allegiance to the LORD, and rejected Sodom's contract offer (See Psalm 50:14).

Lifting up the hand(s) was not like contemporary feelers do in modern coffee-cup church services, but an act of surrender to the jurisdiction of the Most High -- an act of oath taking -- a pledge of allegiance to the LORD, the Most High God -- an act of accepting Christ as one's Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9) -- an act declaring one's devotion to the LORD God and his law -- an act that renews one's covenant to the Savior -- an act that bestows a privilege status upon believers whereby they have the right to appear in court and make their request known to *elyown* (the Most High - Psalm 50:14-15).

Everything about Melchizedek speaks of Christ, points to Christ, and foretells men of the ultimate King-Priest. Melchizedek is telling us to come to the theater, sit down, and gaze at Christ -- to trust Christ to meet our temporal and eternal needs.

Thus, the first communion was a powerful encounter between the Most High God, Melchizedek His king-priest, and Abraham -- a fellowship around a decree of blessing, bread, and wine.

Likewise, we learn that Sodom follows pious men.

Only the intercession of Christ can preserve them. Devotion to Christ is the strength of men in pursuit of piety. When we remember Christ at the breaking of the bread, we commune with the Father and the Son. In so doing, we receive strength to reject Sodom's contract offers and to "throw up our hands to keep our covenant of peace with the Most High (Psalm 50:14).

6.12 Counting the Cost of Following Jesus

Matthew 18:19

Mr. Too Quick: I will follow thee

Matthew 18:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

◆ The fact the scribe stated he wanted to follow Jesus is nothing short of amazing. Why?

Perhaps he heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount and dreamed of joining this new political party or sharing in the power structure of this new kingdom.

We simply don't know, but one thing we know for sure is that he failed to count the cost of following Christ. Men of the cross must share in Christ's poverty, privation, and homelessness (Ellicott).

Following Christ is not a "name it, claim it" journey. It is more like trusting God each day to meet our daily needs rather than trusting God to build you fortunes. The Son lacked a nest to call home and many a pious man has never owned his own lodging and never bought a new car. Is it worth it? Yes. Is it is easy? No!

You can serve Christ superficially with duplicity of heart, or you can follow Christ with all of your heart trusting Him to meet your needs. Count the cost -- the cost is real.

Mr. Too Slow: "Follow me."

Matthew 8: 21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Before us is a serious call to a superficial disciple. The scribe said, "I will follow thee;" but to this man Christ said, "Follow me."

An unwilling heart doesn't need to go far to find an excuse. Mr. Too Slow deserved a rebuke just as much as Mr. Too Quick.

We learn from this that some people travel through life with the pedal to the metal and others travel the pilgrim cobblestone street with their emergency brake on. Both received the Lord's condemnation. Delay is as bad as haste. A pale spirit is as fatal as having a red-hot will. The mind of a mule is as defective as having the mind of a horse.

Carrying for an aged father is a good work required by God, but it was not the work required of the man at this time in his life. Conducting one's business is a good thing unless that business is the anchor that keeps one from sailing his ship on the sea of holy service.

Clutching to security is as much a spiritual flaw as the failure to consider the cost of following Christ.

Mr. Just Right: He left all . . . and followed him.

Luke 5:27-28 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

Luke records the call of Matthew. There wasn't much to leave -- his bench at the custom house, his fellow employees, and his emolument, but it was all that he had. and no man can leave more than that (Ellicott).

Men in pursuit of piety count the cost and follow Christ.

6.13 Seven Marks of True Discipleship

Luke 14:26

◆ Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary. Love so amazing, so divine, could never be satisfied with less than our precious all.

The Lord Jesus made stringent demands on those who would be His disciples—demands that are overlooked in this day of luxury living. Too often we look upon Christianity as an escape from hell and a guarantee of heaven. Beyond that, we feel that we have every right to enjoy the best that this life has to offer. We know that there are those strong verses on discipleship in the Bible, but we have difficulty reconciling them with our ideas of what Christianity should be. We can accept the fact that soldiers give their lives for patriotic reasons, but we are not comfortable with giving our precious all to follow Christ.

“He looks today, as He has ever looked, not for crowds drifting aimlessly in His track, but for individual men and women whose undying allegiance will spring from their having recognized that He wants those who are prepared to follow the path of self-renunciation which He trod before them” — H. A. Evan Hopkins.

We do not think it strange that Communists give their lives for their political cause. But that “blood, sweat and tears” should characterize the life of a follower of Christ somehow seems remote and hard to grasp. And yet the words of the Lord Jesus are clear enough.

There is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we accept them at their face value. Here are the terms of discipleship as laid down by the Savior:

1. A supreme love for Jesus Christ.

“If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

This does not mean that we should ever have animosity or ill-will in our hearts toward our relatives, but it does mean that our love to Christ should be so great that all other loves are hatred by comparison. Actually, the most difficult clause in this passage is the expression, “yea, and his own life also.” Self-love is the most stubborn hindrance in the course of discipleship. Not until we are willing to lie down our very lives for Him are we in the place where He wants us to be.

2. A denial of self.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...” (Matthew 16:24).

Denial of self is not the same as self-denial. The latter means foregoing certain foods, pleasures, or possessions. But denial of self means such complete submission to the lordship of Christ that self has no rights or authority at all. It means that self-abdicates the throne. It is expressed in the words of Henry Martyn, “Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that can befall me outwardly, but as consisting altogether in conformity to Thy will.

*“My glorious Victor, Prince divine, Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine,
At length my will is all thine own, Glad vassals of a Saviour’s throne.” H. G.
C. Moule*

3. A deliberate choosing of the cross.

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross...” (Matthew 16:24).

“The cross is not some physical infirmity or mental anguish; these things are common to all men. The cross is a pathway that is deliberately chosen. It is “a path which so far as this world goes is one of dishonor and reproach”— C. A. Coates.

The cross symbolizes the shame, persecution and abuse which the world heaped upon the Son of God, and which the world will heap on all who choose to stand against the tide. Any believer can avoid the cross simply by being conformed to the world and its ways.

4. A life spent in following Christ.

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

To understand what this means, one need simply ask himself, “What characterized the life of the Lord Jesus?” It was a life of obedience to the will of God. It was a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a life of unselfish service for others. It was a life of patience and longsuffering in the face of the gravest wrongs. It was a life of zeal, of expenditure, of self-control, of meekness, of kindness, of faithfulness and of devotion (Galatians 5:22, 23). In order to be His disciples, we must walk as He walked. We must exhibit the fruit of Christ-likeness (John 15:8).

5. A fervent love for all who belong to Christ.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

This is the love that esteems others better than oneself. It is the love that suffers long and is kind. It vaunts not itself and is not puffed up. It does not behave itself unseemly; seeks not its own, is not easily provoked; thinks no evil. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Without this love, discipleship would be a cold, legalistic asceticism.

6. An unswerving continuance in His Word.

“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31).

For real discipleship there must be continuance. It is easy enough to start well, to burst forth in a blaze of glory. But the test of reality is endurance to the end. Any man who looks back after putting his hand to the plow is not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Spasmodic obedience to the Scriptures will not do. Christ wants those who will follow Him in constant, unquestioning obedience.

Keep me from turning back.

The handles of my plough with tears are wet,

The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet,

My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.

7. A forsaking of all to follow Him.

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

This is perhaps the most unpopular of all Christ’s terms of discipleship, and may well prove to be the most unpopular verse in the Bible. Clever theologians can give you a thousand reasons why it does not mean what it says, but simple disciples swallow the truth assuming that the Lord Jesus knew what He was saying. What is meant by forsaking all? It means an

abandonment of all one's material possessions that are not absolutely essential for use in the spread of the gospel.

The pious man forsakes all, but he does not become a shiftless loafer; he works hard to provide for the current necessities of his family and himself. But since the passion of his life is to advance the cause of Christ, he invests everything above current needs in the work of the Lord and leaves the future with God. In seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he believes that he will never lack food and clothing. He cannot conscientiously hold on to surplus funds when souls are perishing for want of the gospel. He does not want to waste his life accumulating riches that will fall into the devil's hands when Christ returns for His saints. He wants to obey the Lord's injunction against laying up treasure on earth. In forsaking all, he offers what he cannot keep anyway, and what he has ceased to love.

6.14 Marks of a Pious Man

Titus 2:2

“That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.”

♦ The word **"aged men"** is the Greek word *presbutas* which refers to one's age in years. Six marks of mature manhood are identified:

“Sober” (*nephaleos*): Literally the word means *free from the addiction of alcohol*; that is, in his right mind.

Spiritually, however, it refers to *sweet reasonableness* that characterizes grandfathers; it is the opposite of being emotional and irrational; angry and bitter; subjective and glandular. He is a man with personal disciplines void of addictions to illegal substances or over indulgence in eating and feasting.

“Grave” (*semnos*): This word refers to being "respectable" or "venerable" or "reverend" or "serious." The ESV translates the word "dignified."

The mature Christian looks, speaks, and acts like a man of honor and dignity regardless of his economic status in society. A Christian man is a gentle man. He carries his head high with shoulders up. He stands tall because he is made in God's image and is the object of Christ's love and affection. He dresses smart. He is serious rather than silly; respectful, rather than disgraceful; sharp rather than banal; neat rather than disheveled.

A man's dress is a reflection of his theology and his attitude about life. His appearance says "excellent" and "appropriate."

“Temperate” (*sophron*): This word is often translated "self-control." It refers to sanity of mind and the ability to harness one's desires. Self-control is the foundation for leadership. A man who cannot control his own lusts and temper makes a lousy leader – a cast away for service (1 Corinthians 9:27). The mature man must be a moderate man, in control, not given to excess laughter, anger, or food and drink. He controls his desires, his mind, his speech, and his actions.

Furthermore, *sophron* is the one and only command given to younger men in verse six. It is all a young man can do to throttle the engines at work in his person. A man must conquer himself before he tries to conquer the world (Proverbs 16:32). A man must lead himself before he can lead a wife. The first requisite of leadership is self-control. Never trust a man who lacks self-control. He will poke out your eye, crush your hopes, and eat your heart.

“Sound in faith” (*hugiaino ta pistis*): Older men are exhorted to be healthy and whole in the faith, to be mature and balanced in doctrine having studied the whole of God's Revelation. A holy man practices a life of study and applies himself to learn all the Books of the Bible as well as the major doctrines in Systematic Theology. He is a Bible man and a discernor of truth and error. Furthermore, he makes appropriate applications of Scripture to his own life and family. Terms like balanced, wholeness, grounded in truth come to mind.

“Charity” (*agape*): The word "charity" refers to **agape** love. The mature man is a gracious and loving man -- a gentle man. While he believes in self-defense and may be armed, he is a threat to no man. He excels in love because he has a canon of love; that is, he is a man who defines love by God's law for "love is a fulfilling of the law." He does not define love as romantic feelings or a slobbering display of ooey-gooley affection. He is concerned about actions.

He is not only a loving man, but a lawful man; that is, he is not a danger to his neighbors or their property. This does not mean he is passive or weak. He is not made of chocolate coated, Boo Boo Bear Cereals. He does not believe love is the solve-all for human problems. His love for God drives him to hate evil and workers of iniquity (Psalm 97:10).

He makes room for tough-love and the rule of law. In fact, his love is defined by law, not personal feelings. The charitable man has convictions, and he is probably on some government hate-list (1 John 3:13). While a lawful man, he may not be a "legal" man; that is, he is not too concerned about being in conformity to zillions of Caesar's laws, but he is vigorously committed to the simplicity of the law of Christ.

“Patience” (*hupomeno*): The Greek word *hupomeno* means to "remain under." It refers to that excellence of spirit that continues to be godly even under pressure. It is that quality of life that loves and shows grace even while he may be experiencing personnel adversities. It is the ability to love a wife and play with children even when depressed and burdened down by the pressures at work. The pious man does not run from problems. He stays on the

Potter's Wheel even though under the painful process of sanctification. He does not revolt when he is "poured from vessel to vessel" (Jeremiah 48:11). He is godly even though he has a cross to bear.

6.15 Marks of a Pious Woman

Titus 2:3-5

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

◆ Paul addresses **older women** (*presbutidas*) who are seasoned Christians. The goal here is to produce beautiful wives that do not drift toward being an odious feminist in Proverbs 30. He challenged these sisters to develop a way of life consistent with temple servants: quiet, humble, heads covered (*1 Corinthians 11*).

The Greek word "**becometh holiness**" is an adjective describing the noun "**behavior.**" It refers to deportment consistent with actions suitable to sacred duties. The root word (*ieros*) refers to that which belongs to divinity or that which is God-like; i.e., deportment consistent with the character of the Lord God--character revealed in the Ten Commandments; that is, this woman dresses modestly and speaks wisely.

Furthermore, there are some behaviors that are to be avoided like the Black plague: "**not slanderers**" and not "**slaves to much wine.**"

The word "**slanderer**" is derived from the Greek word *diabolos* -- the name given to the Devil who is "the accuser of the brethren" and the "accuser of husbands" (Revelation 12:10).

Here Paul is referring to that discerning, critical, accusing spirit that comes through the experience of discerning people. Older women often have strong opinions and 20 / 20 perceptions when it comes to people. But, without a bridle on the tongue, an unrestrained woman can inject death into relationships. It has been said, "*A six inch tongue can slay a six foot man.*" It is true. A sharp tongue can slice a man into a thousand pieces.

Positively, mature women in Christ are called to be "**teachers of good**" or "good teachers." Only God has a right to define "good." Good is defined in the Ten Commandments. Further, every command is good. Thus, these mature sisters are instructed to teach that which is consistent with the law of the LORD God. And, they teach women, NOT MEN!

Older women should teach younger women the skills and disciplines needed to have a successful home and marriage. Experienced wives and mothers will find their greatest avenue of ministry in teaching younger wives what they need to know to be effective wives, mothers, and homemakers. ~ John MacArthur

This could be called “Marks of a Pious Woman” or “The Seven duties of a Christian Woman.”

The word "**teach**" or "**train**" is a subjunctive expressing a purpose; that is, it should be the purpose of older, mature Christian woman to train younger women in seven areas of duty.

First, it is a mark of Christian women "to be sober."

The word “**sober**” (*sophronizo*) conveys the thought of controlling one’s senses. Knowing that history reflects much on the hysteria of women, Paul exhorts older women to train younger women on how to control their minds and emotions.

“**Sober**” would also involve sobriety, controlling appetites for food and drink, and monitoring one's figure and weight.

No one is at their best when they are driven by disinformation in the mind or fear, anger, or despondency in the heart.

Practically, Paul wanted the older women to teach younger women to tether their thoughts, to “zip the lip,” and to put reins on their fear

Two, it is a mark of Christian women "**to love their husbands**."

The word "**love**" here is not *agape love*, but *philandrous*; *i.e.*, practical, caring, on-hands type love.

Generally speaking, secular women don't have a clue about how to love their man. They are good at demanding, complaining, and socializing, but they are not good at meeting the needs of their husbands. They are good at eating, sleeping, partying, and watching soap operas, but they not good at understanding their head and following his rules for the home.

Most men are quite simple in that their needs are few: they can be quite happy if they come home to (A) a good meal and an ordered home, (B) a loving affectionate wife, and (B) a woman that respects his authority and follows his rules for the home.

In marriages that are in trouble, you will find a bitter, complaining woman that has failed to provide these three things – the Bible calls her the “odious woman” (Proverbs 30:23). No man can long endure coming home to a wife who opens a can of beans, is as cool as a cucumber, and who drills him like a prosecuting attorney. A woman, who can't cook, is too tired for romantic love, and whose heart is filled with bitter complaints that will burn her house to the ground.

Therefore, pious Christian women are exhorted to teach younger woman how to cook a tasty meal, keep a clean, orderly house, how to care for her husband's need for intimacy, and to weigh her words so that they are always respectful and edifying. No barbs allowed! A cold, finger-wagging, neck jerking, motor mouth, in-your-face woman will find herself without a home applying for food stamps while looking to the government to take care of her.

Three, it is a mark of Christian women to "love their children."

When the word "**love**" is mentioned most women think of rule-bending indulgence or ooey-goey, marshmallow permissiveness -- the kind of over protective love that can ruin children. Love must be defined. We dare not draw upon a pagan definition of love or the psychological model of love. Love is defined as obeying God's commandments:

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

The home is the institution of education. It is the duty of Christian parents to train their children in the basic skills that they need to be successful in life. One of these disciplines is law. The devout home is a place where children learn the law of the LORD God, His judgments, and His commands. When a woman teaches her children to love the LORD God and to keep his commandments, she is well on her way to being a good mother. Unlike pagan women who are yellors and screamers and whose houses are built near Mount Vesuvius, Christian mothers live near the tree of life and bring their children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Four, it is a mark of Christian women to be "discreet" (*sophonizo*).

The word "**discreet**" is a reference to self-control. Self-control is a rose in the bonnet of a good woman. It refers to the thermostat on her emotions and the filter on her mouth. It is the opposite of being anxious or worried or loquacious. Pagan women are easily governed by their thoughts and emotions. Husband and home are often neglected. Odious women are known for their explosive emotions and sharp tongues. When troubles arise, a carnal woman can become a chatty-Cathy or a worrywart or as critical as the Washington Post about a Republican politician. Feminists are not called "Bi....s" for nothing. Christian women trust God for all things and exercise control over their minds, emotions, and tongue. For a sharp, bitter tongue set on fire by hell will burn the house to the ground. Be humble or stumble.

Five, it is a mark of Christian women to be "chaste" and "pure" (*hagnos*).

Purity is the Lily of virtues. The word "**pure**" reminds us of snowflakes, of the pristine waters of a high mountain stream, of a clear blue sky with cotton like clouds, and a tall glass of crystal clear water. The word purity refers to moral goodness, modesty, and singularity of devotion to God and family. It is the opposite of sophisticated.(1) Purity is hard to find in a world where the air is foul and the streams are muddy. It seems the Poisonous Tree has contaminated every stream where feminists camp.

Christian wives are known for their pure thoughts, sound words, and good works. They are aware of women who sleep under the Poisonous Tree, dress like prostitutes and who have wasp-words on their lips. But they shun their grim ways. Pious women drink from the water of life; dress modestly and adorn themselves with clothes that complement their femininity; decorate their homes with symbols of life, and anoint their lips with the law of kindness.

Six, it is a mark of Christian women "to be keepers at home" (*oikouros*).

This is a contrast to the seductress whose feet are never at home and always on the street in Proverbs 7. Secular women like to socialize, flit around, and mingle with the boys. The Christian woman, however, is focused on her home. Godly women are a cross between Virgin Mary and Betty Crocker. They are homemakers intensely devoted to their family and its prosperity. In a godly home you can hear the vacuum cleaner running, washing machines working, and children laughing while doing chores. There is no higher calling for a woman than that of being a wife and mother. To take a job in some high-rise LLC sweat shop is a demotion from champion race horse to stall donkey.

The Christian woman as a housewife, looking diligently to the affairs of her family, was the standard in Puritan New England:

*In seventeenth century New England no respectable person questioned that a woman's place was in the home. By the laws of Massachusetts as by those of England a married woman could hold no property of her own. When she became a wife, she gave up everything to her husband and devoted herself exclusively to managing his household. Henceforth her duty was to "keep at home, educating her children, keeping and improving what is got by the industry of the man."(Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family* (New York, 1944), p. 42.)*

One should not underestimate the impact of social engineers upon the Christian family. Lusting for a greater tax base, politicians saw homemakers as a "human resource" for government.

In the 1960's, feminism was born. Rebel Gloria Steinem and others were financed by the Zionist Banksters to captain their cause. A pseudo war on women was announced wherein women were pushed out of the home and into the working world. The man's wages were reduced and soon it took two incomes to provide for the family. Even teenagers have to find part time jobs to support the family.

Consequently, it has become increasing difficult for Christian women to be "keepers at home." Even in the best homes, the woman has been forced into the workplace to help pay the family bills for periods of time. Necessity knows no law. While it is still possible for a woman to "be a keeper at home," the challenges are real. Husband and wife will have to seek the LORD God and carefully plan how they can work together to keep mom at home with the kids.

Seven, it is a mark of Christian women to be "good" (*agathos*).

The meaning behind "**good**" is that of kind heartedness. Feminists are known for catty behavior and tongues as sharp as a butcher's knife. Pious women are known for their generous spirit and kind words. The "good" here must not be defined by man, but defined by God. Modern women define "good" as a woman working in an office on the top floor of some skyscraper in a big city. But, "good" is defined by God's law.

It is good for a woman to be a keeper at home. It is good for a woman to honor her husband and to arrange herself under his law order. It is good for a woman to share the fruits of her labor with her neighbors and to be a "stay-at-home" mom putting band aids on scraped knees.

Eight, it is the mark of Christian women to be "obedient to their own husbands."

Odious women follow their own defiled passions. Furthermore, they see themselves in competition with men fighting to the bitter end for supremacy over men. Cultic religions drift toward matriarchal homes where the men are nothing but passive participants under the powerful thumb of dominating women.

But, no so with Biblical women! Mature Christian woman understand that God appointed men to be the head of the home and that women are called to be "helpmeets" in furthering the purposes of God in the family; that is, pious women vigorously fight Eve's curse (Genesis 3:16; Proverbs 19:13; 1 Timothy 2:14).

The mark of a Christian woman is to "**love**" (*philandros*) her husband; that is, to love him in practical, need-meeting ways. We get the word "philanthropy" from this Greek word which means to promote the welfare of another. True piety does not disregard one's duty to the family. In the context, it means that she is to understand her husband's needs and to find practical ways of ministering to him. It is often true, "Behind every successful man, you will find a successful woman."

In the eight mark, Paul wanted to make sure that older Christian women return to the foundations of authority as set up by God in Genesis; that is, to train women "to obey" their husbands and avoid repeating Eve's transgression (Genesis 3:16 - the control over man).

The word for "**obey**" is *hupotasso*, a military term representing the subordination of soldiers to their commander. It is present passive participle and should be rendered as "be keepers of the home for good, while being obedient to their husbands."

As young women queen their home, they are to be mindful of their husband's supreme command and to order the home under the parameters set by their king. Moreover, she wears a headcovering in church as a sign that she acknowledges God's law-order; his roles for men and women; and, His headship (1 Corinthians 11). And, in some cultures pious women wear a scarf over their heads in public as a sign they are surrendered to propriety for women.

The grand reason that older women need to teach younger women the marks of Christian womanhood is so the "word of God be not blasphemed." The word "**blasphemed**" means "to speak against." Here is a quote from the "Evil Bible," an atheist network:

“The problem with their Christian approach lies not only in an oft- noted failure to practice what they preach, but an equally pronounced tendency to ignore what the Bible itself preaches.”

Paul complains that the Name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles on account of the evil deeds of the Jews (Romans 2:24; see Ezekiel 36:20-23), and he did not want the error repeated in the church. That is, in obeying their husbands, Christian women have an opportunity to glorify God by their reverent conduct in the home. There are none so intolerant as those who preach tolerance. The eyes of secularists are upon Christians and they are more than ready to indict Christian women for practicing "hypocrisy to the highest degree."

The atheist rant continues:

“Christians practice what can only be described as “selective morality”. What they like, they cling to and shove down the throats of others; what they don’t like, they ignore vehemently.”

In this case, the critics of Christianity have tossed a two-ringer horseshoe. Thus, Christian women, and men, must revisit the Third Commandment, and seek to be true men who do NOT take the name of the LORD God in vain.

In summary, Paul places a duty on mature Christian women to train younger women about God's law-order and roll for women in the home. This roll does not include running for governor, but it does include being pious and serving her husband and children.

Warnings About the Odious Woman of Proverbs 31

The Book of Proverbs is about obtaining wisdom, and a priority part of wisdom is discerning the character of women.

That Solomon thought it necessary to educate his son about the "strange" and "odious" woman cannot be denied. In fact, the Book of Proverbs ends with Solomon's observation that, "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." It does **not** end with "fools are many, but a faithful man, who can find?"

Keep in mind, Solomon was not a male chauvinist but the wisest man of his time. The Queen of Sheba left her country to come and hear his wisdom. And, we would do well to listen to the insights of Solomon.

It is the duty of fathers to train their sons "in the way they should go" and warn their sons about odious women (1:8; 22:6). Not all women are odious, but some are . . . and, they can grieve the whole world.

Because we live in a world that idealizes women in glossy photo accentuating their physical attributes, young can grow up with a utopian view of women to their own harm. The Bible neither denigrates nor glorifies women. It tells the truth about the nature of the "fairer sex" . . . and, that nature is not flattering. Thus, godly men must discern the nature of women and then teach the truth about women to his sons in order to save them from the "spider's web."

Solomon was a responsible father and as a father he warned his son about the kind of women no man can live with. One of them was the "odious woman." Earlier in Proverbs, He warned his son about the seductress. She is called the "strange" woman. Here he warns him of the odious woman who is a stranger to God's Household (Proverbs 22:14; 23:33; Hosea 5:7)

Proverbs 30:21 For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:

Proverbs 30:22 For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat;

Proverbs 30:23 For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

In describing the **odious** woman, the original text contain four words.

The word "**married**" is the Hebrew word *baal* which means "married" or "to be ruled over" by a husband. It is translated "a man's wife" in Genesis 20:3.

In English the word "**odious**" refers to something repulsive.

In Hebrew the word "**odious**" (*saw-nay'*) means "hateful." It is used of men who hate God (Exodus 20:5) and their fellow man (Genesis 37:4). Thus, the odious woman is a bitter, resentful woman that hates God, His law-order, and men. Adjectives like proud, insolent, and witchy come to mind.

Notice, Solomon is not talking about the unmarried, single woman with bad character. He addresses the married woman. There is something about marriage (authority) which detonates her nuclear impudence.

Notice the effect. Four things make the earth tremble. One of them is the odious woman. The odious woman has a tonnage of hate: ". . . **the earth is disquieted**" (*ragaz*) and "cannot bear" her.

Look at verse 21: The Hebrew word "**disquieted**" means "to tremble, quake, rage, quiver, be agitated or to quiver."

Notice the enlarged effect. Not only can a husband not live with an odious wife **no one on earth can live with her either**. The world trembles and quakes because of her.

The Hebrew word "**bear**" (*nasa*) means "to carry, lift up, or to bear." The adverb "cannot" negates the verb; that is, the earth cannot tolerate an angry woman. No one on earth has the strength to endure this woman. Think of Jezebel, Athaliah, Vashti, and Herod's wife.

No, Solomon is **not** a male chauvinist. He was being a good, observant father.

Knowing this, Solomon warned his son: Beware of the odious woman who is filled with hate and whose tongue is set on fire by hell. Neither you nor anyone else can live with a woman that hates God and his law-order.

In contrast to odious women, Solomon pens his masterpiece on God-fearing women in chapter 31. Pious women having the mind of Christ are beautiful, wonderful people to be around. So wonderful is the godly wife, men will go to war and die for them.

Finally, consider the earthly hell created by the feminist movement that manufactures odious woman who hate God, hate men, and hate the Ten Commandments. If the earth cannot endure the odious woman, what kind of insanity has gripped society to elect odious women to the office of prime minister, governor, or congress?

(1) Sophisticated: worldly-wise; not naive; manipulative and misleading; complex and intricate Warnings About the Odious Woman of Proverbs 31

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of the odious woman who is a stranger to God's Household (Proverbs 22:14; 23:33; Hosea 5:7)

6.16 Five Symbols

Galatians 6:14.

♦ Throughout the ages, pious Christians have honored five sacred symbols intended to promote the gospel and to prevent apostasy. Give up one of these and apostasy sets in.

The Cross:

“But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.” – Galatians 6:14.

The cross is the most sacred symbol of Christianity. The symbol is on every true church as it represents the accomplishments of Christ for salvation. The cross surfaced as dogmatic symbol adopted by all Christians during the church age to remind them of the Savior's accomplishments at Calvary and to prevent apostasy -- a worthy, honorable, wise praxis having the full support of our Lord (Matthew 18:18).

Traditionally, from earliest times, universal Catholics make the sign of the cross in prayer. Unfortunately, the Protestant Reformation throughout the “baby with the bathwater.” In this age of apostasy, mindful “protestant” Catholics would do well to restore the practice:

Cruci dum spiro fido – “As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross.”

The Chi Rho Cross contains the first of Christ's title Name (Χριστοῦ).

Baptism

From the first days of gospel proclamation (Acts 2) until now, Baptism is an act in which a Christian is immersed in water to symbolize the end of an old way of living, and a new start – his being taken out of Adam and placed into the victorious history of Christ (Romans 6).

Whether it be by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, all pious men are baptized as a symbol they have been placed into the history of Christ to share in His victories. This was not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

Headcoverings

1 Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

The verb "**keep**" (atecho) is an imperative the Corinthians obeyed. Paul commends the Corinthian flock for remembering him and for keeping the ordinances he delivered to them. It takes positive energy to incorporate a Biblical practice into the life of a community, and the Corinthians had a zeal to arrange themselves under the authority of God's Law-word and to obey it.

The word "**ordinance**" (paradosis), a cognate noun stemming from the verb "paradidomi." It refers to authoritative apostolic traditions established in the early church. In using the term "ordinance," the apostle is not referring to personal preferences or frivolous rituals or local Corinthian customs, but enduring practices applicable to all men for all time rooted in God's law. Geo-political Israel had their feasts and festivals to aid them in their worship of YHWH and the church has its ordinances to build up the people of God.

The verbal form of "**ordinance**" (*paradosis*), meaning a command, is used in verse 23 in reference to Paul establishing the Lord's Supper as an ordinance to be practiced in the church; that is, a Divine sanction to be honored by God's people when they come together as Christians to honor our Lord. **Baptism, communion, and headcoverings** (katakalypto) are **three dogmatic ordinances** delivered to the church to keep God's people true to the faith.

Failure to see the practice of headcoverings **as ordinances** arising from Christian law has been the product of more than a little evil. Christians who neglect these warrants are more likely to violate the faith and slide into apostasy of feminism in the church.

Apparently, problems developed in the Corinthian community due to irregularities and objections to these ordinances. Headcovering was not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy. Female clergy, feminism, and verbal abuse by wives comes to mind.

The Women's Headcovering

11:5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

11:6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

11:10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

11:16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

This passage is about headship - the authority of Christ over the man; the authority of the man-husband over the woman -- the requirement to surrender to both authorities.

The uncovered head of the man is a symbol that man is marvelously-made in the image of God and that Christ is the head (authority) of every man.

The headcovering on the woman is a proclamation that God has a law-order; that she is under the authority over her husband (or father); that those gathered together in this place are here to focus on the glories of Christ and not the glory of man.

This passage is in the negative because it is the apostles' rebuke to women who come to church without a headcovering, and a rebuke to men who are ignorant of God's law-order and who have not instructed their wives about humility, authority, and how to reverence God in a church service. Yes, this ordinance, though rebelled against by the modern antinomian, apostate-permissive man, is still required by Holy Scripture. This was not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

The Bread

11:23-24 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

The bread is a holy symbol of the body of Christ broken and bruised for us at Calvary; a precious icon of his vicarious suffering He endured to save men -- an icon which is sanctified (set apart) for religious services venerating the gospel of our Lord. All pious men remember the suffering of Christ and what it cost Him to redeem the souls of men on a weekly basis.

10:16 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

The one loaf and our participation in taking a part of that bread is a proclamation that we being many, are one -- that we individually have put our trust in Christ . . . and, that we share together in the benefits of our Lord's redemptive work at the cross; that believers from different races, cultures, and backgrounds belong to His fold. This was not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

The Cup of Blessing

11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

The cup is a symbol of Christ's blood; the currency of the spirit-world; the price of redemption; the consideration paid in a new contract (testament) between God and man; the only currency accepted in Heaven; that is, our participation in the cup is a faith-

statement that we claim the efficacy of the blood as the only means for forgiveness; for the discharge of our debt to God; for our eternal salvation.

11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

"**shew:**" Christian participation in the bread and wine is a proclamation that the Lord's death was a redemptive act that saves sinners from their sins when they believe.

10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

The "**cup of blessing**" (eulogia) is called a blessing because of what the wine represents -- the blood of Christ shed for our sins at Calvary (1 Peter 1:18-20). The blessing is that He shed his blood to redeem us from the penalty and power of sin. Because wine is red, it is a fitting symbol of the blood of Christ.

"**We bless**" means we set apart the cup (and the bread) for sacred use. We bless this "cup of blessing" because of what it signifies at Christian worship services. We "bless" means that we make prayers, say praises, and rehearse glorious liturgies while performing the duties associated with the holy sacrament.

"Both Luke and Paul, in their account of the institution, express this part of the action by εὐχαριστήσας, having given thanks. And hence the service itself hath long borne the name of the eucharist, or thanksgiving, by way of eminence" (Benson)

Taking the cup is sometimes called the "**Eucharist**." The term "*eucharist*" means "giving thanks." It is appropriate to call this "sacred meal" the "Eucharist" because Christians are thankful for what it represents . . . but in so doing **we must separate it from "Roman Catholic Theology"** which teaches more than the Scripture permits -- that the wine and bread are mystically transformed into the actual body and blood of the Lord. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the "*eucharist*" empowers "priests," but this misinformation corrupts the truth about salvation to the injury of many.

The "**cup of blessing**" is not the literal blood of Christ! It is the "communion of the blood of Christ;" that is, it represents the believers communion (*koinonia*) with the Lord.

Drinking the "**cup of blessing**" is a personal statement that the worshiper is a participant in the benefits of the accomplishment of Christ at the cross; and, there is a holy, mystical, spiritual fellowship (communion) taking place between the living Christ and the worshiper when he participates in the "**breaking of the bread**."

This mystical blessing is not due to a magical quality of the bread or wine, but due to **the remembrance of Christ** (11:24-25) which the symbols invoke; that is, these symbols provoke sweet reflections about the Savior which are always a blessing to the worshiper.

Let us remember that participating in all of these symbols are essential for a healthy perspective about life and salvation. They are the practice of pious men (Acts 2:42). These

ordinances are not a temporary cultural practice but a dogmatic ordinance imposed on all Christians during the church age to prevent apostasy.

6.17 Receive the Spirit

John 20:22

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

◆ How can one be holy devoted to our Lord without the Holy Spirit?

In the East, the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches celebrate Pentecostarion which is the fifty days between Passover and Pentecost.

Pentecostarion is a glorious time for Christians to rejoice in the risen Christ as well as a time of preparation to prepare them to receive the Holy Spirit in a greater way.

In eastern churches, the first seven days of the fifty-day period is called “white week” because it is the time the newly baptized receive instruction from the Book of John about the mysteries and wonders of Christ.

All kneeling is prohibited. It is a time to stand at attention to rejoice and to receive instruction from the Scriptures.

The Eastern Church reads John 20:10-23 to congregants during Pentecostarion. It is the first miracle after the resurrection. Though the doors were shut in the meeting house of the disciples, the risen Christ appeared in their midst to instruct them.

John wants us to know the critical communications that Christ gave to them on the First-day Sabbath.

Jesus gave them a message of peace, “peace be with you.” No doubt, His presence among them startled them and bewildered them all. The One Who died at Calvary, was now alive! Who could grasp the significance of it all? “Peace to you” was the message Christ gave to his followers.

Jesus presented them with legal and forensic proof that He conquered death by showing them the wounds in His hands and side. Having witnessed the conquest of death by our Lord, the text informs us of the change of emotion in the room—the disciples were glad (20:20).

Again, because of the waves of emotion flowing through the room, Jesus wished them peace a second time, “*Peace be with you . . .*” – a double peace.

Jesus commissioned His disciples: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

John wants us to understand that our Savior turned this encounter into a church business meeting. There was work to do, a message to grasp, a commission to obey. He was sent by the father to accomplish redemption at the cross, and now the Lord announces to them the duties of their apostleship.

Jesus breathed on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Our Master presented the disciples with “Mission Impossible.” The Great Commission was bigger than them. The Herculean task required power . . . wisdom . . . counsel . . . piety . . . and grace. He breathed on them as if illustrating the coming of the Spirit upon them. At that moment, they must have received the first fruits of the Spirit in advance of Pentecost.

Jesus clarifies the mission of the church,

“If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.”

The Savior addressed their delegation order – the salvation of men. He was not commanding them to have a Pentecostal experience. Rather, He equipped them for their critical mission. Moreover, Christ did not send them to censor or condemn the world. The world is already condemned because men love darkness rather than light. Rather, their mission was to announce to sinners their sins could be forgiven through faith in the risen Christ.

The church is not an institution of justice . . . or of civil rule . . . but, an institution organized for the purpose of preaching the gospel, reconciling men to God, the caring of souls, the calling for men to repent, to encourage men to believe and to receive forgiveness of sins.

Like Christ, the benediction of the pious is, “Peace to you.”

Romans 16:20: The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly' ?

Is there any surer way of ‘bruising Satan’ under a man’s feet than filling him ‘with joy and peace in believing’? What can the Devil do to that man? If his soul is saturated, and his capacities filled, with that pure honey of divine joy, will he have any taste for the coarse dainties, the leeks and the garlic, that the Devil offers him?

Is there any surer way of delivering a man from the temptations of his own baser nature, and the solicitations of this busy intrusive world round about him, than to make him satisfied with the goodness of the Lord, and conscious in his daily experience of ‘all joy and peace’ ? Fill the vessel with wine, and

there is no room for baser liquors or for poison. I suppose that the way by which you and I, dear friends, will most effectually conquer any temptations, is by falling back on the superior sweetness of divine joys. When we live upon manna we do not crave onions. So He 'will bruise Satan under your feet' by giving that which will arm your hearts against all his temptations and all his weapons. Blessed be God for the way of conquest, which is the possession of a supreme good! (St. Augustine).

See Guido Reni's marvelous painting of Archangel Michael Defeating Satan – a must see.

One key to spiritual power is peace.

*Isaiah 30:15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In (your) returning and rest shall ye be saved; in (your) quietness (rest) and in (your) confidence (trust) **shall be your strength**; and ye would not.*

A fellowship of men was being created with rights, privileges, and duties. With the coming of the Spirit, men had a new capacity to obey the law, to act righteously, and to be holy (Romans 8:1-4).

Some men would enter that fellowship; others would be barred from that communion of men. Laws, rules, liturgy, and traditions developed to mature believers and to discipline the unruly and rebellious (1 Corinthians 5).

Thus, Christians in pursuit of piety in the West would do well to learn from their brethren in the East to prepare to be vessels of the spirit and to use the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost to make room for the Spirit of God in their lives—to put down their coffee and donuts and stand at attention to receive instruction from God's Word.

While all true worshipers have the Holy Spirit, not all believers are filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

"Receive the Holy Spirit," ordered Jesus.

"Prepare yourself to be a vessel of the Holy Spirit," during Pentecostarion say the Greeks. Amen!

6.18 Being Filled with the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18

The Need to Be Filled with the Spirit

◆ We live in a sensual, emotional, passionate society controlled by a demonic spirit. Like a black hole that sucks in rays of light, the devilish cosmos has a gravitational force that pulls all towards the epicenter of its lusts. We live among carnal men whose fleshly responses stir up passions within us. And most difficult of all, we live in unregenerated bodies with unredeemed parts grounded in the Adamic nature. It is little wonder there is so much deviance, divorce, and division among us. What is needed is people who know experientially what it is like to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Age of the Spirit

The Old Testament testified of the dawning of a new age among men where God's Spirit would be poured forth to regenerate the earth, to regenerate the heart of man, to unite men to God, and to take up residence in the heart of the righteous. The message of the Spirit was a New Day (Psalm 96, 98; Isaiah 11), a New Man (Ezekiel 36:27), a New Creation (Isaiah 32:14, 15), and a New King (Isaiah 61:1ff; Isaiah 59:21). The OT saints never tasted the powers of the Age to Come. They saw it at a distance (1 Peter 1:10-12).

The New Testament period opens with the Spirit descending upon the Son. The Spirit began a new work in and through Israel's Messiah. The Messianic Age came upon the nation of Israel in a wonderful and yet limited way to defeat man's enemies and to bring men under the blessings of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus promised the Spirit to His disciples at the Last Supper (John 15:26; 16:13). The ultimate blessing of the Eschaton was given to men at Pentecost and the Christian age was born.

The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The zeal of the Lord will accomplish this.

Definition of "Being Filled"

Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

The word "**filled**" is the Greek word *pleroo*. It is translated "fulfill" (51x), "fill" (19x), "be full"(7x), and "complete" (2x), "end" (2x), and misc. terms (9x).

The word "**fill**" means "to make full," "to fill up;" i.e., "to fill to the brim;" "to cause to abound," "to furnish" or "supply liberally." In Christian thought, "**being filled with the Spirit is equivalent for being controlled by the character of the Spirit—operating under the power of the regenerated man; the new man; the new creation; and, under the new gestalt.**"

Being filled with the Spirit is not the same as the "baptism of the Spirit." It is not "being slain in the Spirit." It is not being overwhelmed in a spiritual frenzy. It is not being unreasonable. It is not losing control of one's senses. It is not speaking in tongues. It is not an ecstatic, sensual, emotional experience. God's seed is within him (1 John 3:9). The man

Spirit-filled man operates by his new gestalt programmed with the Word of God. **For this reason the filling of the Spirit in Ephesians is the same as being filled with the Word of God in Colossians 3:14-16!**

Facts about the Filling

The word “**filled**” is the Greek word *pleroo*. It is a present passive imperative and can be translated, “Be being constantly filled.” The present tense demands durative action. When a man believes, the Spirit enters the man and makes a new creation. The seed of God is implanted, and new life is at work in the inner man. The Spirit-filled man is one who looks to the Word of God as his moral compass and who relies on God’s power to live that life.

It is contrasted with “**not being drunk with wine.**” “**Being filled**” with the Spirit stands in juxtaposition to being under the influence of wine. But unlike a drunken man, the Spirit supplies the Christian with *self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23). There is nothing debilitating, indiscreet, or foolhardy when the Holy Spirit has the reins in a Christian’s life.

The verb “**being filled**” is in the *passive* voice and indicates the Spirit is the One seeking to influence the believer; and that the Christian man must not resist the sanctifying work of the Spirit. In other words, let the Spirit have His way.

The verb “**being filled**” is in the *imperative mood*; i.e., “being filled” is a command that demands obedience on the part of a Christian. The “**filling**” is not just a sovereign act of God that overwhelms a person. It involves the man’s cooperation. Being filled takes a decision, an act of the will on the part of the believer.

There is only **one baptism** of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), but there can be many fillings of the Spirit.

Filling is never complete, never perfected, and never fully achieved. We can always be more filled with Holy Spirit. Part of the Christian is not born again; that is, the body is not regenerated. Therefore, the Christian must command his body and surrender it as a vessel of service. There is tension between the old and the new. There are attitudes to adjust, values to reinforce, habits to change. All this takes time.

The opposite of being filled with the Spirit is to be filled with fear or anger or lust or frustration (2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 4:27-30).

Being filled with the Spirit is synonymous with being led by the Word of God. The Spirit will do nothing contrary to the Word of God (Colossians 3:16). The Spirit-filled Christian is a Bible man.

The Baptism of the Spirit v. The Filling of the Spirit

The baptism of the Spirit is the action of the Spirit whereby he takes a new believer and places him into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). It is a non-experiential, one-time transaction that occurs at the moment of conversion wherein the Spirit takes the new

believer and identifies him with the history Christ. It is a universal truth applicable to all Christians regardless of their denominational association or disposition.

The filling of the Spirit, however, is quite subjective. It involves the cooperation of the human will with the will of the Spirit—a will devoted to the Word of God. The filling is experiential; that is, it involves daily reliance upon the energies of the new creation. The filling of the Spirit is not a universal experience, and is dependent on the hunger of the individual Christian to be in the will of God.

Principles of Being Filled with the Spirit

There is no formula to be filled with the Spirit. Following “steps” is mechanical and superficial. But, a person can put themselves in the way of blessing. Consider the following:

Know God’s will (Romans 6:6; Colossians 1:9): Knowledge of God’s, will as recorded in the Holy Scripture, will help the believer to not struggle with the Spirit who prompts him to obey His Word.

Judge sin and resist sin (Romans 6:6-13; 8:13; Colossians 2:4-6):The Spirit is called “the Holy Spirit” and leads Christian men to judge all that is contrary to the character of God in their lives. The Spirit and water is connected in Ezekiel 36:24-26 indicating the dual action of the Spirit which is cleansing and regeneration. Note the directives: “**Quench not the Spirit;**” and, “**Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.**”

The term “**quench**” means “to extinguish” or “put out the fire.” The word “grieve” means “to cause sadness.” Christians quench the Spirit when they say “No” to obeying the Word of God; and, believers grieve the Spirit when they say “Yes” to sin and disobey His Law-word (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30).

Yield to God and His will (Romans 6:13; Romans 12:1-2). When the Spirit forbids us to offer our members as instruments of unrighteousness and encourages us to present our members to God, He makes a demand on the will. There is something about exercising the will that is requisite to the filling of the Spirit. The Christian must want the joy of being in His will more than he wants to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Stay under trials and obey in times of testing (John 14:21). Being filled with the Spirit does not mean the Christian will be free of trials. If the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for a time of testing, He will lead Christians into times of testing.

Rely upon grace (Romans 6:14). Christian living is not empowered by law (anarthrous noun) or the principles of reward and punishment. He is empowered by the provisions of a grace-based relationship. Being under law refers to one’s effort to merit God’s favor; but, grace bestows God’s unmerited favor upon all who believe before they are called to obey His commands. The Christian, however, is never without duty to God’s law. Grace provides the Christian with spiritual resources to keep His commandments—not to gain His favor, but because they already enjoy His favor. Grace is not the opposite of law; the opposite of grace is permissiveness; the opposite of law is lawlessness. Grace, understood, enables a man to

keep the law. In other words, live responsibly while expecting God to graciously provide what is needed as you face the demands of life. When you access the benefits of grace “sin shall not have dominion over you.”

Manifestations of Being Filled with the Spirit

Fellowship: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns . . .” (Ephesians 5:19). The Spirit will lead us to sing and to rejoice in our Lord together with all the saints.

Boldness in witnessing (Acts 4:31): When a man is filled with the Spirit, he will have freedom to speak the gospel and stand on principles of righteousness in his witness for Christ; that is, he will not be governed by fear or timidity.

Character under trial (Colossians 1:11): Trials are distressing and demanding. They expose men’s frailties and flaws. It is under trial that Christians need to be Spirit-filled in order to exercise virtue.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The fruits of the Spirit are a description of Christ-like character. “Being filled with the Spirit” means to manifest His character in all circumstances of the Christian life. The fruits of the Spirit are marks of the *Eschaton*. The Eschaton is the Age to Come and in the Age to Come there will be joy and peace in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Thus, we pray, “Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done,” now, in my time, at this moment of my life.”

The fruits are not the same as gifts. Gifts are abilities. Fruits are reflections of Christian character.

- **love** (*agape*); Affection without criticism or self-interest
- **joy** (*chara*); delight in God’s will in every circumstance.
- **peace** (*eirene*); calm serenity that unites people to the will of God.
- **longsuffering** (*makrothumia*); the ability to restrain one's emotions and tongue under stress.
- **gentleness** (*chrestotes*); careful management of other people’s flaws.
- **goodness** (*agathosune*); demonstrating excellence in Christian character.
- **faithfulness** (*pistis*); believing God and being faithful to commitments in a busy schedule.
- **meekness** (*prautes*); humility and self-restraint; i.e., power under control.

- **temperance** (egkrateia): mastery of one’s mind, emotions, bodily appetites.

Know that this list is in reverse order. The first fruit of the Spirit is self-control / temperance and not love. Without self-control the pious cannot harvest the other fruits. Master self-control and your silos will be full.

6.19 Avoiding Wretched Subjectivism

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

◆ One time I read an ad by an Eastern religion promoting meditation that said,

“Come to our Meeting where you go in and in and in, And then you go in and in and in, And after that you in and in and in and in.”

In one of these eastern groups, the adherent sits on a mat with his legs crossed and arms folded to meditate on human flight. In his trance, the spiritualist seeks to levitate above the earth. With his legs folded in a frog like motion, he unconsciously propels his meditating body upward about 4 inches off the mat in a sequence of hopping motions giving him the supposed sensation of flight.

This retreat into self as a spiritual experience is called *subjectivism*. Because the soul of man is only occupied with self, its feelings, an experiences it is “wretched subjectivism.”

True piety has nothing to do with *wretched subjectivism*.

When Napoleon launched his conquest of Europe, William Pit told the British Parliament,

"Roll up the map of Europe. It will not be wanted for ten years."

Like a prairie fire, the Charismatic Movement is on an unprecedented rampage in the United States. Blurring distinctions between what is Catholic and what is Protestant, they set fire to churches, and then butter the survivors in the false hope of wretched subjectivism.

The Charismatic Movement which embraces "holy roller Pentecostalism," neo-Pentecostalism, and revivalism, is sweeping the world in a delusive frenzy of anti-gospel religious sentiment.

People searching for a "deeper religious experience" are attracted to the delusionary optimism of this apostate dynamism.

Subjectivism and the Gospel

The original sin of *libido dominandi* (the will to control and power) sucked man into the vortex of subjectivism.

Note how many times the pronoun "I" was used by Adam in one sentence:

Genesis 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

What a contrast between God and man! God came to the garden to seek man only to find a man preoccupied with himself and his fears. Captured in a metaphysical trap of self-centeredness, Adam could not escape the fetters that bound him to his egotism.

God's Cure for Subjectivism

Naked and afraid, God slew two animals to clothe the first couple -- a marvelous remedy typifying ultimate deliverance through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.

Consider Paul's remedy for Corinthian subjectivism:

Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

This verse is stated so simply, we tend to overlook its context. This truth of the gospel which takes our eyes off self was delivered to Corinthians groveling in a cesspool of wretched subjectivism: bickering, rivalries, carnality, indulgent in incestual acts, permissiveness, divorce, arrogant possession of knowledge, stinginess, idolaters concerned only about eating and drinking, oblivious to the headship of Christ and his law-order for the home, unable to love, grasping after spiritual gifts, competing for prominence in the church, praying in foreign languages in order to impress others, arguing about meat and vegetables, and chained to the iron-fetters of self-interest.

In order to correct the Corinthians who were overly concerned about spiritual gifts and their religious experiences which they held as proof of a higher spiritual life, Paul left them with his crowning argument -- the wonder and splendor of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15).

The Christian religion is unique in that it is a historical religion that proclaims salvation through the work of Another. It takes a man outside of self in the glories of the Son of God. It is not centered on the worshiper's own religious, ecstatic experiences. When Peter was filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), he did not stand up and talk about his new power, inner peace, his gifts or flurry of feelings. He spoke about the Christ and his death, burial, resurrection, and session at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2).

Experience has shown us that the human tendency is to forget the objective gospel and to drift back into wretched subjectivism; to neglect justification, and to emphasize sanctification; to ignore redemption, and to center on regeneration; to slight Christ's work on the cross *for us*, and to spotlight the Holy Spirit's work *in us; to ignore Christ's experience outside of us, and to focus on our feelings inside of us; to turn from Luther and to return to Rome.*

The Victory of Another

Consider the importance of federal headship. In Romans 5, Paul informs us we DO NOT BECOME sinners because of something we did or experienced. We became sinners because of something that happened outside of us near a tree in the experience of Adam,

Romans 5: 18-19 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Likewise, men do not become righteous by something within their own experience. They become righteous by trusting in the work of Christ, in His experience on a tree, outside of them! Selah!

His victory is our victory. We share in the benefits of His accomplishments *sola fide*.

God does not redeem us by producing a change within us. *He redeems us by imputing our sins to Christ and by imputing His righteousness to us.* When we were dead in Adam, God gave us life in the New Adam. By virtue of His death, burial, and resurrection, our Savior ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the father as OUR REPRESENTATIVE.

We can raise our hands in victory and say with Martin Luther (1519):

"Therefore a man can with confidence boast in Christ and say: 'Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, His suffering and dying; mine as much if I had lived, done, spoken, and suffered, and died as He did'" (Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957, vol. XXXI, p. 297).

We say this with confidence because ". . . the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Charismatic will no doubt ask, "What about the Holy Spirit?"

John 16:13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself. A mature Christian does not say, "I am a spirit-filled believer. Let me tell you about my religious experiences . . . my feelings . . . my gifts . . . my miracles and how I was baptized by the Spirit which I felt down to the balls of my feet."

The most Spirit-filled man on the Day of Pentecost said,

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22).

"He shall not speak of Himself." The great affirmation of the apostles was not their spiritual feelings, but God's act of redemption in Christ.

Objective Faith

The worst form of subjectivism is religious subjectivism because it takes a man in and in and in to self. Eastern religions whether Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism (psychology), or psychological humanism in "Christian universities" all take a person on inward journey into the abyss of self.

The ugly fruit of eastern subjectivism (Hinduism) was planted in America through psychology. Any archaeological journey into people's historical experiences by psychotherapists is a journey into the dark world of wretched subjectivism. The Spirit commands attentive Christians to vigorously avoid these kinds of philosophical movements (Colossian 2:8).

The great call of the gospel is *sola fide* -- to believe and rest in the Victory of Another. Biblical faith is not about feelings, euphoria, ecstasy, spiritual gifts, or demonstrations of spiritual power. Men are saved when the eye of the soul is upon the admirable beauty and awesome power of the Son. Faith is objective for it glories in the doing and dying of Christ -- in His victory at Calvary outside of our own experience. Faith rests in the finished work of Christ at Calvary. There is no rest for the subjective soul in the unfinished, incomplete work of the Spirit on the human heart.

But, this faith, though objective, is not dead. It is alive and active. As Paul said to the Galatians, faith works by love (5:6). But, this love is also objective because love "seeketh not her own" (1 Corinthians 13:5). Self is NOT the center of concern for a Spirit-filled believer. The Spirit-filled Christian is not occupied with "self-realization" (Maslow), but with the wonders of Gods Beloved Son.

Isaiah 58: 6-7 "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

God's love is not an emotion. It is goodness in action.

The Charismatic movements confounds *eros* with *agape* wherein adherents become infatuated with sensual and exciting experiences which is called "love" but in no way is associated with love. Love produced by the Spirit leads to a death of self - a love that transcends one's own personal feelings (Colossians 3:1ff).

By way of illustration, see the beautiful art work of Italian Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini in his masterpiece, St. Teresa of Avila -- a physical representation of the Roman Catholic Theology which emphasizes the heart as being the locus of salvation.

The Spirit-filled believer does not listen to uncertain voices from within or seek signs from without!

He does not confound inner impulses with that of the sure Word of God. He obeys Scripture seeking to conform his inner life with the to the absolute, objective standard of right and wrong, God's Word (law).

Karl Barth of Swiss descent said it well. When asked what was the most important theological principle he had learned in his life time, Barth replied,

"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

The great message of the gospel is that God "so loved the world that he sent His Son" to "save his people from their sins." The sinner can find a way out of wretched subjectivism by focusing on the victory of Another outside his own experience. Upon believing the Savior and being justified, our Lord gives His Spirit to men to deliver them from the poison of subjectivism.

6.20 Avoiding Psychoheresy

The Glorious Gospel v. Psychology

Colossians 2:8

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

“We are living in an era in which everyone tends to believe they are right and to do what is right in their own eyes, just as in Judges 17:6 and 21:25. This is amplified in counseling” – PsychoHeresy Awareness Ministries.

◆ The Greek word for “philosophy” refers to any trendy intellectual movement that is capable of controlling the mind and one’s perspective. Psychology comes into view.

A contrast between the glorious gospel and pop psychology

The gospel piety is about the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ; psychology is about the ugly world of self.

The gospel takes man out of self and into Christ while psychology causes men to look away from Christ and to look inside self. Does “Inside Out” by Larry Crabb ring a bell?

The gospel is about learning the history of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-12) while psychology is about exploring the history of self.

The gospel is about a man confessing his sins while psychology is about confessing one’s wounds inflicted on him by others.

The gospel teaches a man to accept the blame for his actions while psychology seeks to help a victim find “blame points” for his behavior.

The gospel is about God forgiving sinners, while psychology is about forgiving self.

The gospel teaches that men are sinners (predators) while psychology teaches men are victims.

The gospel is about how man can be right with God (Romans 3-5), while psychology is about inner healing and finding self-esteem.

The gospel teaches that we are sinners in need of a Savior while psychology is about how men have been wounded by others and need inner healing.

The gospel demands men confess their sinfulness and repent; psychology demands men confess how they were victimized by villains and to confront the abuser.

The gospel teaches that man’s problems are generic to humanity because of sin while psychology teaches that man’s problems are unique and only related to one’s personal experience.

The gospel blames bad behavior on the sinner; psychology blames bad behavior on parents.

The gospel teaches men to honor their parents; psychology teaches children to blame their parents.

The gospel frees a man from his own guilt; psychology enslaves a man to guilt by blaming others for his bad behavior. When God asked Adam what he had done Adam responded, “The woman which thou gavest me. . . “

The gospel teaches a man to beat his breast and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner” and so be justified by God (Luke 18:13); psychology teaches a man to say, “I am a good person who has been victimized by sinners” in order to be justified before men.

The gospel, like the Serpent in the wilderness, teaches man to look away from his sins, his wounds, and his snake-bit potent to the crucified/risen Christ, while psychology encourages the sinner to look at his wounds and inspect the extent of damage done by the poison working in his soul.

That everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life -- John 6:40.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else -- Isaiah 45:22.

“Look at Christ and be impressed; look inside and be distressed.”

The gospel is about justifying the sinner; psychology is about justifying sin.

The gospel is about justifying the sinner before God; psychology is about how to fix the sinner so he can find acceptance with men.

The gospel is about faith in the accomplishments of Christ; psychology is about the accomplishments of man to better himself.

The gospel is about the doing and dying of Christ on behalf of the sinner; psychology is about what the victim needs to do on behalf of himself.

The gospel is about the love of Christ; psychology is about how men can love and forgive themselves (2 Timothy 3:1-6).

The gospel is about healing the predator/sinner so he stops sinning against God’s law; psychology is about healing the victim so he can feel good about himself.

The gospel is about reconciling a man to God’s law; psychology is about reconciling a man to his own feelings.

The gospel turns a sinner into a saint; psychology turns a sinner into a victim.

The gospel helps a man to deal with his own weakness by finding elements of the gospel that minister to that need; psychology is about exploring a man’s messed-up inner self to help him rearrange the chairs on a sinking Titanic of Adamic ruin.

The gospel is about the New Adam and his accomplishments; psychology is about exploring the old Adam and his failures.

The gospel offers power to the one who believes the gospel; psychology offers good feelings to those who are able to blame others for their problems.

The gospel frees a man to live a life of self-less love; psychology enslaves a man to the endless maze within his own soul. Falling down" the rabbit hole" of psychology, Alice goes in and in and in and in and in and in to self.

The gospel says you're not O.K. and that you need a Savior; psychology says your O.K., I'm O.K., we're all O.K.

The gospel changes a man when he beholds Christ; psychology offers change by looking at one's inner pain. See 2 Corinthians 3:18 on how one changes.

And the list continues on and on and on because psychology takes you in and in and in and in and in and in and in.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus is the Son of God who entered history to die on the cross for our sins, to overcome death to be our Savior and Lord. Psychology is the false gospel of the secular world that gives a sedative to men poisoned with sin. Piety is a product of understanding justification by faith.

6.21 Claiming Your Citizenship

Hebrews12:13-17

◆ Before us is a beautiful contrast between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion, Moses and Christ, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, between ancient Jerusalem below and the New Jerusalem above.

This passage is preceded by the command "**Looking diligently**" at Christ so "**that no man would fall short of the grace of God.**" Grace is contrasted with bitterness, and the faithful believer is contrasted with faithless Esau (Hebrews12:13-17).

To release the effects of grace and in order to avoid being like Esau who received strict justice - a type of Mt. Sinai, the author of Hebrews reminds his Jewish brethren of their superior calling to Mt. Zion -- the Heavenly City with its rivers of grace.

Mt. Sinai

Hebrews 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Paul contrasts the believer's calling in the gospel to Mt. Zion, the City of the living God, with the calling of Israel to Mt. Sinai in the wilderness where strict justice under the law caused knees to shake and bones to rattle.

Mt. Sinai posted seven warning signs. Everything about this mountain said, "Stay Away! Any closer and you will die!" To impress upon the people the supreme holiness of God and the dreadful sinfulness of men, God appealed to the five senses of men: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.

(1) mount that might be touched: For a period of time, the Most High God made Mt. Sinai his home. He invited Israel to the basin of the mountain to meet with Him. But, the mountain was marked off with barriers to prevent man and animal from trespassing on holy ground. Trespassers that infringed upon these barriers and touched the mountain were instantly executed without mercy. That is, Israel was called to meet God, but at a safe distance.

(2) burned with fire: One unique characteristic of this mountain was that its peak blazed with fire. The flames on the Mt. Sinai warned the people not to come any closer lest they be consumed by the scorching heat.

(3) blackness (*gnophos*) and

(4) darkness (*skotos*) were bad omens that communicated something foreboding, mysterious, uncertain, and dangerous. This thick darkness warned the people to stay away.

(5) and tempest (*thuella*): The violent winds and earthquakes on this trembling, volcanic mountain divined death and destruction.

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

(6) the sound of a trumpet: in case people were rock-headed, their meeting with Elohim was formerly announced by the blast of a trumpet -- a shofar (ram's horn) with up and down trills -- a public siren warning the people to stay off this mountain and seek shelter a safe distance away.

(7) voice of words: God proclaimed this warning to the people through Moses:

"the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. . . . the people cannot come up to Mount Sinai . . . whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death "(Exodus 19).

20 For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

The verb "**endure**" (*phero*) means "to bear" or "to carry." Negated by the adverb "not," it expresses the fact the people could not cope with such a severe command. Under this rule of God's government, transgressing men and animals faced certain death.

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:

Hearing the warnings, even Moses trembled with fear. If the holiest man in Israel quaked with fear, how much more should apostate Jews have fear wanting to return to Mt. Sinai.

Why would a Jew forsake the warmth and sunshine of the gospel, and return to the dark, volcanic justice of Mt Sinai where sure death awaits the transgressor? Yet, this was the predicament the writer addressed.

Mt. Zion

22 But (alla) ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

But (alla) is a strong adversative.

"**ye**" introduces the believers in contrast to unbelieving, faithless Jews.

"**ye are come**" is presented as an absolute fact (perfect tense in the indicative mood).

"**You are come**" is followed by a series of seven dative indirect objects (spiritual realities): to Mt. Zion (*kai*) . . . the city . . . Jerusalem, to myriads of angels, to the festive gathering (*kai*) church, to Theos the Judge of all men, to spirits made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to sprinkled blood. The seven dative-topics are contrasted with the seven austere descriptions of Mt. Sinai in 18-21.

The verb "**come**" (drawing near) corresponds to those who believed the gospel -- a contrast to those at Sinai who drew near but remained afar off. In both cases, men sought God. Moses mediated matters between God and man, but our Lord's mediation actually brings men into fellowship with God. In contrast to the weakness at Mt. Sinai, consider the strength of the gospel which calls men -

(1) To Mt. Zion, the City of the Living God. Mt Sinai below was a dark shadow of Mt. Zion above. The LORD once made a temporary home on Sinai, but Zion above is the eternal home of the Living God. Death reigns on the earth below, but life reigns in the city above. Mt. Sinai was a lonely, dark, blazing mountain threatening trespassers with doom; Mt. Zion is a city radiated with light-- a city that promises eternal life to all who knock at its gates.

and to Heavenly Jerusalem. Mt. Sinai was a visible, earthly, hostile mountain where God temporally made His home; Mt Zion is a welcoming, invisible, heavenly Mt. Zion where Heavenly Jerusalem stands as the Queen of cities.

(2) to an innumerable company of angels,

Believers are said to have come to the celestial city which is composed of myriads of angels and the festive assembly of perfected spirits --

to *myriads of angels* sent to earth to perform the will of God . . . servants of God that assisted the saints in their work on earth.

(3) to the (general) festival and church of the firstborn. The word "**general**" comes from the Greek word *panegurizo* which means *festive gathering* - (See Isaiah 66:10). A metonym-synonym associated with the ecclesia; that is, this is the celebratory church triumphant.

Mt. Sinai was a barren, lonely place with no mention of angels or people. There were no communicants or assisting angels at Sinai; but, Heavenly Jerusalem is described as a glorious city filled with servant-angels and the festive ecclesia (fem. dative) of perfected believers; that is, the church triumphant composed of Old and New Testament saints -- the church militant which has not yet entered the holy gates of the eternal city.

of the Firstborn; that is, the beloved Son. The title firstborn does not refer to a birth in time, but to the favored status of the Son of God -- our Savior and Mediator (See Exodus 4:22).

which are written in heaven, and to God represents the permanent registry of the citizens living in perpetuity with this favored status in this eternal, Heavenly City. "It is written" infers authority, permanence, and imperishability.

(4) and to God the Judge of all. Israel came to their Judge at Sinai. Because they lacked a Savior, even the holiest man among them despaired of hope (Isaiah 6). Moses mediated between the LORD and the people, but our Mediator actually brings men to Theos. Believers are accepted by this Judge due to the doing and dying of the Son who is the Savior of all men. Sinai brought fear; Heavenly Zion extends the olive branch of peace to all in need of forgiveness.

(5) and to the spirits of just men made perfect or having been made perfect - an accomplished fact (perfect passive ptc.).

Sinai exposed the wretchedness of sinful man and threatened trespassers with certain death if they touched the mountain. But, Mt. Zion not only welcomes believing sinners through the gospel, it makes them perfect by offering Heaven's love, the benefits of Calvary, and by granting them a permanent status (justification) because of their faith in the Son (Romans 5:1).

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

(6) "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" is in contrast to Moses, his mediation by law, and the rigorousness of the Old Covenant.

Standing between the phrase, "**just men made perfect,**" and "**refuse not Him that speaketh,**" is "**Jesus**" our mediator. Through the gospel believers are qualified to enter into the presence of this holy God through the mediation of the Son -- God's Representative

to men; and, man's Representative to the Father. The new covenant of grace is contrasted with the old covenant of works.

(7) **and to the blood of sprinkling . . .** " The old covenant was ratified by the blood of bulls and goats (Exodus 24), and the new covenant was ratified by the precious blood of the Lamb, the prized currency of the spirit-world.

that speaketh better things than that of Abel teaches us that the blood of the Old Covenant typified by the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance; but the blood of Christ cries out "forgiven," "fulfilled," "paid in full," and "accepted in the Beloved."

Blood shed for sin under the Old Covenant temporarily covered sins enabling the Lord to tolerate sinners; but, the blood of Christ permanently removes sins as far as east is from the west qualifying us to enter the kingdom. Blood shed under the Old Covenant did not assure anyone of a permanent relationship with the LORD, but the blood of Christ secures the believer's eternal redemption and permanent status in the Eternal City built by God (Hebrews 9:12).

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Use of the term "**escape**" (*ekpheugo*) implies danger. It is the same word used in Hebrews 2:3. Terms like "shake" and "shook" (12:26) are foreshocks of the coming catastrophe. Rejecting Christ leaves the unbeliever in deep peril – a warning to the wobbling, indecisive audience considering the choice between Sinai and Zion.

The word "**refuse**" (*paraiteomai*) means "to deprecate" (disapprove) and it is used twice in this text as a reference to Exodus 20:19 - "And they said unto Moses, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' "What a terrible thing it must be to repeat the sin of the people at Sinai after hearing the call of the gospel.

The tone and manner of giving the law was designed to impress all hearts with the solemn risk of disobedience wherein one can lose his precious all. Even though the people feared and disapproved of God's words, ***their contempt did NOT void His Word or nullify their duty to obey Him.*** Their disdain did not save them from the obligation to obey. Nor could their fecklessness cause them to escape the duties of the Law or the terrible penalties which awaited all transgressors.

The lesson is clear: He is the Creator, we are His creatures. He is the Prosecutor and the Judge; we are the defendant party. He is sovereign, we are His subjects; He is the Lawgiver, we are those under law. Our demurs and dallying consent does not dissolve our liability to the Lawgiver.

“**much more shall not we escape**” raises a question to which no man has an answer: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:2-3)? The one who rejects the gift of grace will perish under the duties of law.

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

When God spoke at Mt. Sinai, the mountain trembled. When God speaks at the end of history, not only will the earth shake, but the stars in the heavens will fall. Men cannot escape their duty to God, nor can any escape judgment. There are hard, maximum duties under the Covenant at Sinai, and there are gifts of salvation to all who accept the Covenant of Grace. Which one do you want?

27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

The rumbles, fire, and darkness at Mt. Sinai were merely foreshocks of the coming judgment on the earth. The shaking acts like a sieve that retains the good and discards the bad.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

The main message of Christ was the kingdom of God; that is, He came in the middle of history, not to condemn mankind, but to offer men the blessings of the kingdom in advance of the final judgment. In the gospel, Christ offers men the benefits of the kingdom in a first fruits way to those who surrender to His authority. Though the kingdom is an irresistible force, it does not compel men to submit to it. The "rule of God" must be received freely without compulsion. The gospel of the kingdom does not coerce men to yield to its authority. It is a gospel of grace that must be received thankfully. Those under grace serve, not to be accepted, but because they are accepted.

Being reconciled to God and serving Him should be the goal of every man, but the kind of service implied is "sacred service." This "**acceptable**" service is defined by two Greek genitives of association: **reverence and godly fear** -- terms opposed to that which is careless and casual.

"**let us have grace**" (*echomen charin*) may be properly rendered, **let us hold fast grace**; for it is as necessary to retain it as it is to obtain it" (Benson).

It is a warning against the sin of presumption. Yes, men are saved by grace and must continue in grace lest they be swept away from thankful service by a whirlwind of passion. Moreover, all service is balanced with thankfulness and fear -- thankfulness for His Mercy and fear of displeasing His Majesty.

- I am not on probation: I am not out on parole. I am not in danger of losing my freedom because freedom is not conditioned upon my performance.
- Grace once extended to me will not be retracted because of me. God knows all about me. He loves me, not because of Who I am, but because of Who He is—a God of love.
- His grace is not bestowed because of human merit, nor is it withdrawn because of human failure. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. (Think Grace)
- ***Whereby we may serve God acceptably (euarestos) with reverence (aidos) and godly fear (deous):*** Those under grace are motivated to please Him (*euarestos*) and to serve Him out of a deep sense of humility (*aidos*) coupled with a sense of fear of displeasing Him (*deous*).
- Even if I give God my very best, I am still unworthy of His grace. His grace is independent of me, and it is not dependent on what I do or do not do.
- Service must spring from a grateful heart or it is not grace.
- I now serve the Lord with humility, not because I am better than other people, but because His love has not been withdrawn because of my many failures. Service is not a necessity for me. It is a great privilege for me. By the grace of God I have a ministry. (Think Grace!)

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

This is a quote from Deuteronomy 4:24 -- a solemn warning against idolatry and rejection of the gospel.

The God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament. The God that commanded men to obey His law under the Old Covenant is the God who commands obedience to the faith in the New Covenant. Though believers are warmed by the sunbeams of His love in the age of gospel proclamation, they know that He still possesses the volcanic power so stunningly displayed at Sinai.

God is not so just He cannot forgive men through Christ, nor is He so loving that he cannot punish those who reject His Son.

The One that punished His Son for our disobedience to law is the One who provides salvation to men through Christ's obedience to law. You can either rely on your dogged determination to obey God's law for salvation (Romans 2:1-12), or you can rely on the doing and dying of Christ for your salvation (Romans 4-5). Those that camp at Mt. Sinai will die for their transgressions; but, those that camp at Mt. Zion experience life and peace.

6.22 Mastering Temperance

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

◆ Consider temperance as one of the great virtues of pious men, the Secret of the Saints – **Opus Angelorum**:

*“In the Work of the Holy Angels the members are encouraged to strive to acquire seven special virtues which will help them to achieve a more intimate union with the holy angels. These are: Fidelity, Humility, Obedience, Charity, **Silence, Temperance** and the Imitation of Mary.”*

Temperance is considered as one of the four cardinal virtues. Roman Catholics define temperance as “. . . the righteous habit which makes a man govern his natural appetite for pleasures of the senses in accordance with the norm prescribed by reason.”

Miriam-Webster Dictionary defines temperance as “habitual moderation in the indulgence of the appetites or passions.”

The word “temperance” comes from the Greek word *egkrateia* which is translated “self-control” in other versions. It is a moral “*asset that moderates the desire for pleasure.*”

There is nothing wrong with enjoying life and pleasure, but eat too many yum yums and you become fat; drink too much Rocky Mountain beer, and you will stagger around like a Denver drunk; pursue non-marital sex with some beautiful thing, and you may become a father or mother before your time; talk too much and people will hate you.

Because Paul wanted to emphasize love, temperance is listed last in the “fruits of the Spirit” But, **self-control it is really first pious attribute in the library of Divine Virtues** (2 Peter 1:3-7). Without self-control, we cannot produce the other the fruits of the Spirit. Titus gave young women seven pious qualities to nurture, but he gave only one holy asset for young men to grasp – temperance (Titus 2:4-5). The first and only virtue Titus ordered young men to master was “self-control” or to be “sober minded” — Titus 2:6; that is, control your mind; throttle your passions; master your physical drives; harness your ambitions; regulate your emotions; and, nail your tongue down with a holy peg.

Temperance is the first virtue that perfects man’s ability to relate well with himself and to interact with others.

One of the first lessons Solomon taught his son was self-control: “*When sinners entice thee, consent thou not*” (Proverbs 1:10); that is, the future king had to learn how to say “No!” to his own appetites and the passions of close friends.

Learn to say “No!” to temptations, passions, wants, food, alcohol, drugs, pleasures, sleep, lusts, prurient interests, things, frustrations, anger and godless ambitions and you will walk where only holy men dare to tread.

When men and women reach puberty, concupiscible appetites ignite like fireworks on the 4th of July. There is nothing sinful about being fully human and fully alive. But, those desires for pleasure, like a wild horse, must be tamed, harnessed, and haltered.

Like riding a wild horse, we must never whip our passions into a gallop. We must be temperate with our eyes, temperate without our mouth, temperate with our ears, temperate with our hands, temperate with our feet — lest we stumble ourselves and others.

*Oh, be careful, little eyes, what you see,
Oh, be careful, little eyes, what you see. 1
There’s a Father up above looking down in tender love,
Oh, be careful, little eyes, what you see.*

Oh, be careful, little ears, what you hear, 2

Oh, be careful, little tongue, what you say, 3

Oh, be careful, little hands, what you do, 4

Oh, be careful, little feet, where you go, 5

We must consent to be made holy and pray to the Lord to make us holy!

Justification is the work of God. It does not require man’s help. But, sanctification, unlike justification, requires man’s cooperation. Unlike justification, piety requires an act of the will, the man’s consent, and his concurrence. This is where the pious learn to say “No!” to the will of man, and “Yes!” to the will of God. It is part of being totally reconciled to God.

If a woman or a man fails to add self-control to the foundation of their Christian life, they will be unfit for service in the House of God.

1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, ***I myself should be a castaway.***

6.23 Conquering Anger

Colossians 3:8

◆ In Colossians 3:8, Paul told the church, “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” Paul groups in “anger” with “slander” and “filthy language” as actions or feelings which are to be laid aside as filthy clothes associated with Adam; that is, pious men will be angry at sin, but strive to never react out of anger to frustration.

Whatever is begun in anger, ends in shame – Benjamin Franklyn.

To be angry about trifles is mean and childish; to rage and be furious is brutish; and to maintain perpetual wrath is akin to the practice and temper of devils; but, to prevent and suppress rising resentment is wise and glorious, manly and divine – Isaac Watts.

Shallow men are easily irritated and often angry; manly men harness anger and speak thoughtfully. A man not committed to reigning in his anger is unqualified for holy service. Self-control is a prerequisite for the Christian ministry– B. Stockton

When you resort to shouting in a conflict, you are reacting in the flesh. You have lost control of the only person you can control: yourself – Neil T. Anderson.

Do not say, “I cannot help having a bad temper.” Friend, you must help it. Pray to God to help you overcome it at once, for either you must kill it, or it will kill you. You cannot carry a bad temper into heaven – Charles Spurgeon

Hot heads and sharp tongues never solve problems. An angry man will duel with these all his life — B. Stockton

Anger and bitterness are two noticeable signs of being focused on self and not trusting God’s sovereignty in your life. When you believe that God causes all things to work together for good to those who belong to Him and love Him, you can respond to trials with joy instead of anger or bitterness – John C. Broger.

People who are not angry have yielded to the evils of the world. Good men are motivated by anger. Anger sergeants them to battle. Spirit-filled men harness it and go deeper into carefulness to provide a soft, accurate answer for the corruption around them — B. Stockton.

If we would be angry and not sin (says one), we must be angry at nothing but sin; and we should be more jealous for the glory of God than for any interest or reputation of our own – G.K. Chesterton.

If we would be angry and not sin (says one), we must be angry at nothing but sin; and we should be more jealous for the glory of God than for any interest or reputation of our own – Matthew Henry.

“Be angry and sin not!” An angry man cannot be trusted with the deep things of God; therefore, master anger or be mastered by it. The kingdom mandate has no place for angry men.

The great question is not “Do I trust God,” but “Can God trust me **not** to strike out in anger?”

As we learn self-control, we earn the privilege of being trusted with service, commissions, trusts, and secrets. All of God’s true men have temperance in full bloom. If we betray a trust, we forfeit those benefits.

Let us grow in temperance all the days of our life!

6.24 Anger Opens the Door to Satan

Ephesians 5:26 -27

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.

♦ The Christian's life and ministry pivots on justice, mercy, and walking humbly with God. The Scripture is sufficient to help man overcome anger. Forget psychology and Hindu mysticism that bypass the cross of Christ. What a man needs is the peace of God while going deeper into Christ and not going deeper into self.

Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The work of God must proceed in the power of the Spirit.

Zechariah 4:6 This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Consequently, we are exhorted to create a happy relationship with the Spirit and to avoid offending the Spirit.

Anger offends the Spirit

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

For this reason we are exhorted to be careful and not reckless with out words and anger.

James 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

James 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Beware of a root of bitterness --the failure to deal with anger righteously . . . letting anger fester and become septic:

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

The word **bitter** refers to "gall" or anything that poisons the spirit. In this case, betterness festers in the presence of rebellion against hardships and chastisements.

Anger opens the door for Satan to come in and do his destructive work.

Ephesians 5:26 -27 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.

The word "**place**" refers to a room, village, city, or district.

Anger is not resolved by psychological principles, Hinduism, or taking archaeological journeys into self to find discover blame points. Anger is not due to a lack of self-esteem, but due to a lack of Christ-esteem. Angry people do not hate sin enough. The gospel does not take a man into self, but into Christ . . . to the cross . . . to the risen Christ, King, and Priest to His peace.

We pray the Lord's prayer: Thy kingdom, thy rule, come to me -- Matthew 6:9ff. The kingdom of God is marked by peace (Isaiah 11). Peace must captain the heart.

The peace of God, not anger, defeats Satan.

Romans 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The peace of God or Shalom must govern the heart.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

The word "**rule**" means "umpire."

Men are exhorted to make peace with God. The command is repeated twice.

Isaiah 27:1- 5 Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.

Peace guards and protects our hearts.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Our Lord gives double peace.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

In 2 Kings 2:1-15,19-22, Elisha prayed for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

Note: One could make an argument here that Jesus left them with objective peace (Romans 5:1 - peace with God) and His subjective peace (John 16:33 - the peace of God).

Both fear and anger (trouble) open the door for Satan to do his dirty deeds.

Develop holy habits of letting the peace of God rule the heart in adversity.

Philippians 4:8 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Remember the rule of the Benedicts: "Be patient in hardship; speak modestly."

Aspire to be a man filled with the Spirit and in control of his passionate anger.

Ephesians 5:18-20 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Proverbs 14:29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Proverbs 16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

If one sins, be quick to confess (1 John 1:9-10; 2:1-2); and quick to rejoice in God's forgiveness (Psalm 32:11).

6.25 Beware of Bitterness

Making Bitter Waters Sweet

Hebrews 12:15

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness (pikrias) springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

◆ **Background:** Out of Egypt, the former slaves traveled toward Mt. Sinai. Three days of traveling in the desert tested the limits of man and animal. Everyone was thirsty. The joy of redemption faded as the heat from the desert sand made demands upon the body.

A man can go 40 days or more without food, but he can only survive three days without water. A glimmer of hope beamed on every cheek as Israel headed for an oasis. But, hope was shattered when the report stated that the waters were bitter.

As people gathered around the salty flat and stared at the undrinkable water, grumbling erupted in the camp. The waters were bitter, and bitterness poisoned the hearts of the people. Forty years later, Moses addressed their bitterness in this verse, which, by the way, is the foundation of Hebrews 12:15

Deuteronomy 29:18 Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit,

The phrase “**lest any root of bitterness**” (*pikrias*) in Hebrews 12:15 is a summation from Deuteronomy 29:18 for the term “gall” (*rosh*) and “wormwood” (הַאֲנָה אֶל לְנֶחֱדָה).

The word “**gall**” (*rosh*) is translated “venom of asps” in Deuteronomy 32:33 and “hemlock” in Hosea 10:4.

The word “**bitter fruit**” (*la anah*) is translated “wormwood” in Deuteronomy 29:18 and “hemlock” in Amos 6:12.

Who can describe the bitter disappointment a thirsty nation felt when they discovered the waters in the desert were poisonous to drink. No wonder they called the place **Marah** (bitter).

Wormwood / Hemlock

Like Hemlock and venom, a large dose of wormwood can kill a man.

The Greeks and Romans call Wormwood, *Artemisia absinthium*, an erect-growing perennial herb native to Europe and naturalized in northeastern North America. Wormwood is not always fatal and in small doses it can be a healing herb. The ancient Greeks used leaves from absinthium to counteract poison from mushrooms and sea dragons (snakes). Hypocrites prescribed absinthium for jaundice, rheumatism, anemia, and menstrual pain. Wormwood is not called wormwood for nothing. In small doses it can kill parasites and worms in the stomach and liver. Missionaries have to take absinthium regularly when they are on the field. A couple of tablespoons of green olive leaf, cloves, and green walnut for two or three days a month helps to control intestinal parasites.

Having exhausted their water supply and choking with thirst, the bitter water was no laughing matter. **More frightening** was the poison spreading through the hearts of God's people. Within minutes of receiving the news about the bitter waters, the nation began to grumble against Moses. Hemlock in the soul poisoned the nation and a spirit of gloom settled over the people.

The Root of Bitterness

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness (pikrias) springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; (16) Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. (17) For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears

Our text warns us, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness (*pikrias*) springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled." Bitterness is what poisons the soul and depletes the heart of joy.

The word "**looking diligently**" (*episkopos*) is the same word as "bishop" or "overseer" in the N.T. We get our word "scope" from this word. Bitterness is such a problem among men, that God urges us to keep a sharp eye out for a root of bitterness that might spring up and pollute the community of God's people.

The word "**fail**" (*hustereo*) is translated "to fall short" in Romans 3:23, "to be in want" in Luke 15:14, and "lack" in Matthew 19:20.

Bitterness is an affliction of the human spirit. A financial reversal, a tragedy, an unexpected death, a health crisis are bitter waters to drink. But, we must keep our hearts filled with thankfulness – the antidote to wormwood.

The next verse (16) describes the root of bitterness growing in the heart of Esau: fornication, profanity, and selling of his precious birthright.

We get the word "pornography" from the word "**fornicator**" (*pornos*); that is, Esau, having rejected the things of God, plunged into immorality.

When people feel the pain of disappointment in their soul, they often plunge into sensuality, sexual indulgences, and pornography; that is, they give up. Having failed to find pleasure in God's will, they seek comfort exploring their own sexual energies.

The word "**profane**" (*bebelos*) means "common" or that which is permitted to be "trodden underfoot." It is an adjective describing what is common, unholy, and not sacred. A public sidewalk is common compared to a visit to the oval office at the White House. Bitter people stop walking in the high courts of Almighty God, and tread the common path of sinners.

The phrase "**sold his birthright**" refers to Esau's low esteem for the "spiritual" inheritance belonging to the firstborn son; that is, the right to be in the Messianic line. In his bitterness, he lost sight of that which was holy and precious, and treated his birthright as a commodity to be traded for a bowl of "pottage." Imagine, here was a man that was willing to trade his spiritual heritage for a bean soup.

How can a person know if he has a bitter spirit? There are other symptoms of bitterness.

The word Hebrew word "**marah**" is translated "chafed" in 2 Samuel 17:8, "angry" in Judges 18:25, "discontented" in 1 Samuel 22:3, and "heavy" in Proverbs 31:6. A bitter spirit can be recognized because it is easily chafed (irritated), prone to anger, and feels raging disappointed that ignites the unthankful tongue. The danger is that bitterness will grow in the soil of one's heart, sprout weeds, and defile a garden of relationships.

Part II

Prescription for Bitterness

Moses prayed, and God showed him a tree. Moses ordered the tree be placed in the bitter waters and to everyone's amazement, the waters turned sweet.

Scholars have tried to figure out what kind of tree could perform this kind of cleansing. But, in my opinion the search is useless.

God performed a miracle and the tree performed the function as a type of Calvary. The solution for the bitter waters was a **tree**, and the solution for bitterness of soul is the **Grace of God at the cross**. Add grace to every conflict, and the waters become sweet.

Israel complained because they lost sight of God's love and redemptive purpose (at the Red Sea); and, Christians complain because they lose sight of the **CROSS**.

You can overcome a bitter spirit by applying the following prescriptions:

Prescription 1: Stop looking at trials as God's punishment upon you, and start looking at trials as God's training program to make you strong.

The whole of Hebrews 12 is about God's training program for his children. All his children are disciplined. Discipline is not punishment, it is child training. It may feel like punishment, but it is not. If Christ took all our punishment upon himself at Calvary, how

much punishment is their left for you and me? God does not punish His people, but He does discipline them for their good.

God led his people to the bitter waters of Marah, not to hurt them, but to help them; not to disappoint them, but to encourage them; not to poison them, but to refresh their bodies with water and their souls with a demonstration of His power.

Anyone familiar with strength training and muscle building knows that muscle development follows muscle exhaustion.

Likewise, God often exhausts His saints to strengthen His saints. Brokenness precedes holiness.

For this reason, the Spirit exhorts His people to “**not despise the discipline of the Lord**” (rebel) nor “**faint**” (quit) when they are reprovved by Him (12:5). Bitterness grows when germinated by resentment and resignation.

Prescription 2: Stop seeking perfection, and start seeking excellence.

Idealism and perfectionism are regions where bitterness grows best. Those with high expectations for others will always be disappointed. Bitterness grows where people have unreal expectations of others. *Those who "want it all" are setting themselves up for fall into the river of bitterness and gall.*

We live in a fallen world. Clothes wear out. Cars break down. Paint peels. Milk sours. Toast burns. In an imperfect world, the perfectionist will always be disappointed and critical.

Perfection is God's job, but excellence is our job. Excellence recognizes the impossibility of perfection. Excellence recognizes the sinfulness of man and knows that perfection is impossible; but, it does encourage people to do the best they can do. Only a demanding, critical legalist demands perfection.

God led Israel to Marah because this was the beginning of their integrity training.

How do you take a nation of slaves and train them to be spiritual leaders, soldiers, and statesmen? Integrity training! He wanted to show this nation that He could fix broken things; that He could take bitter things and make them sweet; that good can come out of bad experiences; that He is sovereign over every circumstance; that they needed to go deeper into trust.

Prescription 3: Stop fearing death, and start fearing sin.

As humans we fear want, need, and desire. We fear failure and financial ruin when we should fear sin. It was Adam's sin that brought death and misery to humanity; and, it is sin that wrecks relationships and mars our spirit today. *Sin in the heart was more of a threat to the nation's health than the bitter waters of Marah.*

Psalm 97 has been called the OT gospel. Notice that in Psalm 97:10 the fundamental attribute of the godly is not love, but hatred—hatred of evil. The whole instruction in God’s law was designed to produce in men the fear of God and animus toward sin (Deuteronomy 6:1-2).

The course of this world sees sin as a form of entertainment and embraces it; but, those instructed by God’s Word see sin as an enemy and wage war against it. ***Bitter people lay down their swords, stopped obeying, and surrendered to be ruled by their bosom sins.***

Prescription 4: Stop looking at the difficulty of circumstances and start looking at the power of Christ.

Calvary, not circumstance, is the criterion of God’s love for us. Out of Egypt, God prepared his people to enter Canaan. The Lord enrolled the nation in Integrity Training 101 and the first lesson was about trusting God in the time of need. ***Would Israel bite their lip and trust God, or would Israel bolt and bellyache?***

His disciplines are not indicators of a change in God’s disposition toward us, but evidence of His love toward us.

*Those He elects, He lovingly corrects. Those He corrects, He zealously perfects.
Those He perfects, He wonderfully protects.*

Psalm 37:9 . . . but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

In 1 Chronicles 28:20 David said to Solomon his son,

*“Be strong and of good courage, and do **it**: fear not, nor be **dismayed**: for the LORD God, **even my God, will be with thee**; he will not **fail thee** (*raphah*), nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.”*

This verse is in reference to the building of Solomon’s temple.

The Hebrew word “dismayed” (*chathath*) is a stimulating word. It means “to be shattered,” “to be broken,” or “to fall apart.” Negative circumstances have a tendency to shatter our confidence in God’s love. A soul at rest will not unravel.

The verb “will not fail” (*raphah*) thee means “to sink,” “to drop,” “to abate,” or “to abandon.” It is also a Hiphil / causative. The verb *raphah* is translated “idle” in Exodus 5:8. There, Pharaoh accused the slaves of being bootless on the ground when work needed to be done. When we rest, **God will not be idle** (*raphah*)!

Prescription 5: Stop looking on the inside, and start looking outside to the Lord.

We must not look inside ourselves for a reason why God should love us. The reason is not within us, but within the character of God.

The primary work of Divine grace is not God's work exerted in us, but God's work outside of us in Christ at Calvary.

The Lord does not choose to be gracious to us because of a change in our heart, or the activity of faith in our souls, or because we are born again, but ***because it is His nature to be gracious!***

God loves because of Who He is, not because of who we are (1 John 4:8ff). What He does flows from Who He is: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son . . .” (John 3:16).

Prescription 6: Stop trying to earn God’s love, and start accepting His love.

- ***Consenting to be loved while unworthy is a great secret of the Christian life*** (Romans 5:8).
- ***We did nothing to gain God’s love, and we can do nothing to lose His love.***
- ***His love is not bestowed because of human merit, nor can it be withdrawn because of human weakness.***
- ***Grace triumphs in the presence of human weakness, and it ceases to be grace if it is withdrawn because of human failure.***
- God knows all about us. ***He loves us, not because of Who we are, but because of Who He is—a God of love.***
- ***Grace extended in spite of us will not be retracted because of us.***
- ***Even if we give God our very best, we cannot earn more grace.*** His grace is independent of us, and it is not dependent on anything we do or do not do.

Psalm 27:13 says, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”

The word “believed” (*aman*) is a Hiphil, perfect. The idea behind the Hiphil is causation. David is saying that unless God caused his heart to believe, he would have camped in the desert of despair.

Both faith and fear will sail into the harbor of our minds, but only faith should be allowed to drop anchor.

Our enjoyment of grace is totally dependent on our faith, that is, our ability to perceive the love of God at work in our lives.

When we believe, we really enjoy God’s grace.

Bitter people are often critical others, even railing others for their sins against them. Strangely, however, they often see themselves as righteous; that is, their focus is on the

failures of their spouse or boss or neighbor, and never upon their own sins, failures, anger, bitterness, thanklessness, fears, unbelief, or unreal expectations of others.

Bitter people can be blind people--blind to their own wretched sins and self-righteousness. In their minds, it is not themselves that need healing, but others; it is not themselves that need to repent, but their spouse or neighbor.

Bitter people are sometimes "perfect" people in their own minds. Who can live with a perfect person whose tongue is filled with the poison of asps railing others for their faults and failures? Who can live with a person that constantly criticizes them, but is righteous in their own eyes?

Thus, bitter people are fixated on the faults of others and seem to have a total incapacity to admit wrong, confess sins, and ask forgiveness from those closest to them. Those with hemlock in their own hearts and poison on their tongues don't feel the need for the Savior, for the cross, or for forgiveness. In their minds, other people are 100% at fault and are to be blamed for their miseries.

We are instructed in Psalm 46:10 "**Be still (*raphah*), and know that I am God.**"

In Exodus 4:26 the Hebrew word *raphah* is translated "So he let him go" (*raphah*).

In Exodus 5:8, the word *raphah* is translated "idle."

In Joshua 10:6, the word is translated "slack."

When we trust Him and are at rest, He will not be idle.

Interestingly, when Solomon's temple was built, there was no sound of the hammer or chisel. God's works best when we are quiet and there is no fleshly activity (1 Kings 6:7).

God's people are not permitted to bind themselves with anything that produces human sweat. God's people are called to serve, but not to sweat . . . to work but without fleshly perspiration- anger, anxiety, fear, frustration, etc. (Ezekiel 44:18).

Do you get the idea? We must learn to be still, to be idle, to be slack, and to rest so God can go to work. When we rest, God rolls up His sleeves and builds the kingdom.

Anger, wrath, rage, slander, railing, and bitterness creates an environment where Satan feels at home. God, on the other hand, inhabits the praises of His people – that is, those focusing on the sovereignty of God.

Prescription 7: Stop grumbling and start thanking God; i.e., stop counting your troubles and start counting your blessings.

We have to fire the chorus of complainers, and we have to employ the attitude of gratitude.

The word for “**grumble**” in this passage is the Hebrew word *lun* (לונ). It is translated “tarried” in Genesis 28:1, “lodged” in Joshua 6:11, “remain” in Psalm 55:7, and “grudge” in Psalm 59:15. The idea here is that Israel was headed down hill to set up camp in the valley of despair. Every thought and every emotion was lodged in the crevice of bitterness.

Thankfulness creates an atmosphere where God can work.

Grumbling creates a work shop for the Devil.

God loves praise; the Devil hates it.

Remember Psalm 22? YHWH inhabits the praises of Israel.

"Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel:" The "praise of Israel" is not the choruses of His people. Rather, the "praises of Israel" refers to the Ark of the Covenant, the throne of God, His position as King between the cherubim; that God is there (Jehovah-Shammah) was the privilege, honor, blessing, glory, and praise of Israel. In a secondary sense, "the ever-ascending praises of His people become a throne for the Divine King, and take the place of the outstretched wings of the cherubim" - Ellicott.

Remember Psalm 50:23? The psalmist says that whosoever praises God clears a road for the chariot of His salvation (deliverance from the circumstance).

Ruth Graham tells this story:

While attending Wheaton College, one of my roommates, Kimberly Long (Wyckoff), and I would sing "His Loving Kindness" while we walked the six blocks to campus in the morning. In the evenings when we walked home, we sang heartily, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." The idea came to us from Psalm 92:2: "To show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night" (Ruth Bell Graham, Prodigals and Those Who Love Them, 1991, Focus on the Family Publishing, p. 104).

A Lighthouse of God's Grace

Bruce Goodrich was being initiated into the cadet corps at Texas A & M University. One night, Bruce was forced to run until he dropped -- but he never got up. Bruce Goodrich died before he even entered college.

A short time after the tragedy, Bruce's father wrote this letter to the administration, faculty, student body, and the corps of cadets:

"I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my family for the great outpouring of concern and sympathy from Texas A & M University and the college community over the loss of our son Bruce. We were deeply touched by the tribute paid to him in the battalion. We were

particularly pleased to note that his Christian witness did not go unnoticed during his brief time on campus."

Mr. Goodrich went on:

"I hope it will be some comfort to know that we harbor no ill will in the matter. We know our God makes no mistakes. Bruce had an appointment with his Lord and is now secure in his celestial home. When the question is asked, 'Why did this happen?' perhaps one answer will be, 'So that many will consider where they will spend eternity'" ("Our Daily Bread", March 22, 1994).

In conclusion, all of us will be led to bitter waters because we are enrolled in God's integrity training program. We need grace: grace to believe and accept life's difficulties from God to make us better, not bitter; grace to admit our own faults and flaws; and, grace to forgive those who hurt us.

When God leads us to Marah, let us look up instead of down. Let's tap into grace and reject a root of bitterness. Believing God loves us makes the bitter waters sweet.

6.26 Grind the Wheat

Habakkuk 2:20

"But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

Charles Spurgeon — "There are times when solitude is better than society, and silence is wiser than speech."

◆ We should be better Christians if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering through meditation on His Word spiritual strength for labor in his service.

We ought to muse upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them. . . .

Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons, make but slow advances in the divine life?

Because they neglect their closets, and do not thoughtfully meditate on God's Word. **They love the wheat, but they do not grind it;** they would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it; the water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord. . . ."

“They love the wheat, but they do not grind it . . .”

Because “his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” like us grind the wheat and add virtue to faith; faith to prayers; and prayers to duty.

Robert E. Lee to his son:

“Do your duty in all things, like the old Puritan. You cannot do more; you should never wish to do less.”

6.27 Follow Jesus

Isaiah 53:6

“He was despised and rejected of men?”

◆ So, you want to follow Jesus . . . really?

- There was no room for him in the inn.
- He was driven out of Bethlehem by Herod and his government.
- He was expelled from Nazareth by His neighbors.
- Peter begged the Lord to depart from Him because he (Peter) was a sinful man (Luke 5:8).
- His own family rejected Him.
- The priests threw Him out of His own temple.
- The Gerasenes fired Him as their pastor and requested He leave their community.
- The last six months of His life he traveled in Phoenicia and Perea because there was no room for him in Israel.
- He was crucified outside the city because there was no room for Him in Jerusalem.

Why do we expect to be received and welcomed everywhere we go? The more we are accepted by pagan politicians, carnal Christians, and the apostate church the further we are from the pure Christ. Believest thou this?

*Hebrews 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the **camp**, bearing his reproach.*

6.28 Develop Humility

Matthew 11:19

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

◆ A friend told me he had never met a humble woman. Have you met one; or, a humble man for that matter?

If you know a humble person, you are fortunate. The West has trained their daughters to be proud, loud, arrogant, and opinionated complainers.

The man who seeks to follow Christ must remember that He was the most humble man that ever lived.

There is no rest for the proud man because he wastes so much energy thinking about himself.

The humble man keeps his opinions about himself to himself.

The great need is not more “self-esteem,” but more Christ-esteem where knowledge about Him leads to humility. Men do not suffer from low self-esteem, but from focusing too much on self. What good is it to be known by men, if one is not known by God?

Be humble or stumble for the Lord said, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul” (Mark 8:36)?

I would rather be humble than know how to define it. But, here is one attempt:

Humility is realizing who you are and why you are who you are and not trying to be who you are not.

Whatever you have is a gift of God; and, whatever you lack is also a gift of God.

The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? (Exodus 4:11).

Many thoughts about self do not satisfy the soul, but the soul caught up with the beauty of our Lord has a perpetual feast. In Psalm 45, we have a heart “stirred” by a noble theme. Hearts are often stirred by fruits connected to the Poisonous Tree, the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. But, this heart is stirred by virtue of Him Who created the tree of life.

A key to happiness is the quiet life that is content to be unknown. Knowing that he is known by God, he knows that God knows him in truth. Therefore, he is not shaken when men believe lies about him. He knows that the person looking up to God will not look down on him; and, that the person looking down on him does not look up to God.

When we forget ourselves we do things that are most likely to be remembered.

Those pious people listed in God’s Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11) saw themselves as nothing and Christ as everything. They walked humbly in charity with patience knowing that God saw them and would reward them in His own good time.

6.29 Love Obedience

John 14:15

”If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

Consider the virtue of Obedience, of the Secret of the Saints – Opus Angelorum:

“In the Work of the Holy Angels the members are encouraged to strive to acquire seven special virtues which will help them to achieve a more intimate union with the holy angels. These are: Fidelity, Humility, Obedience, Charity, Silence, Temperance and the Imitation of Mary.”

◆ The law for the pious, and the law for a Christian society is rooted in the law of Holy Scriptures.

“Nothing is more deadly or more derelict than the notion that the Christian is at liberty with respect to the kind of law he can have” (John Rushdoony, Institutes of Biblical Law, p. 9)

The Holy Scriptures not only command a man to obey God’s law, but the rules laid down by his mentors (Ephesians 6:1ff; Hebrews 13:17).

We obey the gospel to be justified; we obey the laws of holiness to be sanctified. We do not seek to be holy to be saved, but because God saves us, we seek to be holy out of love and respect for the Savior.

Piety begins with knowing your position or status before God. There are only two types of people: the natural (unsaved) man, and the spiritual (saved) man. There is no such thing as a “carnal Christian,” but there is such a thing as “carnal thinking” (1 Corinthians 2:16-3:1-5).

“I preach deliverance to others while I hear my own chains clang” – John Bunyan.

The key is to begin thinking correctly (Romans 6:11) and to grow up into your new position in Christ: *Reckon yourself dead unto sin and alive unto God.*

Obedience must be learned! The Christian life is not that hard but if the holy intern wanders from the path of obedience, he will slide down the slipper slope where it is uphill all the way.

The opposite of obedience is sin, and sin is the opposite of righteousness. The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness. The opposite of grace is not law, but permissiveness.

When God saves a man, he is released from the penalty of sin; but, he is not released from the presence of sin nor immediately delivered from the power of sin. The justified must learn to be sanctified.

The very definition of sin is “each turning to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6). Living life “your way” is a force within that you must master.

Obedience to a godly order is better than lawlessness.

God saves rebel to His law and then turn them into pious men. In God’s child-training program, the apprentice disciple experiences horrific struggles between the “old man” and “the new man.” And, the apprentice disciple can never gain peace of mind unless he subjects himself humbly and unconditionally to the love of God.

The pious learn not to trust their feelings, but to trust the facts; to not trust opinions of worldly wise men, but to trust the counsels of sure Word of God.

The pious are taught to pray and practice, “Not my will be done, but Thy will be done!”

Those seeking to escape duty flee the benefits of the gospel; those seeking personal interests instead of the interests of Christ walks away from the sunshine of God’s grace. “He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day” (John Bunyan).

Self-will replaces God’s will;

Murmuring muffles praise;

Fear unseats faith;

Death poisons life;

Conflict shadows relationships;

And, sinful habits rise out of the grave to grab the reigns of the heart.

Humble yourself! Learn to obey, you who are but dust and clay!

Repent deeply! Confess! Come clean! Flee the darkness.

Play the man and say “No!” to the desires of the flesh.”

Beat your body and bring it into submission to Christ.

Crawl back on to the path of obedience; and,

Grace shall raise you up and strengthen your soul.

Surrender to your spiritual mentors and revel in the “breaking” of your will! (Hebrews 13:7).

The problem is that we don’t hate sin enough! Let us learn to love obedience and to manage the pain of self-denial.

Let us be like the Pilgrim John Bunyan where obedience took over the castle of his heart: ”

“I will stay in prison till the moss grows on my eyelids rather than disobey God.”

6.30 Practice Charity

1 John 3:11

“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

◆ The church considers charity as one of the three great virtues: Faith and hope are the other two (1 Corinthians 13:13).

What does charity look like? It has feet to walk in love; it has a smile to announce God’s peace to men; it has eyes to see the needs of others; it has two big ears to hear their troubles; it has a mind to discern true needs; it has hands to help them; and, it has heart to give them more than they need to make them glad; and, it has a tongue to encourage them to trust God and seek Christ.

Pious people (catholics; not RC) learn that God is love. He loves because of Who He is; likewise, we love because of who we are and what we are becoming; a people of love.

- We love because He first loved us.
- We are patient because God is patient with us.
- We are kind, because God is kind to us.
- We listen to others, because God listens to us.
- We are not easily angered with others, because God is not easily angered with us.
- We exercise tough love because God exercises tough love toward us.
- We avoid fuzzy-wuzzy, touchy-feely “love” because God love in sending His Son to the cross was anything but sugar and spice and everything nice.
- We lovingly but firmly confront sins in others near and dear to us because the Spirit faithfully confronts our sins.
- God has given us two hands: with one to receive God’s gifts, the other to give (BG).
- We are silent because God is sometimes silent towards us.
- If we arouse fear in others, we know that we are not yet perfected in love (1 John 4:18).
- We are not surprised when the world hates us, because those that hate, do not know God (1 John 3:13; 4:8).
- That God hates the sin and loves the sinner is sun kissed, honey roasted theology, and questionable at best. Good hates sin and the lawless man that lives life his way (Romans 9:6-29).
- We are willing and ready to forgive those that injure us because God forgives us.
- We distinguish between sin and criminal acts codified by the State. We forgive sins against us by those who repent (Luke 17:1-3), but we have no authority to forgive criminal acts even though they are sorry for what they did. We affirm and support the power of the State to prosecute criminal acts.

6.31 Dressing Appropriately for Church

Psalm 96:9

“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.”

♦ The NAS Bible reads, **"Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth."**

A liberal First Presbyterian Church advertises: *Come as you are to worship God. Dress is casual and varied . . .* but, is this what Scripture says? "Come as you are" may be appropriate for a church picnic . . . but a worship service?

The term **"worship"** is a Hithpael imperfect verb meaning "cause yourself to bow down." In the Persian Empire the law required citizens to bow prostrate when approaching the king at Persepolis. Humility is always in style.

The term **"beauty of holiness"** refers to the attire of priests. Exodus 28 focuses on the special clothing which God authorized for the high priest. Because God is beautiful in holiness, church services dedicated to worship require stately excellence and order.

"Bow before Jehovah in holy attire" (Ellicott).

"Worship the Lord in Holy Attire" (Psalm 96: 8-9). The Hebrew word for "attire" is "hadarah," which means "adornment and glory." When you and I enter as priests in God's presence, this very act assures our adornment with glory" (Loving Grace Ministries).

"We don't often think of holiness as beautiful. Preachers sometimes threaten their listeners with God's holiness, while people who claim to be holy can strike us as self-righteous. To say that someone has a "holier-than-thou" attitude is not a compliment. But here, the psalmist speaks of the beauty of holiness" (Lake Trails Presbyterian Church).

"As we are by nature, it goes against the grain to see and call holiness beautiful" (PRCA.org).

Nevertheless, the psalmist calls the whole earth to fear and to worship him in the beauty of holiness.

The word **"fear"** (*hadarah*) in this text is not the usual term for fear (*yare* or *yir'ah*). This word for "fear" (*hadarah*) means *to writhe, twist, shake, contort, or dance*. Most likely the psalmist is calling delinquent people to "tremble" in fear at the greatness and majesty of the LORD . . . to possess a fear that leads to surrender and obedience.

Worshipping the LORD in the beauty of holiness requires the soul to be in harmony with the LORD God -- a harmony which is reflected by what one wears in the sanctuary.

Since worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness involves clothing, Christians ought to consider **the dress code in Orthodox Churches**.

- *Ladies* – sleeved and non-revealing dress or blouse, respectable fitted clothes and skirt length with a headcovering.
- *Gentlemen* – sleeved and collared shirt, long trousers, coat and tie is preferred with *no* headcovering.

Source: <https://armenianchurchsydney.org.au/learning/respectful-traditions-of-the-armenian-church/>

The **St. Joseph Catholic Church** requires the following:

- Women and girls must cover their heads. (Chapel veils or mantillas are available for loan in the vestibule.)
- Women and girls must wear dresses or skirts that cover the knee completely when sitting or standing; slacks, shorts, sleeveless, tight or low-cut clothing or dresses with long cuts or slits are to be avoided.
- Men and boys should wear suit coats and ties. (Except in very hot weather)
- Jeans, sports logo and other casual attire are inappropriate for attendance at church services.

Let our dress reflect modesty . . . dignity . . . and the greatness of the King we serve.

6.32 Warning: Don't Be Overly Righteous

Ecclesiastes 7:16

"Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself?" (ESV)

"Do not be excessively righteous, and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself?" (NASB)

◆ These verses caution men about being overly religious, addicted to always being right, and bullying others to apply religious principles to every details of life.

This verse warns men about excessive zeal in being right in the absence of Scriptural admonitions . . . about fear of freedom . . . about controlling others through criticism . . . about a person who has to know it all and be right on everything.

Ellicott says it is a caution about **morbid scrupulosity**.

Benson warns about carrying certain parts of religion to an extreme . . . about being **over tenacious** of insignificant forms or human inventions . . . about pretending to kinds and degrees of righteousness which the Scriptures do not require . . . about **punctiliousness** degenerating into **superstition, indiscretion, and folly**.

Matthew Henry adds this thought: "Be not conceited of thine own abilities; nor find fault with every thing, nor busy thyself in other men's matters."

You don't have to know it all and have an opinion on everything. Relax! Accept your humanity. Be humble. Live by faith. Be teachable. Live courageously. Be gracious to others or you will destroy yourself and your relationships.

This verse does not mean that a man should not take his duties to God seriously. Where God speaks, men ought to obey. Rather, this verse cautions men about **spiritual pride and dogmatism regarding frivolous, inconsequential behavior** . . . about **fear** of making personal choices where you have freedom to do so . . . about exacting conformity to one's personal preferences like not eating meat on Friday or playing golf on Sunday or fixing a leaky faucet on the Sabbath.

The next verse corrects any view that men are not to take God's law-word seriously.

Ecclesiastes 7:17 Do not be excessively wicked, and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?

"**Be not excessively wicked**" is not permission to do evil things, but a warning about a pivotal decisions that sets a course to live wickedly. The expression is a literary device that means, "Do not be wicked at all."

Not only will gross excesses destroy a man, a little folly can ruin a person's career.

This text is a warning about aggravating your sin so as to make yourself a prisoner of passion.

Pursuing one's desires without the restraint of true religion leads to ruin. The wages of sin is death.

Scriptural admonitions protect one from the lions of lust, shelter a man from the storms on the sea of life, and shields one from the blizzards of adversity.

Follow God's law and do not drift into the sea of irresponsibility by the heat of passions . . . or you will be ruined, ravaged, and wrecked by your transgressions.

6.33 Rejoice in Christ

Psalm 45:1-2

(To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.) My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

Nehemiah 8:10 ” . . . the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

◆ We love the Lord Jesus Christ and seek to follow Him, but we often stumble on the pilgrim path. We seek to be holy, but we are too often defeated. We resist sin, but we too often fail in this battle. Consequently, our joy can never reside in our own spiritual victories: “rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” – Luke 10:20.

Our joy is in our Lord Jesus Christ Who never stumbled, who never failed, and Who never sinned.

He has no outstanding virtues because all the glories of the Father coalesce in Him.

When we believe, the Spirit baptizes us (places us into Christ) to share in the marvelous benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-6).

Yes, we seek sanctification, not to be accepted, but because we are accepted in the Beloved by faith in the Son. Justification is necessary, but holiness is esthetic.

Our joy, therefore, is not in our meager victories, but the victories of Another; not in our righteousness, but in His righteousness; not in our character, but the character of the Savior. The Father’s joy in the Son is our joy! Our heart “bubbles over” with the beauty of our Savior. Thou art fairer than sons of men (Psalm 45).

“It was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made my righteousness worse, righteousness was Jesus Christ himself” – John Bunyan.

We cannot count all the virtues of the Savior, but here are a few ways the Lord Jesus Christ is superior to other religious leaders and common men:

- He is fairer than other men in His origin whose goings forth are from everlasting.
- He is fairer in conception whose mother was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- He is fairer than other men in His nativity.

- He is fairer than other men in His nature—He is the sinless God-man.
- He is fairer than other men in His childhood (Luke 2:52)
- He is fairer than other men in His manhood.
- He is fairer than other men in His character—He is holy and true.
- He is fairer than other men in His calling.
- He is fairer than other men in His works—He died for the sins of men.
- He is fairer than other men in His teaching.
- He is fairer than other men in His response to evil.
- He is fairer than other men in His transfiguration.
- He is fairer than other men in His righteousness.
- He is fairer than other men in His devotion to the Father.
- He is fairer than other men in His suffering and passion.
- He is fairer than other men in His death.
- He is fairer than other men in His accomplishments.
- He is fairer than other men in His resurrection.
- He is fairer than other men in His devotion to the Father.
- He is fairer than other men in His reward and exaltation.
- He is fairer than other men in His reign and kingdom ministry.

‘Only as we focus on Christ can our heart be filled with good things. It is too easy to focus on our problems, our faults, our sins, and our failures. It is too easy to focus on the problems of our spouse, or boss, or co-workers, or political leaders. Let us do what the author of Hebrews exhorted us to do and “fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and Finisher of our faith and “consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” Then and only then will our hearts become an artesian well of spiritual life (Philippians 4:7-8).’

Thus, those in pursuit of piety are motivated by His beauty and His character and not fear.

6.34 Fight Temptation

Job 7:1

“Is there not a warfare to man upon earth? And are not his days like the days of a hireling?” (ASV)

“The life of man upon earth is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling.” (Douay-Rheims Bible)

Whether we are young or old, we face allurements. As long as we are in this world, we cannot escape testing and suffering. We are never safe from inducement, because sin’s energy comes from within the unredeemed part of us.

Try to escape these enticements, and we fall victim to their forces.

The text above informs us that life is war. Whether one is Bedouin or a Monarch, we are driven by the Adamic nature and its sinful desires.

All must be on guard.

All must pray.

All must recognize the Adversary.

Satan never sleeps. He is a stalking-lion seeking whom he may devour.

All the saints have been made better, not bitter, by temptations. It is not hard to be energetic and devout when there are no decoys. Though it is hard to resist “Deviled Delights” from Satan’s table, the one who overcomes becomes spiritually strong — even a pillar in the House of God:

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” - Revelation 3:12.

Tests are necessary to increase our strength, to humble us, purify us, and instruct us. As fire tempers iron, hot-temptations forges steel into the soul of the pious. Temptations help us grow in our resolve to say “No!” to evil, and in compassion toward our brethren who struggle with trespass and guilt.

The regenerated man wants to please God, but he still lives in an unredeemed body with depraved desires and thinking. Sin is in us, but it does not own us. As we learn to “mortify” the flesh, we become more Christ-like and easier to live with. Character emerges from the furnace. Opportunities for service appear.

The key is to learn to resist early before sin gains momentum. For the spirit to say “No!” before the flesh says, “Yes.” Remedies come too late. Escape routes close down. Duty treks uphill.

6.35 Hate Sin More

Matthew 17:8-9,

“And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.”

◆ People trapped in sinful habits like outburst of anger, lust, and pride, must learn to hate sin more.

Jesus shows us what hate for sin looks like.

“If you hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off.” He is not literally speaking of mutilating the body; He uses hyperbole – an extreme exaggeration to show men how much they should hate sin. Better to go through life with one arm, than to have one’s whole body cast into hell.”

If a rattlesnake was in your living room, you would hack it to death with a garden hoe. Likewise, men must learn to treat sin as a deadly, slithering, poisonous reptile. It is you or him. Both of you can’t occupy the same house.

If you were on a boat in the middle of a Minnesota lake and you saw a storm coming, you would paddle like a madman towards shore to get to safety; that is, when are tempted to sin, flee the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the world.

2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

6.36 Trust God, Not Man

Psalm 118:9-10

“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.”

◆ These verses are in the exact middle of the Bible.

We live in a society where men boast of their strengths as if superior to all others. Modern man values “positive thinking,” and “yes, we can” philosophies as the key to success.

Again and again we hear men say, “trust me!”

But, this verse commands us not to trust in man or in kings or even in ourselves. We are not self-sufficient. We trust God.

We do not put our trust in science, because scientist lie and do not distinguish between theories and facts; between real science and fake science; between honest conclusions and haughty opinions.

We do not trust in experts, because experts claim to know much about specifics on earth but know little about ethics.

We do not trust in friends, because our friends are deeply flawed and are not careful about what they say.

We do not trust in celebrities, because “stars” are puppets in front of those with an agenda to make money.

We do not trust in government officials, because they are flawed sinners concerned about money and fame.

We do not trust wealth, because it promptly disappears.

We do not trust in beauty, because it quickly fades.

We do not trust in our talents, because they are humble at best. Half of us are below average.

We do not trust in our training because our training is filled with fraud and propaganda.

We do not think we are better than others because we all descendants of Adam.

We do not take pride in our good deeds, for God’s judgments differ from those of men and what pleases them often displeases Him.

Sometimes we do good, but we do not take pride in doing good. Rather, we seek to see good in others, so we can remain humble.

We brag about others accomplishments, but we do not brag about our own . . . because in the long scheme of things, the only thing that counts are the accomplishments of Christ on our behalf.

6.37 Practice Mortification

Colossians 3:5

“Mortify (slay) therefore your members (parts of your humanity attracted to sin) which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

◆ Both the saving of life and the taking of life are duties of men. Likewise, holy men cultivate the life of God in the soul while mortifying sinful impulses that come from within. Both death and life are at work in the man.

Those in pursuit of Christ-likeness must accept the duty to die to self and mortify the deeds of darkness at work within our soul.

When men desire too much, they fall short of patience. A proud and avarice man knows no peace because his heart is never satisfied, but a poor and humble man lives in peace and at peace with others.

Our text places a duty on the pious man to mortify (put to death) his desires to eat sugar-fruit near Satan’s Yum Yum Tree.

The happy man puts his sinful desires to death in order to be a blessing to others: “So death is at work in us, but life in you” – Paul (2 Corinthians 4:12).

An unmortified man is quickly enticed and overcome by small loitering evils . . . especially in private. He can hardly restrain his flaming passions. Knowing nothing of the virtue of silence, he is easily irritated, quickly angered, and immediately frustrated.

If he succumbs to temptation, remorse suffocates his conscience and peace flies away like a frightened bird.

True joy, then, is found in resisting passions, not in satisfying them. There is no peace in the heart of the carnal man who yields to temptations. Thus, the happy man is a mortified

man. Like a wrangler pulls back on the reigns of a spirited horse, the pious pull in the cross to restrain (kill) his passions.

6.38 Pursue Truth

Psalm 25:5

“Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life . . .” (John 14:6).

Jesus told the Jewish leaders, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” (John 8:32)

◆ Free from what? The context is sin.

True freedom is that blessed state of being free from the choking strangleholds of lusts, greed, anger, pride, arrogance, fear, and the deeds of darkness.

The Pharisees would have nothing to do with it.

Put an ad in the newspaper on how to make a million dollars this year and the auditorium will be packed. Give a lecture on how to cure cancer, and you’ll never lack an audience. But, announce a lecture on how to be free from sin, and you’ll be lucky to have three people in the audience.

God sent his Son to save His people from their sins, but people were pre-occupied with the “cares of this world.”

Sin deceives, but truth clarifies; sin entraps, but truth sets one free. Every command in Scripture addresses a potential taskmaster; and, obedience to those commands sets us free from the Adamic nature.

Neglect of things to find truth is necessary for the one who pursues freedom from sinful habits. God is truth and he cannot be found in an apartment store or at a car dealership.

We are not talking about “truth” as a question of philosophy, but truth that sets a man from the chains of sin. Jesus was not a philosopher expounding on theories about “truth.” He was the truth, and he promised freedom to truth seekers pursuing piety.

The pious man seeks truth . . . life as it is and not what the Utopian world dreams life to be . . . truth about Christ . . . truth about self . . . truth about the nature of man.

The more pure the man in his walk with God the less distracted he is with the lying propaganda of the evening news and entertainment. He is not in a dizzy over the evening news. He see God at work and does not fret (Psalm 37:1).

If men exercised as much care in pursuing truth and uprooting lies as they do discussing the problems of politics, they could be at peace without all the scandal and uncertainty of deep state schemes.

The real problem in life is not political, but spiritual; not enslavement to men, but enslavement to sin at work in the individual man.

The Jews sought freedom from Rome. Jesus offered men freedom from guilt and transgression. Why then are modern Christians in a dither about modern corruption which the average pious man can do nothing about?

Truth delivers a man from the power of sin, but truth does not necessarily deliver a man from the powers of totalitarian government.

Because men in power care too little about serving the truth, governments are instruments of deception and slavery. They offer a false hope and false freedom. When politicians speak you can hear the chains rattling in the background. *Get a license or permit and come under our control*, they whisper.

For this reason, pious men seek truth that frees them from the power of sin within and without – and, the entrapment of officialdom. Real freedom does not come from government but from God who frees men from the fetters of one's own sin and sometimes the sin of others (John 8:34).

Only when men are free from the power of sin, can they hope to be instrument of political freedom.

6.39 Walk in the Light

1 John 1:1-10

During John's ministry, many professed to know God. But, pretenders migrated to Christian circles spoiling the purity of the church. In his letter, John seeks to unmask these

pretenders (Gnostics and Judaizers) and at the same time assure struggling Christians of their glorious standing before God in Christ.

John's challenge was how to encourage believers who are aware of their sins and imperfections; and, at the same time expose wolves in sheep's clothing who claimed perfection.

You can be assured that you are a Christian by studying the marks of a true Christian and the character of pretenders.

The Grounds of John's Claims

1 John 1:1-10 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

John claims to know the Word of Life. He is not a fideist, but an empiricist providing the legal grounds on which his claims are based.

Notice how John's claims about Christ are not based on analytic theories but upon the Hebrew / Roman legal Rules of Evidence: What did you see, hear, and touch? The highest form of proof is based on eye-witness testimony and not upon speculations, analytical-theories, and presumptions. He declares what he saw, what he studied with his eyes, what he heard, and what he touched with his hands.

John's Claim of Authority

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

John's Claim that God is Light

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Having laid down the legal grounds (type of proof) upon which his claim is made, John now makes another claim.

While John asserts that "God is love (4:7), he states his first claim that "God is light" with no darkness at all (1:5).

"Light" is a metaphor for holiness, purity, perfection, and beauty. "Darkness" is a metaphor for sin, evil, and moral depravity.

Many in the early church must have claimed to have happy communion with God, even superior spirituality. But, upon closer examination, the lives of these pretenders were filled with anomalies associated with darkness.

John wants us to know that the one claiming to know God must share a measure of His light.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

John had no tolerance for those walking in the shadows, and did his best to expose these imposters. Creatures of the night have no relationship with the God of light. Those who say they know the Father, of Lights, but live in carnal dens are liars.

"To walk in darkness, is to live and act against religion. God holds no heavenly fellowship or intercourse with unholy souls. There is no truth in their profession; their practice shows its folly and falsehood" (Matthew-Henry).

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,

This wonderful text has three important clauses.

The contingency "if" introduces a 3rd class conditional clause with the subjunctive" -- maybe you do, but maybe you don't, but if you do, you will walk in the light.

we have fellowship one with another,

John did **not** say, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God;" but, "fellowship one with another."

Fellowship with God's people is primary evidence one is walking in the light. Instead of calling the pretenders "liars," John flips the coin on its edge to expose their false claims; that is, those claiming to walk with God must also walk happily with the flawed, fractured people of God. God's heart is with His people, and if those professing to have true religion do not love God's people, they don't know God. If one claiming to know the Shepherd does not hang around the sheep, he is probably a wolf in sheep's clothing.

And, God's call to fellowship with other sheep does not mean one has to meet with goats.

and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

The verb "**cleanseth**" (*katarizo*) introduces the subject of sanctification, and not justification.

We get the word "**catharsis**" from this Greek stem. "Catharsis" is "a metaphor used by Aristotle in the Poetics to describe the effects of true tragedy on the spectator. The use is

derived from the medical term *katharsis* (Greek: “purgation” or “purification”). Aristotle states that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse “terror and pity” and thereby affect the catharsis of these emotions" (Britannica).

The spirit uses the term "catharsis" to define the healing of lepers in Matthew 11:5.

The concern in 1 John is not being saved from the penalty of sin, but the power of sin and its haunting influence on the conscience. He is not discussing being "redeemed" by blood, but being "cleansed" and "healed" by blood. Even the best of God's people sin and "feel" the ring, pop, and thump of guilt pounding away like kettledrums in the conscience. This text ministers to the conscience by informing believing men His shed blood cleanses and qualifies them for fellowship with the Father and the Son. Faith in the blood, therefore, silences the percussions of a troubled conscience (Hebrews 10:17).

Rest, soul, rest in the sufficiency and efficiency of the blood of Christ which is working now, this moment, to cleanse your conscience.

- Believing men are propitiated through His blood - Romans 3:25
- Believing men are justified by His blood - Romans 5:9
- Believing men are redeemed by His blood - Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:12, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 5:9
- Believing men are made near to God and His promises by His blood - Ephesians 2:13
- Believing men secure peace with God through His blood - Colossians 1:20
- Believing men obtain a clean conscience through His blood - Hebrews 9:12-14
- Believing men attain boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus - Hebrews 10:19
- Believing men are sanctified by His blood - Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2
- Believing men are repaired and equipped to serve God by His blood - Hebrews 13:20-21
- Believing men are cleansed by His blood - 1 John 1:7
- Believing men are washed from their sins by the Blood of Christ - Revelation 1:5
- Believing men are made white in the blood of the Lamb - Revelation 7:14
- Believing men gain victory over Satan, the accuser of the brethren, by His blood - Revelation 12:11

In 1 John 1:7, the apostle is not occupied with the cross, but with the throne; not with the blood that purchases sinners, but the life-giving blood of Christ which purifies and

sanctifies the saint. Blood in this text has "the cleansing power of life" similar to Paul's statement in Romans 8:2 'the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes me free from the law of sin and death.'

We are not only saved by his death from the penalty of sin, we are saved by his life from the power of sin (Romans 5:10).

When Zachariah gained insight into the Christ child, he saw the hope that "we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear" (Luke 1:74). How can we serve Him without fear? The answer is in 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 13:20-21).

In Hebrews we read, "**through the blood** of the everlasting covenant, **make you perfect** (*katartizo*) **in every good work** to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight" (13:20-21).

The word "**perfect**" (*katartizo - tisaí*) (aorist optative - a wish) means "to equip thoroughly" and "to repair." It is translated " perfectly joined together" in 1 Corinthians 1:10; "fully furnished" or "equipped" in 2 Timothy 3:17; "to mend" nets in Matthew 4:21; "to restore" in Galatians 6:1; and "to frame" in Hebrews 11:3. In using the optative the apostle is expressing a wish that a believer's consideration of the blood will fully equip him to serve God.

Christ not only saves us through the power of His death unto justification; He saves us through the Power of His Risen Life unto sanctification. The One saving us through His death from the penalty of sin is the One now saving us through His life from the power of sin. He saves men from the condemnation of sin through faith in His death, and saves men from the domination of sin through faith in His Highly Exalted Life (Colossians 3:2).

A growing cleansing from the dominion and the power of sin is granted to us, if the life of Jesus Christ is breathing in our lives as we depend on His heart-beat operating within us by His Spirit.

The sacrifice on the Cross is the basis of everything, but that sacrifice does not exhaust what Christ does for us. He died for our justification, and lives for our sanctification. He died for us, but He lives in us by His Spirit. Because He died, we are forgiven; because He lives, we are made pure (MacLaren).

That only way we can become free from the tyranny that dominates us, is having the life of Christ as the animating principle of our lives. When we depend on His life as the animating principle of our lives, the spirit of Jesus emancipates us from the power of sin and death (MacLaren).

The blood of Christ at the cross redeems us from the penalty of sin unto justification (being declared righteous), but the quickening blood of Christ in His intercessory work at the right hand of God cleanses us from the power of sin unto sanctification (being made righteous).

The verb "**cleanseth**" is a present active indicative meaning His blood cleanses and keeps on purifying the saint. Believing men are not only redeemed by His blood, but cleansed day by day, moment by moment by His blood in order that men might be sanctified and qualified to walk in the light. Like silver is refined by heat, the heart is refined by continual reliance on the life of Christ as the animating power of one's life.

If the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from ALL sin, what does that leave for baptism . . . or prayer . . . or penance . . . or saying the Rosary to cleanse? The answer is closer to nothing than something.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

John was an apostle of love, but he was also a "son of thunder" totally intolerant of "goodie-two-shoes" type Christianity where people claim to have achieved a state of perfection. His intense moral sincerity and his love for Jesus made him hate evil and to vigorously condemn sin.

That men are sinners is a fact regarding our humanity. To deny the presence of sin in the flesh (the unregenerated part of man) is to deceive ourselves and to build life on a fiction and not truth. Failure to see the problem makes it impossible to see the remedy.

Even after we are both justified and regenerated, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Those in the kingdom of God have experienced the blessings of salvation in a first fruits way, but not the full harvest. Christ saves men from the penalty of sin and the power of sin, but not the presence of sin -- that awaits the Parousia.

The wretchedness of **deception** is the deceived does not know that he is deceived. Those around him know he is a deeply flawed, but the deceived can't see it or admit it.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Truth be known, many Christians are tied up in knots over their failures. This prevents them from enjoying the Lord and His accomplishments for them at the cross and the throne. Thus, 1 John 1:9 is the remedy for the misery that many feel.

The word "**confess**" (*homologeō*) means *to agree with* -- part of the 3rd class conditional clause involving a subjunctive.

The word "**just**" in this context means "faithful to His promises;" that is, God is a promise-keeper.

"**Walking in the light**" involves naming and confessing one's sins as the Spirit identifies them to him. Formal admission of sins to God is evidence the believer is walking in the light with God. Silence, denial, and concealment belong to the darkness.

Confession by itself does not sanitize the soul. Light cleanses because the Truth reaches the man. As light dispels darkness, confession exposes sin so that light of Christ's

accomplishments can heal the man. Mothers say, "*Play in the sunshine*" because of the therapeutic nature of sunlight. As sunlight disinfects and heals wounds, walking in the light with an honest and open heart heals the sinner; that is confession enables the man to come into the sunlight where the blood of Christ can be applied to the soul (1 John 1:7).

Know that confession by itself does not cleanse the soul. There is no forgiveness apart from the doing and dying of Christ. Confession is the catalyst that enables the blood to be applied to our sins so we can maintain our walk with the Father and the Son moment by moment.

Know that confession to a priest does not cleanse the soul. **The "blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin."** Confession of sins to God (and forsaking them) enables the Spirit to apply the cleansing power of the blood to our soul (Proverbs 28:13).

God is faithful to purify the believer because of the doing and dying of Christ. Confession connects the Christian with the cure (blood) to effectively maintain the man in his walk "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Because Christ is the believer's Representative at the throne of God, he can afford to admit guilt before God. Walking in the light means the man can be humble and acknowledge the worst about himself knowing that he will **not** be rejected. The one honestly confessing known sins in their full extent has the full assurance of free and full forgiveness necessary to walk in the light "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Those **walking in the light** are given a promise. Confession, as opposed to suppression, enables the believer to claim God's forgiveness and enjoy the cleansing of the conscience from ALL unrighteousness. This confidence is not based on one's "victory" over sin or the strength of one's resistance to sin, **but upon God's character**: i.e. when we come into the light and confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us because His Son shed his blood as a payment for our sins. Being so cleansed equips us to pray and serve Him.

1 John 2:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Confession of sin is more like a "foot washing" than a total bath (See John 13) -- a necessary process to wash away the defilement that comes from being on this earth.

Confession must be accompanied by faith. Faith has to be aggressive after the conscience has knowledge of failure. For this reason the psalmist (Psalm 32) exhorts confessors **to triple down** on laying hold of the benefits of confession by denying one's feelings and believing the promises until one's feelings match the truth of God's promises. Joy over forgiveness is evidence of faith. These acts of obedience make the heart glad. Believe it, then achieve it.

*Psalm 32:11 **Be glad** in the LORD, and **rejoice**, ye righteous: and **shout for joy**, all ye that are upright in heart.*

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The verb "sinned" is part of a 3rd class conditional clause. It is a perfect, active indicative meaning that one has sinned in the past and continues to be a sinner in the present. The adverb "no" negates the verb; i.e., these pretenders deny they have sinned in the past, are still sinners still, and that their sins are really sins.

Again, John reveals his intolerance of those with a "holier than thou" attitude. Those claiming perfection or a superior spirituality make Him a liar, and are disobedient to His Word!

John's Intolerance of careless, reckless living

John's words are so simple that a child can understand them. He does not argue or reason, he declares the truth in the most understandable way.

6.40 Our Advocate and His Work of Propitiation

1 John 1:1-2:2

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

John introduces us to Christ in three ways: (1) as the "Word of Life" having proof of claim (1:1-4); (2) The One Who cleanses us from all sin before the Light by his blood – the currency of the Spirit world, and (3) the Advocate who provides a remedy for human failure by virtue of His work of propitiation and advocacy before the Father.

John refers to Christians as "little children" six times in His letter – as an expression of his tender fatherly love for his readers. (2:12; 2:28; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21).

"these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." First, John teaches us that believers must not sin. In John's mind, there is no other way to live than to not sin! In 1 John, the duty to love replaces slavery to the Adamic nature.

Second: “**And if any man sin**” is a third class conditional clause (subjunctive) holding out the possibility that a man might not sin. Sin is **not** a fact to this apostle. That men would sin is inconceivable to him . . . but he also knows there is a possibility his “little children” may sin.

Third, John wants us to know: “if any man sin, believers have **an advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. The verb “have” is an indicative – a statement of fact; of certainty; and, of assurance. Unfortunately his “little children” do sin; and, the aged Apostle wants them to know there is comfort for them when they “fall short of the glory of God.”

This comfort is found in the advocacy of “Jesus Christ the righteous.” The fact that He is righteous implies the Judge accepts His presence and intercessory ministry in His holy courtroom. His “little children” do not have a scroungy, drunken, two-bit lawyer advocating their case, but “Jesus Christ the righteous.”

The word “**Advocate**” (*paracletos*) is translated “**comforter**” four times in John’s gospel (14:16; 14:25; 15:26; 16:17).

It has two meanings. **First**, the term *paracletos* refers One who **comforts** others during times of stress; and **Second** it refers to a Greek **lawyer** who advocates for those charged with a crime.

In 1 John, John presents the Father as perfect light, pure and holy; and, His tender Son as a merciful Champion before the Supreme “BAR” pleading the case of His children if they transgress His law. This comfort is made possible due to our Lord's propitiatory work on the cross.

The word “**propitiation**” (*hilasmos*) refers to the “mercy seat” on the Altar of Testimony (Exodus 40:5; Revelation 6:9). It is often insufficiently translated “atonement.” The idea behind the word “propitiation” is that Christ satisfied the claims of holiness against sin by paying for the sins of His children with his own blood – the currency of the spirit world; that is, Christ is the mercy seat with blood on the altar that “cleanses us from all sin” (1:7).

Christians should not sin, but if they do their Advocate steps forward to remind them that they are still accepted as His beloved children due to His propitiatory work at Calvary. So effective is Christ’s blood at cleansing his “little children” from sin John adds, “not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Moreover, the power of the blood is so potent that it goes to work cleansing the conscience following honest confession:

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

If believers listen to the drum-pounding voices of “guilty” in their conscience or sulk over their sin, they discredit the advocacy of “Jesus Christ, the righteous.”

The message here is to think higher and better about our Advocate and the power of His blood. **There is no greater need for Christians than to see the Supremacy and Majesty of their heavenly Advocate, the Lord Jesus the righteous.** His work on the cross is more effective and more comforting than any of can fully fathom. Faith in His blood silences the siren going off in our conscience; that is, faith in the power of His blood comforts the conscience and gives it peace.

2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The term "**propitiation**" comes from the Greek term "*hilismos*" which is the root word for "propitiation" or "mercy seat" resting above the ark. See the above comment. As the cherubim looked down on the ark they saw the law (two stone tablets) -- a giant metaphor instructing students that God is obligated to punish sin. In OT times, the priest put blood on the "mercy seat" cover -- another Herculean metaphor instructing students that the debt of sin has been fully discharged.

The New Testament points us to the cross and to the fact the blood of Jesus paid the debt for sin; that He is God's Mercy Seat; that the Judge accepts His blood as currency to settle the debt of sin. Therefore, He is our propitiation, mercy seat, and *hilasterion*. Since the Creator-Judge is satisfied with this transaction, then the sinner's soul can be at rest. The debt is paid! Hallelujah! Rest, Soul, Rest!

John's Evidence that One is in the Faith

Over the next few chapters, John lists the marks of a true Christian in contrast to the Gnostics and fake Jews who claimed to know God but in their works denied Him. Obedience to God's Commandments is the evidence that one truly knows the God of Light. We have the right, even the duty, to judge whether one is truly in the faith.

Notice a few **marks of a true Christian** in the Book of 1 John:

- True believers keep the Ten Commandment and all relevant case law in His Word - 2:3, 3:24
- True believers love the brethren - 2:11, 3:14; 4:8, 20
- True believers do not love the world - 2:15ff; 4:4-5; 5:4
- True believers confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God - 2:22; 4:2, 15; 5:1, 13
- True believers have the Holy Spirit - 2:20, 27; 4:13

- True believers seek to do what is right - 2:29-3:10
- True believers make a break from sin - 2:9 (i.e. do not continually keep on sinning)

Those in pursuit of piety must have strong faith in the blood of Christ and regularly confess their sins to Him.

6.41 Standing Against Casual Churchianity

Malachi 1:14

“For I am a great king,” says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, “and my name is feared among the nations!”

I was traveling and stopped in at a large church in Colorado Springs to worship the Lord.

My family entered the auditorium and the congregation was being led by three young men in blue jeans, white T-shirts, and long hair.

The lead guitarist was jamming away like a Rock Star doing the Jail-house Blues. Some people were standing, some were bouncing up and down in front of their chairs like yo-yos as if they were in a trance, and others sat in their chairs in tank tops sipping coffee and woofin' down donuts.

Nothing in this gathering said “holiness” or that “we serve a great king.”

A few minutes into the sermon, my family got up and walked out. We felt like we were at the Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan waiting for a virgin to be sacrificed to the god of the Aztecs.

This was coffee-cup Christianity . . . a plague sweeping the nation: casual dress, casual manners, casual sex, causal morals, casual ethics, casual theology. They want it all: food, sex, and God.

David Pratt described it well:

"I think many (most?) people in the U.S. who call themselves Christians are coasting:

We may (or may not) read the Bible.

We may (or may not) expect answers to our prayers.

We may (or may not) naturally and happily talk about Jesus with our friends.

We may (or may not) be extremely generous with our time and money.

We may (or may not) be known for being a loving community." (The End of Casual Christianity)

A few months later, I met an "elder" that supervised this church and told him what I thought of his blasphemous service. He responded, "We don't want to be legalistic!" What he meant by this is that his permissive "church" was made up of moral relativists that had declared war on God's law-order. The verse, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16) came to mind.

Here is what Barna Group had to say:

"Question: What have you found to be the appeal of Casual Christianity, as opposed to what draws people to the Captive Christian or even the Mormon tribes – that is, other tribes that are much more fervent about their faith?

Barna: Casual Christianity is faith in moderation. It allows them to feel religious without having to prioritize their faith. Christianity is a low-risk, predictable proposition for this tribe, providing a faith perspective that is not demanding. A Casual Christian can be all the things that they esteem: a nice human being, a family person, religious, an exemplary citizen, a reliable employee – and never have to publicly defend or represent difficult moral or social positions or even lose much sleep over their private choices as long as they mean well and generally do their best. From their perspective, their brand of faith practice is genuine, realistic and practical. To them, Casual Christianity is the best of all worlds; it encourages them to be a better person than if they had been irreligious, yet it is not a faith into which they feel compelled to heavily invest themselves.

Question: What are the critical elements that make the Casual Christians tick?

Barna: The comfort that this approach provides. It offers them life insights if they choose to accept them, gives them a community of relationships if they desire such, fulfills their inner need to have some type of connection with a deity, and provides the image of being a decent, faith-friendly person. Because Casuals do not view matters of faith as central to one's purpose or success in life, this brand of Christianity supplies the multi-faceted levels of satisfaction and assurance that they desire.

. . . Casual Christians are driven by a desire for a pleasant and peaceful existence. Captive Christians are focused on upholding the absolute moral and spiritual truths they glean from the Bible . . . "

Barna described two types of Christians: **the captive Christian and the Casual Christian.** Which one are you?

Somehow, I don't think it was "casual Christianity" that "turned the world upside down" in the first century, do you? Rather, it was a gospel that preached the Kingship of the risen Christ (See Acts 17:1-7).

The more I study Casual Christianity, the more I am convinced it is not only an enemy of God, it is one of the greatest enemy of the gospel.

Can you imagine the Israelites gathered around Mt. Sinai to meet with God dressed in pajamas, sipping yucca root tea, and gnawing on a piece of beef jerky while the LORD God delivered the Ten Commandments?

It is **not** legalism to have standards and rules for conduct. Godliness demands a code of conduct. Legalism has to do with beliefs about salvation by law, not moral standards.

I thought to myself, if these donut-woofing people did this in front of a judge, they would be cited with contempt of court. I concluded that casual Christians are committing contempt of the holy sanctuary.

Don't hear what is not being said. I am not saying there is not a time for a home Bible study with family and friends with cinnamon rolls and coffee. There is a time and place for everything, but there is no place for sloppy dress and sloppy singing and sloppy preaching in church.

Enough of donuts! It's time to get back to honor, dignity, and integrity.

"We do not have time to waste our lives coasting out casual, comfortable Christianity." –David Platt

For Barna's full report see the following:

<https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/268-casual-christians-and-the-future-of-america#.VX3ycEZRJN0>

Enough of Casual

It has become quite popular for pastors not to wear ties, to wear t-shirts or golf shirts, and appear cool and common in the pulpit.

But, this trend also reflects casual Christianity and "come as you are," "seeker friendly no repentance necessary" theology.

Your dress reflects your theology. If your clothing and appearance at church is sloppy, your theology is defective, tattered, and torn. Pious men seek holiness. They look holy and dress up for church.

Moreover, you only have one chance at a first impression. If you look like you just finished scrubbing the toilet, people will flush you and your church out of their minds.

After Steve Bannon's appearance at the Roy Moore campaign Rep. King Bashed the man saying, "(Bannon) does not belong on the national stage. He looks like some disheveled drunk that wandered onto the political stage."

His criticism was justified.

Do you or your pastor look like a disheveled drunk at church?

Consider this text:

*Psalm 96:9: O worship the LORD **in the beauty of holiness: fear before him**, all the earth.*

Worshipping God in the beauty of holiness is a command . . . not an option . . . not a great suggestion.

All worship is guided by law and all law carries with it enforcement authority; that is, there are holy standards, codes, and rules for worship.

The phrase "in the beauty of holiness" (*behadrath kodesh*) is law. It directs us to consider the glorious garments and ornaments worn by high priests in their administrations. This professional attire was "the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work . . ." crafted by the most skilled artisans of the time (Exodus 28:3).

These garments were given to these ecclesiastical leaders for beauty and dignity; that is, the worshiper priest was to put on his sacerdotal attire, to offer faultless offerings (*a minchah*), to come into the courts of the LORD to perform his priestly duty and to make intercession for the people.

That is, this text tells us how we are to worship the Lord. Our inner and outer man needs to reflect the Lord's honor and dignity.

We serve a "**great King**" (Malachi 1:14).

If you are going to meet the King at church, dress like it! Act like it. Be clean and dignified.

The guide for meeting with the King of Queen of England is as follows:

*"It is said that in the presence of royalty you should avoid wearing something exposing your arms. **Formal dress is recommended.** Jeans and trainers will be unacceptable "(Whales online: May 26, 2022). ""Royal protocol for women's fashion includes no revealing cuts, no wearing black outside of funerals, no bare knees and no heavy make-up – a more natural look is preferable."*

The protocol to meet the pope stands as follows:

*"Its basic code is for both **men and women both need to cover their knees and upper arms.** They prohibit wearing shorts or skirts above the knee, sleeveless tops, and low-cut shirts. Men must take their hats off before entering whereas women may continue wearing theirs." "For men, that means a jacket and tie and polished shoes. For women, a nice dress or suit works best — preferably one that covers the arms and has a hemline below the knees." "For women: Shoulders and the décolleté should be covered. Dresses and skirts should fall just below the knee. Shoes should be closed-toe. A black veil or mantilla is recommended. Jewelry should be discreet" (Aleitia). "In very hot weather a shawl or large scarf/Pashmina can be draped around the shoulders for visiting the sites. Bare shoulders and short skirts are not permitted and again come prepared to cover up if wearing shorts. Men should also be aware that hats need to be removed before entering any church or Chapel which includes St Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel" (Papal Audience).*

Let's get rid of casual, and learn how to worship the Lord "in the beauty of holiness." The pursuit of piety demands it.

6.42 Magnify the King

Malachi 1:14

"I am a great King . . . my name shall be great among the gentiles, saith the LORD of hosts . . ."

◆ Malachi is called a "burden" from the Lord (1:1). The word "**burden**" (masa) means "heavy, hard, weighty, or burdensome."

This message comes from the heavy heart of the LORD God. . . a heart weighed down by the irreverence and disrespect of ancient Israel for Himself. Because they had a shriveled, view of God, the priests showed contempt for the Lord by accepting inferior, blemished sacrifices offered by the people.

Malachi's message is a corrective to casualness and carelessness of man's worship of the King of the Nations.

Malachi 1:5 The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel. . .

The word “**magnified**” (*gadal*) refers to the intense action of being illuminated . . . of growing bigger and bigger in prominence. God is great! The only question is, “Will men recognize and treat Him as such?”

The preposition “**from**” should be “above” or “over” Israel — that is, the One who hovers over the nation is greatly magnified . . . and should be revered as majesty.

6 Wherein have we despised thy name?

This is a malicious question asked by the priests.

The word “**despised**” (*bazah*) means “contempt, worthless, contemptible, and despicable;” that is, the priests who should have been honoring the LORD as one would a great earthly king were acting carelessly, sloppily, and casually while carrying out the duties of the priesthood. They erred by tolerating inferior, mediocre, substandard sacrifices from the people.

10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand . . .

This is the remedy for the casual, coffee cup worship church. Dismiss the service; and Shut the Doors! It would be better to not have a worship service than do it in a profane, tacky way.

So infectious was the spirit of carelessness that God has to ask: Isn't there one man among you that has a standard of excellence . . . that recognizes my greatness . . . that despises your half-hearted, despicable services, and has the guts to shut the doors of the temple?

11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen (gowy = Gentiles), saith the LORD of hosts . . .

“**For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same . . .**” refers to distant lands to the east and west or to the sweeping jurisdiction of the LORD.

The LORD is not just “my God,” or “the God of Israel.” He is the **King of Nations** (Jeremiah 10:7); and, His greatness must be acknowledged in word and deed wherever men call upon His name. Since ancient Israel was God's “beachhead” for reaching the world, it was the duty of these temple servants to reverence His name in all their liturgy and services by following His regulations for temple services.

14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

Worshippers were not permitted to offer females of the flock in a burnt offering . . . if they had a perfect male in the herd. The one pretending to worship God having a perfect male in the flock while offering a ewe (“corrupt thing”) is called a “deceiver” — a fraudulent hypocrite with no standing before God.

*“Two cases are mentioned. In the first place, that when according to the law a male animal ought to have been sacrificed, the person offering the sacrifice offered a female, i.e., one of less value, under the pretence that he did not possess or could not procure a male. The prophet calls this nakhal, cheating.”
(K & D)*

So repulsive and unacceptable was this practice of offering the mediocre and inferior animal from the flock, the LORD pronounced a curse on the pretenders of worship. Cursed is the man who possesses the best, and then willfully offers Him the ordinary.

The grounds of this expectation of great sacrifices and the curse on deceivers is that God is a great King; The glorious title, “**Great King**” is adopted by the “LORD of Hosts” who is the Captain of “armies,” “navies,” and “marines.”

HE IS GREAT in Divine attributes:

- in virtues and glories
- in majesty and admiration
- in powers and abilities
- in knowledge and wisdom
- in justice and fairness
- in holiness and goodness
- in mercy and grace
- in love and kindness
- in patience and courage
- in distinction and honor

Because He is great, He is worthy of the best . . . the finest . . . the rare and precious.

Who would “dare to offer to a king or to his ruler (Malachi 1:6) anything but the best?” (Ellicott).

“**My name is dreadful.**” The word “dreadful” (yare’) is a Niphal stem (passive or reflexive) meaning *God will cause His name to be revered among the Gentiles*. Terms like dignity, excellence, honor, quality, cherish, esteem, majesty, and worthiness should characterize

man's approach to God. In worshiping this Great King churchmen would do well to be mindful of their dress, words, and actions.

“As God is the great King over all the earth, and will be acknowledged as such among the Gentiles under the gospel, (Malachi 1:11) so men’s religious services ought to be performed with a reverence suitable to the greatness of his majesty.” (Benson)

“He Alone is King, and a King so great, that of His greatness or dignity and perfection there is no end.” (Barnes).

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Revelation 5:12)

One has to wonder what this Great King might say to the casual, “Coffee-Cup” church about pastors and song leaders dressing in t-shirts and flip-flops; about cowboy churches where men wear their ten-gallon hats during the service; where the women have more skin showing than a Las Vegas prostitute; where church attendants dress in tank tops and short-shorts; where song-leaders laugh and giggle between songs; where men come dressed in overalls and mechanics vests; where announcements to the church are longer than any liturgical practice of the church; where offerings are truncated and diminished; where men drink coffee and eat donuts during a service; where women preach and pray; where men mutter prayers like hillbillies from the Ozarks; where women are naked without headcoverings; where majestic liturgical prayers are replaced by common, thoughtless, repetitive casual, spontaneous “I”-centered common prayers; where singing hymns sounds more like a funeral dirge . . . or worse, where great hymns are replaced by modern, senseless, repetitive pop songs?

2 Chronicles 20:21; “. . . he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army. . .”

“Worship the Lord in Holy Attire” (Psalm 96: 8-9). The Hebrew word for “attire” is “hadarah” which means “adornment and glory.” When you and I enter as priests in God’s presence, this very act assures our adornment with glory.” (Loving Grace Ministries).

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The protocol to meet the pope stands as follows:

*“Its basic code is for both **men and women both need to cover their knees and upper arms**. They prohibit wearing shorts or skirts above the knee, sleeveless tops, and low-cut shirts. Men must take their hats off before entering whereas women may continue wearing theirs.”*

“For men, that means a jacket and tie and polished shoes. For women, a nice dress or suit works best — preferably one that covers the arms and has a hemline below the knees.” “For women: Shoulders and the décolleté should be covered. Dresses and skirts should fall just below the knee. Shoes should be closed-toe. A black veil or mantilla is recommended. Jewelry should be discreet” (Aleitia).

“In very hot weather a shawl or large scarf/Pashmina can be draped around the shoulders for visiting the sites. Bare shoulders and short skirts are not permitted and again come prepared to cover up if wearing shorts. Men should also be aware that hats need to be removed before entering any church or Chapel which includes St Peter’s Basilica and the Sistine Chapel” (Papal Audience).

Since the Lord Jesus Christ is a Great King, let us dress, sing, and speak with excellence about His majesty in public services.

*“my name shall be great among the gentiles, saith **the LORD** of hosts . . . “*

6.43 Standing Against Godless Officials

Daniel 3:18

“ . . . Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

To Globalists and World Governments;

From: Anti-woke and the true Family of God

◆ We have a message for you . . .

We will not . . .

We will not eat your bugs.

We will not live in your pods.

We will not sacrifice our children to your false gods of sexual grooming and perversion.

We will not co-parent with you.

We will not get your brain implant.

We will not exchange AI programming for the Holy Spirit.

We will not fight your crony wars.

We will not rent our wombs.

We will not mutilate or sterilize our children.

We will not prostitute our daughters on only *OnlyFans*. . . We will not sell our souls or the future of children to the public fool system.

I will never be called parent #1 and my wife will never be called parent #2.

We will own our cars, our homes, our children, grandchildren, and great grand children. And, we will die happy regardless if we spend the rest of our lives thwarting your evil plans.

We are not your subjects and cogs in your machine.

We are the children of a loving and powerful Father, and we are willing to meet him before ever caving into your agenda.

Compare with Source: American Principles Project, CPAC Hungary, "A Message to Woke Globalists" - 2023

We could add . . . BE IT KNOWN

We will not take your death, depopulation jabs.

We will not call ourselves subjects of Congress, taxpayers," "individuals," "persons" or "entities" because we are endowed by our Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, with unalienable rights.

We will not call ourselves "homo sapiens," "human beings," "primates," or apes, "or "non-binary" individuals per your stupid statutes starting at 1 U.S.C. §8.

We will not pay an unconstitutional tax to fund abortions or transgender operations for the military or anyone else.

We will not fight in your banker's wars to defend homosexuals, lesbians, transvestites, or non-binary perverts.

We not buy into your propaganda that Askenazim are true Jews and that criticism of Sodomite, murdering fake Israel is antisemitic.

We will not believe the Zionist indoctrination propaganda cliché that America was built on the Judeo-Christian ethic. It was built on the Puritan ethic period!

We will not dress our daughters in military uniforms and send them off to die in a banker's war.

We will not wear face diapers.

We will not cut off our daughter's breasts.

We will not castrate our boys.

We will not refer to a boy as a she or call a girl a he.

We will not call Sodomite sin "marriage."

We will not call "Jews" the chosen people of God or teach Zionism as an American creed.

We will not acknowledge more than two genders.

We will not accept your gender-bender curriculum.

We will not call fake science "science" or pornography "freedom of the press."

We will not turn in our guns.

We will not permit our children to be entertained by drag queens.

We will not call all faiths a way to heaven nor will we defend "all faiths."

We will not call blasphemy "freedom of speech."

6.44 Double Peace

2 Kings 2:1-15, 19-22,

◆ Elisha prayed for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

Because we live somewhere between sheer terror and the soft patter of rain upon our windows, some of us need to pray for a double portion of the Lord's peace.

Who can we serve God in this unstable, maddening world without peace? It is pious, peaceful men who bring sanity to the world.

Shalom! Shalom!

(1) The kingdom of God is characterized by peace.

Where Christ is recognized as the King-Messiah, there is peace. Shalom marks his reign (Isaiah 9:6-7).

“The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat . . . they will not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain” (Isaiah 11:6, 9)

The LORD, thou wilt ordain peace (shalom) for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.” (Isaiah 26:12)

Because God will punish the Leviathan (hostile nations to Israel), God urges men to make peace with him. The exhortation to seek peace with God is repeated twice (Isaiah 27:1- 5):

“Let him make peace (shalom) with me; Let him make peace (shalom) with me” (5).

All of God’s children can enjoy peace (Isaiah 54:13); But, there is no peace offer to the wicked (Isaiah 48:12; 57:20-21).

Peace comes to those who accept the reign of Christ and His authority.

Peace comes when just men embrace God’s Son by faith (Romans 5:1).

The pardoned have the certainty of double *shalom* (Isaiah 57:19), but there is no peace (shalom) to the rebel.

“. . . Peace (shalom), peace (shalom) to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.” –

Note God offers peace to them that are near (Jews), and to them that are afar (Gentiles); to Jews in Babylon and to Jews in Jerusalem; to front row Christians and to back row Christians.

Isaiah 57: 20-21 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Peace comes to those who forsake lawlessness and embrace God’s law-order:

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend (stumble) them” (Psalm 119:165).

Peace comes to men who mind the things of God:

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

(2) On the night of the Last Supper (Tuesday), Jesus announced:

*Peace I leave with you, my **peace** I give unto you -- John 14:27*

One could make an argument here that Jesus left them with objective peace (Romans 5:1 – peace with God) and His subjective peace (John 16:33 – the peace of God).

(3) In the evening of Resurrection Sunday Jesus comforted His disciples:

*John 20:19 “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, **Peace be unto you.**”*

20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

*21 Then said Jesus to them again, **Peace be unto you:** as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

Our text deals with two different occasions where the Lord had a double message of peace for his troubled disciples.

The first occasion where the disciples needed peace was at the Last Supper before our Lord’s all night trial.

Who can fully grasp the whirlwind of emotion swirling within the hearts of the disciples at the Passover Supper? Something was wrong! Tension filled the air. Satan entered the heart of Judas. Jesus stripped down to his essentials to wash the feet of the disciples. Peter rudely objected. Jesus reported treason in their midst. Winds of doubt rushed through the hearts of the disciples. Jesus identified Judas as the traitor by giving him the sacred portion of the meal (the sop). Jesus announced He was going away; and, then he told Peter that He was going to betray Him three times.

Jesus silenced the wind and the storm while in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, but the gale tossing and twisting the faith and fear of these seminary students on this Passover night hit land like an ominous category 3 hurricane.

Double peace: Twice Jesus used the word “peace” to calm the storm stirring up doubt and fear in the heart of the eleven: “**Peace** I leave with you, my **peace** I give unto you.”

The second occasion where the disciples received double peace was on the evening of Resurrection Sunday.

Think of the waves of emotions that must have swamped the boat where the disciples birthed their hope on Passover Week: Jesus’s arrest; Peter slicing off the right ear of the servant of the high priest; Jesus’ healing touch; Peter’s denial of Christ before a handmaid; The Lord’s all night trial; the Sanhedrin’s guilty verdict; Jesus’ beatings before Herod;

Pilate's condemnation and death sentence; His crucifixion on a cross; His death; His burial in the tomb; disciples hiding; and then . . .

Peter and John's shocking announcement the tomb was empty; Mary Magdalene's stunning report that she saw the risen Christ near the garden tomb; the chatter of doubt, wonder, and mystery by a small band of disciples gathered together on Sunday evening; the shutting of the doors while hiding from Roman authorities; and, then the sudden appearance of a dead man (Christ) standing in the middle of the frightened crowd.

Can you feel the unruly seas of fear, the lawless waves of doubt, doomed hope, and sputtering faith, swells of unbelief, impetuous distrust, stern skepticism, and chaotic chatter colliding with sanguine hope, storybook faith, and intangible dreams of the followers of Christ?

Can you feel the calm reaching the shores of every soul in that room when the risen Christ appeared alive "in the flesh" behind shut doors saying to the stunned Galileans, "Peace be unto you"?

With those words, the Lord softly quieted the thunder of doubt and the roaring waves of fear crashing on the beach of the disciples' souls.

But, no sooner was the cold storm over that a tropical storm surfaced. When the Lord showed the paddling disciple his hands and side the mood shifted. Suddenly, the hearts of the mariners burst with wonderment!!

Paralyzed with happiness coupled with self-loathing the Lord said, "Peace be unto you."

When the bitters of life pound upon the shores our lives, we need His sweet peace.

When disappointment rushes in to fill an empty room of lost hopes, we need His peace.

When clouds of doubt darken our day, we need to bask in the light of His peace.

"If God be our God, He will give us peace in trouble. When there is a storm without, He will make peace within. The world can create trouble in peace, but God can create peace in trouble" – Thomas Watson (Puritan).

". . . Then were the disciples glad."

When the sweets of life excite our tastes with ecstasy, we need His clarifying peace.

When the dreams of life are realized and the smiles of angels overwhelm us, we need His calming peace.

"Double your peace, to my soul, Oh Lord!"

How Do We Get Peace?

We all need peace at various stages of our lives.

There are no 12 step programs to obtain peace, but obtaining peace does involve our consent and cooperation.

(4) Here are a few actions we can take that will create a climate for us to enjoy the peace of God

Distinguish between “peace with God” and the “peace of God.”

*Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*Colossians 3:15 And let the **peace of God** rule (act as judge, umpire) in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

Peace with God is a benefit of believing the gospel. When a person hears and believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the war between the man and God is over. Our Armistice Day is the day of our salvation.

It is not a feeling, it is a fact all Christians possess. It is an objective in nature, and represents a change in status from condemned to justified (Romans 5: see the benefits of justification, forgiveness, regeneration, reconciliation).

The peace of God is needed when unwelcome events barge into our lives. The peace of God is a subjective feeling that all is well under His providence. It is the calm we receive from the Spirit when we trust God and believe that “all things are working together for good” (Romans 8:28) and that His “grace is sufficient in all things” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Distinguish between the peace of Christ and the peace of the world.

*John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: **not as the world giveth**, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

The world offers peace to those who accept its temporal, earthly, fickle, superficial, sensual political views, control, and statutes. The peace that Christ offers is a gift of heavenly grace to those who believe His promises, trust Him, and are in a right standing with Him.

The world’s peace comes by eliminating suffering; Christ’s peace comes to those in the midst of suffering. The world offers peace to the complaint; Christ offers peace to the defiant – to those that defy the world with its lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and self-sufficiency (pride).

(5) Peace is a gift . . . and it must be received by faith.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 ~ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

Isaiah 26:3 ~ You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you..

Colossians 3:15 ~ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

(6) Resist anxiety:

*John 14:27 ~ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. **Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.***

Fear (anxiety, worry, anger, cowardice) and **trouble** (agitations, irritations, disturbances) are the opposite of peace.

The Greek verb “*Let not your heart be troubled*” (*tarassesthō*) is a present, middle imperative negated by the adverb “not” (*me*); that is, when trouble stirs up anxiety in our heart, we are under command to trust Christ for His peace and to participate in resisting the temptation to worry and fret.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The verb “be careful” (*merimnate*) is another term for anxiety. It is present active imperative negated by the direct object adjective “nothing” (*mēden*). The Spirit forbids the believer to be anxious, troubled, agitated, irritated, and disturbed. Peace is king and it must reign in the tabernacle of the human heart.

(7) The opposite of anxiety is prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.

Instead of worry and fret, the Spirit calls agitated Christians **to pray** (*proseuché*: general prayer and worship), **make supplications** (*deēsei*; formal, genuine, specific pleadings), and **give thanks** (*eucharistia*; gratitude) in the midst of troubled seas. See 1 Timothy 2:1-7.

(8) Claim the peace that passes all understanding that shall keep your heart and mind.

Note **the definition of peace** in Philippians 4:6 above: a peace that “passeth all understanding.”

The Greek word “**passeth**” (*huperechō*) means “to rise above,” “to be superior,” and “to govern.” It is translated “higher powers” in Romans 13:1.

The noun “**understanding**” (*nous*) refers “to reason” and “to intellect.” The promise is that a pious Christian can have a supernatural peace, a calm restful spirit, without a direct change in circumstances — a peace that defies explanation. It is a peace that calms the soul without calming the sea upon which one’s ship is tossing to and fro.

The verb “**keep**” (*phroureó*) means to guard as on a military patrol; that is, God’s peace stands guard over one’s mind and emotions to keep the soul from doing something foolish and irrational.

(9) Think on holy things:

*Philippians 4:8 ~ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think on these things.***

“Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the haven of peace” – Charles Spurgeon.

(10) Develop holy habits:

Philippians 4:8 ~ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

*“Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny”
(R.W. Emerson).*

(11) When pious men have peace, they are in a position to crush Satan.

Romans 16:20 ~ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Matthew 5:9 ~ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

A minor disturbance happened in an Italian village, and a woman came running into the chapel chattering away as fast as she could jiggle her tongue. The priest held up his hand and stopped her prattle. Closing his eyes, the priest slowly spoke, “May the Lord bless you and keep you and give you peace!” Dropping his hand, he spoke to the roused woman, “Now, you can speak.”

*2 Thessalonians 3:16 ~ Now may **the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way.** The Lord be with you all.*

6.45 The Power of Purity

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”

If your heart is pure, you will have power.

In the Legend of King Arthur, it was said of Sir Galahad:

“My good blade carves the casques (helmet) of men,

My tough lance thrusteth sure,

My strength is as the strength of ten

Because my heart is pure.” (Tennyson, 1834)

The Holy Scripture sheds light on the power of purity.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

God blesses those with a pure heart.

In Catholicism, you will find churches named “Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church,” and the “Sacred Heart of Jesus Church,” but you will never find a Protestant church named “The Pure Heart Baptists” or “Pure Heart Presbyterian Church.”

Why is this? Why isn't there an emphasis on the blessedness of a pure heart among evangelicals?

Since the blessing of having pure in heart is to see God, you would think there would be more of an interest in obtaining a pure heart.

Purity Defined

Purity is the process of cleansing the soul of duplicity and seeking God with an unadulterated heart. *When we are pure we gain everything. If we are impure, we can lose everything.*

Purity is not naivety or being adolescent in awareness of evil. Purity seek to have single-minded devotion to Christ and to avoid duplicity and hypocrisy. Purity of heart comes into the light to be cleansed and refreshed by the Spirit of jealousy. The pure heart is a strong heart because it is not weary fighting the monsters of sin taking refuge in a divided heart.

Purity means following the dictates of the Holy Spirit without paying attention to the anti-God forces shouting commands at us. Where there is purity there is clarity; where there is a lack of purity there is obscurity. Ambiguity blinds us to the pitfalls on the pilgrim journey to the Celestial City — pitfalls that cause death for “the wages of sin is death.”

Purity is the result of using God's Word as a scrub brush on the soul. Purity is obtained not just by learning how not to sin, but learning how to love deeply:

“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:21).

Purity has Value

Advertisers hawk their wares as “pure pleasure,” “pure satisfaction,” “pure sugar,” “pure butter,” and “pure water.” Animal breeders seek pure-blooded cats, dogs, and chickens. Gold and silver traders advertise their coins as 99.9% pure. Shoppers look for pure cotton, pure wool, and pure silk because these products are known for their beauty, endurance, and comfort. But, God seek to develop in each of His own a pious heart.

Purity is Rare

Men seek wealth and power, but where can you go to find Christians that pursue God with a pure heart?

Nature tends to contaminate. Just as it is difficult to find pure water, it is difficult to find pure Christian men with a passion for holiness.

The opposite of purity is defilement, compromise, duplicity, pluralism, hypocrisy, and inconsistency. When something is pure, it is unmixed, unpolluted, unadulterated, uncontaminated, and undefiled by foreign substances.

Purity is difficult to achieve

It is easy to have one foot in the church and the other in the world; to have a heart where *“the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful”* (Matthew 13:22).

Oh, that there was a ritual with “holy water” that could purify the soul. Oh, that there was a laver in the church that congregants could sprinkle on themselves and others to make them holy. Such traditions may be instructive, but they are not effective.

Let us not worry about having more money, but having a pure heart. Somehow, someday the kingdom-man must find a way to develop a pure heart for God.

The beatitudes represent stages of growth in the Christian life. The blessedness of pure is the sixth beatitude. This is the period where the trials of life refine the soul, unshackle the believer from habits of sin, and where the Spirit progressively works into the heart a purity of ambition to know Christ intimately and to obey Him in the little things of life.

This is a stage where the man must separate from the world and walk with God alone. A pure heart is a single-minded heart in pursuit of God. Oh, how lonely is the walk of those marching in step with the Spirit. The joy of Christ’s apprentice is not in the fellowship of men, but in fellowship God where he seeks God’s approval and not man’s.

*Luke 1:74- 75 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies **might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him**, all the days of our life.*

Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

James 1:8 . . . a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

John 12:43 For they loved praise from men more than praise from God (Berean)

Soon after a man comes to know Savior, he learns that while sins have been taken off him, sin is still in him. He learns he has been saved from the penalty of sin, and that he must now be saved from the power of sin. His spirit is born again, but there are parts of him which are not yet regenerated. He is a true child of God, but he may not share the family resemblance . . . yet. But, he has power over all this.

Being saved from the penalty of sin by the Savior is one matter (justification, forgiveness); being saved from the power of sin by the Spirit is quite another (sanctification).

Galatians 5:16 Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Purity does not imply Perfection

Yes, the pure resist sin and oppose lawlessness. *The pious sin less, but they are not sinless.* If purity depended on the eradication of sin from the man, there would be no pure hearts among us because no man can uncouple sin from his body. Though the pious love righteousness and hate iniquity, they still struggle with their fallen humanity (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:1-9). Struggle, Yes! But, contentment with sinful imperfection, Never!

While the pious struggle with their humanity, they are not conquered by their weaknesses. They keep short accounts, and are quick to crawl back on the path of righteousness and reinforce good habits. With Bible-sword in hand, they stand ready to confess their sin and forsake it.

All men at one time or another confess wrong. Those who said, “I have sinned” in the Bible include Pharaoh (Exodus 9:27; 10:16), Balaam (Numbers 22:34), Achan (Joshua 7:20,21), king Saul (1 Samuel 15:24, 30), David (2 Samuel 12:13; 24:10; Psalm 41:4), Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:4), and the lost son (often called “prodigal son,” Luke 15:18-21). Only a few of these persons genuinely turned away from their sin, even though all of them confessed their sin verbally.

The difference between the pious and the above confessors is that the pious not only confess their sin, they repent, make restitution, heal the hurt they caused, and plot a new course towards kingdom holiness.

A Puritan View of Sin

Puritans have been much maligned by proud, modern men. And, this is unfortunate as the Puritans understood spiritual realities better than most.

Consider the following marvelous thought on sin by William Secker (Puritan):

A saint is not free from his sin; that is his burden.

A saint is not free to sin; that is his blessing.

Sin is in him; that is his lamentation.

His soul is not in his sin; that is his consolation.

The Beauty of Purity

God commands his children “to be holy as He is holy;” that is, to start immediately to bear the family resemblance (1 Peter 1:15). When the pious fail, they start again. When they get dirty, they clean up.

Personal holiness is not necessary to attain salvation, but salvation produces a desire to attain holiness. God has no need of our goodness, but we have a need for God’s goodness—to love more and to sin less. And, those who focus on loving Christ and His people sin less.

Purity is the fruit from the hardwood of holiness growing in the heart. Purity and humility are the sweet fragrances of a manly man. Purity makes a man stately. Holiness beautifies the man and makes him strong. It changes a man’s heart, habits, and hope into a garden of good will. The more he learns to love, the more he says “No” to sin and “Yes” to the Spirit. The more pure the Christian man becomes, the lonelier he feels. Here, he must find his joy in God only without man’s applause.

The pure heart sees God, and seeing God makes a man pure. “Seeing” is an idiom for perspective, insight, and spiritual closeness to Him.

Holiness is the strength of the soul, and it comes to the man who obeys God’s laws and commands. Often a man does not need more light. He needs to obey the light that he has.

*Deuteronomy 32:45-46 And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel . . . Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, **which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.***

The desire to love more and to sin less is a gift from Heaven. The more a man reads the Scripture, the more he understands how destructive sin is to him and to others. The more one understands the Lord, the more he desires to be like Christ free from sin’s defiling influence. The goal to give more replaces the old desire to have more.

A Christian may lack knowledge and many talents, but none should lack holiness. In the eyes of God, a pure man is a useful man. Just as men prefer to drink out of clean cup, He uses clean souls to accomplish His will (2 Timothy 2:19-21).

The pure heart is a chaste man, a careful man who guards what he sees and hears, a man who prays throughout the day, a man who “mortifies his members upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:” (Colossians 2:5).

The pure heart seeks the approval of God in secret when only God can see and judge.

The Power of Purity

Take a look at Robert Evans, the main instrument of [the Welch Revival of 1904-1905](#). Deeply subjective, he sought to confess all his sins, big and small, to rid his heart of duplicity, to be filled with the Spirit, and to witness to all that would listen about the love of God at Calvary. His ambition was simple obedience to the whispers of the Spirit. He dropped out of Bible college to pursue piety and a pure heart. He prayed that God would use him to lead a 100,000 souls to Christ and then set out to purify himself by Bible reading, prayer at 4:00 in the morning, and church attendance. When revival broke out, God used him to purify the church. Within months over 100,000 people confessed Christ, turned whiskey into groceries, and joined churches all across Wales.

- If your heart is free from inordinate affection, no good work will be difficult for you.
- If you seek after nothing but pleasing God and the welfare of your neighbor, you will enjoy freedom within.
- If your heart is pure, then you will see things clearly.
- If your heart is pure the Spirit will strip you of hypocrisy, play acting, and all duplicity; stripped of anger, bitterness, and resentment; stripped of secret lusts, secret sins, and secret ambitions.
- If your heart is pure, then your life will be a book of holy teaching for others.
- If your heart is pure you will conquer your secret self and walk bravely in submission to the laws of the LORD God.

If your heart is pure, you can be trusted with holy appointments around men, women, and children. For this reason the next beatitude is a commission of being an ambassador of peace in the midst of conflict.

*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God –
Matthew 5:9.*

While we should seek purity, we can never achieve perfect purity. It is a lifetime process. Even pure mountain water is slightly contaminated by material debris.

Consequently, our joy must be in the purity of the Savior sent to cleanse us from all sin at Calvary:

“Because Jesus was not of this world, He is the pure, incorruptible Light. . . . Jesus exposed sin, but He was never contaminated by sin. Jesus could touch sinners, but sin never touched Him. He was totally undefiled. When the Bible calls Jesus the “light of the world,” it’s a reminder of the sinless, stainless purity of the Son of God.” (Purity of the Light – 2019).

6.46 **Marvelous Effects on Those Pursuing Piety**

2 Chronicles 15

Revival can break out when Christian men and women return to a path of piety.

Part I

The Welch Revival

In late 1903, a pastor in West Wales grieved over growing worldliness and evident lack of devotion to Jesus in the young people he served. As his burden grew, he arranged for a special 2-day youth meeting over the New Year. The messages preached spoke to the hearts of the young people and made a deep impression, especially on one teenage girl. Florrie Evans was challenged by what she heard and a month later found herself at a crisis point. She met with her pastor one evening after a service and spoke to him about what she recognized as the world’s pervasive grip, her apparent inability to rescue herself from it, and a desperation leading her to conclude, “I cannot live like this.” Her pastor made an insightful inquiry, asking Florrie whether she was *surrendered*; whether truly she could say “*my Lord*” to the Lord Jesus Christ. The emphasis intrigued her, but surrender to her Lord was a new concept. She understood it but did not have it as her personal experience. She pondered the challenge and left.

Convinced by the Spirit of truth, Florrie soon yielded to her Lord’s demand to reign on the throne of her heart. Obedience to the promptings of the Spirit became her aim, and soon the shy girl would follow through in significant fashion.

It was on a Sunday in February following her surrender that Florrie heard her pastor ask the assembled youth what Jesus meant to them. Looking for more than something drawn

from general knowledge, the pastor emphasized personal, experiential understanding when he asked, “What does Jesus mean *to you*?” Amid the ensuing silence, the Spirit prompted one to respond. Florrie stood to answer:

“I love the Lord Jesus with all of my heart.”

Her sincerity was unmistakable, and her expression of love touched hearts across the room. Conviction spread, and hearers would come to understand that we love Him because He first loved us. Florrie’s simple testimony of love provided the town of New Quay and Cardiganshire County with the necessary catalyst for revival. Its immediate impact sparked the beginning of a manifest moving of the Spirit that would develop into one of the mightiest revivals in history, the Welsh Revival of 1904-05.

The voice of a teenage girl, made available to her Lord, had been endued with power and mightily used. Word spread as the ripple effect of this stirring continued. Later, Jessie Penn-Lewis would write with insight, “There is a cloud the size of a man’s hand hovering over Wales.” In God’s goodness, wide-scale revival exploded across the country that November.

Even to the present, Florrie Evans’ declaration of devotion sounds deep chords in hearts with a passion for Jesus. May we let these words challenge us this day and beyond! Do I love the Lord Jesus with all my heart?

Do you?

Part II

Revival Under King Asa - 2 Chronicles 15

In this chapter we see the marks of reformation and revival.

Reformation is a correction in theology and a return to Biblical theology – an accurate practice of true religion void of religious clutter. Revival is an infusion of energy by the Spirit to serve the Lord and to obey His law. Both are needed. Both are the work of God.

Reformation must precede revival or the ignorance of the sanguine will dominate the body politic. Piety is necessary or the zeal of the proud will grind the meek under wheels of necessity.

Revivals are rare. There are only three revivals in the Old Testament: The times of Asa, Josiah, and Nehemiah.

Let's take a look at true revival during the time of King Asa (911-870 BC).

The source of Revival is not man, but the Spirit of God.

1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:

There is nothing flesh can do to bring about revival. It is wholly of the Spirit. Zealous preachers cannot plan a revival. Oh, if it was only that easy!! The best men can do is to prepare themselves and to create an environment where the Spirit of God is free to do His work.

Revival begins with men responding to the Word of God.

2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

Revival is not subjective, but objective. It does not involve introspection, but inspection of God and His law-word and a diligent pursuit of personal piety.

Revival is needed because apostasy stalks the people of God.

3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

Note: apostasy is a departure from the healthy practices of the faith. Reformation is the corrective. Revival strengthens the faithful to do what the Bible says.

Revival comes when men turn from their troubles to seek the LORD God.

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

Again, the Spirit does not lead these people inward. He leads them upward to the LORD God of Israel. In seeking the God of Israel, they found freedom from their troubles.

Revival is needed because men lose their spiritual perspective during times of political turmoil.

5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

Revival comes when spiritual leaders grow in strength and courage to engage the work of the Lord.

7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

Revival comes when spiritual leaders confront the idols of their age, repent of pet sins, and smash defiling habits.

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim,

Governments are revival killers. But here we have a king who sought the law of the LORD God to execute it as a matter of government policy. That is, Asa was not only a political leader but a spiritual model. Very rare!

Revival is marked by the restoration of wholesome religious practices such as Bible reading, singing, confession, prayer, visitation, liturgy, manners, giving, communion, headcovering, moral codes, rules for living, family values, and spiritual habits.

8 and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD.

Note: The whole purpose of government is to protect the gospel and to get out of the way of true religion. Asa used his authority to improve true religion by ordering the restoration of the temple altar.

In our time abominable idols include fake science, pop psychology, government, pornography, popularity, political power, TV, money, drinking, fornication, materialism, feminism, movies, and the pursuit of pleasure. Revival begins with sweeping out the old, and bringing in the new; with renewed theology, singing, liturgies, and good habits.

Revival is marked by men congregating together to seek the Lord.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

Note: Think Malachi 3; Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25. Asa's administration was not neutral. He did not think we live in a multiple universe with multiple religions. There was none of today's nonsense that all religions are good; that all religions are a path to heaven. He chose sides, and used his authority to encourage the people to respond to their Biblical calling.

Revival is marked by worship and sacrifice to the LORD.

11 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

Consider the sacrifices approved in Hebrews 13:15-17 – praise, doing good, and giving to others.

Revival is marked by oaths, covenants, and commitments to seek God with all our hearts.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

A covenant is a contract. Revival demands that men develop new habits, patterns, and disciplines in their life. Protestants, however, are scared spitless that new commitments are somehow legalistic. Get over it. Clean up your live and commit yourself to godly habits. If you fail, practice 1 John 1:9, get out of the gutter, and get back on the highway to holiness.

Revival is marked by intolerance of idolatry and rebellion.

13 That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

Note: One of the greatest hindrance to true revival is government policy -- a policy of pluralism, toleration of obscenity, and the practice of depravity. Governments not only tolerate false religions, they promote and encourage multiculturalism to keep the people divided and in need of government to unite them. Not so with King Asa. The revival under Asa was a return to the law and the intolerance God required of the nation toward idolaters, heretics, and philosophical revolutionaries (Deuteronomy 5:8-7; 13:1ff; 17:1-3).

In the age of grace, the Spirit of revival will lead the church to a return of law; But, the church has NO authority to force men to serve the Lord or to exercise the death penalty toward heretics, but it does have authority to excommunicate the unruly and those guilty of immorality in the church (1 Corinthians 5). Revival does not tolerate immorality or wrongdoing.

Consequently, renewal of church discipline and rejection of careless, reckless living is a mark of true revival.

In America, we do not need the full cooperation of government for revival because the people are sovereign, but revival must be accompanied by a wholehearted commitment to obey God and not the fickle policies of the state. When men follow King Jesus, they resist the intervention of god-government.

Revival is marked by public ceremonies affirming individual / collective commitment to follow the Lord.

14 And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

Revival was alive! Silence, passivity, and indifferent did not show its face. Moreover, revival is not driven by emotional preachers who are masters of psychological crowd manipulation. This revival was a collective response by people whose pious hearts were in tune with the LORD God.

Revival is marked by joy, fellowship with God, and peace.

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about.

Revival is marked by preeminent devotion to the Lord -- a devotion that supersedes natural affections.

16 And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron.

Note Asa's intolerance of idolatry in his own family. Religious duty superseded natural affections.

Revival is never perfect nor does it create heaven on earth, but it is genuine and effective. Sin is dealt with. Idols are destroyed. New habits emerge. Holiness abounds.

17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.

Talk about encouraging! Though this revival was not perfect, it was true and genuine. If our standard is perfection, then we will always be disappointed. Perfection is the enemy of progress . . . the enemy of revival. Lower your expectations of others and you will find joy in strengthening those who struggle.

In times of revival, the house of God (the church) has resources to conduct its ministry.

18 And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.

One marvelous effect of revival is that men stop being thieves and start being givers. Church coffers are full --not to make clergy men rich, but so ministry can be fully supplied and conducted without financial worries. Happy pastors and deacons make for a happy church.

Revival leads to peace -- even double peace (John 14:27).

19 And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

We have to ask, "Why is America always at war?" Why is war the answer to every political problem? Nonstop warfare is not a blessing, but a curse on a nation.

Our God is a "God of peace," and those seeking to follow him must be at peace and promote peace (Romans 16:20).

Revival lasts as long as men trust God and not themselves (2 Chronicles 16) . . . and not government (Psalm 118:8-9).

A prayer: "I am exceedingly afflicted; **Revive me**, O LORD, according to Thy word" (Psalm 119:107)

PART III

The End of Revival

2 Chronicles 16 is an account marking the end of Asa's revival.

Reading this story is heartbreaking. It is like reading the obituary in your local newspaper.

We have in the first verse King Baasha's reaction to the revival under King Asa.

Governments are not only NOT interested in revival, they oppose it. Because governments compete with God for the affection of the people, their programs impede true religion . . . but, they cannot destroy it. Stop paying your tithe to God is of no concern to the State, but stop paying a double tithe to the government and the State will charge the man with act of high treason worthy of death.

Baasha Builds a Military Installation at Ramah

1 In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

With a stream of people from the northern tribes making pilgrimages to Jerusalem . . . and spending money there, the northern economy suffered. Feeling threatened by the loss of loyalty to the golden calves set up at Dan and Bethel, King Baasha decided to build a military check point at Israel's southern border five miles north of Jerusalem to prevent pilgrimages from the northern tribes to the temple in Jerusalem.

A military outpost a few miles from the capital city threatened King Asa.

But, constructing a military fortress to prevent pilgrimages did not end the revival going on in the nation . . . but, King's Asa's ÷ spontaneous, fleshly, pragmatic response to this military threat did!

Note: There is a scribal error regarding the time of this event (1 Kings 15:33). This event appears to have taken place in the twenty-sixth year of King Asa's reign.

King Asa' Pragmatic Decision

2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

3 There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

With no prayer, no consultation with spiritual leaders, and no examination of the Word of God, King Asa made a snap, arbitrary, capricious decision to make a treaty / contract with the king of Syria and to pay him to break his treaty of peace with King Baasha initiating war against the northern regions of Dan.

Draining the temple treasury and the government's treasury, King Asa bought the loyalty Syria. Money fuels politics.

Note that God did not send a prophet to warn Asa not to contract with the king of Syria.

The Contract Between King Asa and the King of Assyria

4 And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

Bought and paid for, Benhadad the King of Syria broke his alliance with King Baasha, and sent raiding parties into Northern Territory of King Baasha. Feeling the heat of war in the north, Baasha was forced to suspend building his military check point at Ramah at the southern border of Israel.

The Apostle Paul identifies the problem with this treaty: "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

5 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

Forced to move his troops north and to shelf building his military outpost, King Asa ordered his military to dismantle the fortress at Ramah.

This pragmatic decision by King Asa worked , , , but like many pragmatic solutions, it exposed Asa's self-will, independence, and lack of trust in God. Making a treaty with King Benhadad to attack God's people in the northern kingdom burst the bubble of the revival under King Asa.

Instead of relying upon the Rock of Ages, Asa relied upon the broken reed of Syria (Matthew Henry).

The Rebuke of Hanani the Prophet to King Asa

7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

The seer exposed the international contract with the king of Syria for what it was . . . a lack of trust . . . reliance . . . dependence on the LORD God!

8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

The Spiritual Principal King Asa Violated

9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

King Asa's Carnal Response to God's Rebuke

10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.

11 And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

God's Discipline on King Asa and the End of Revival

12 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

Again, King Asa makes a fleshly pragmatic decision to trust men (physicians) and not God. The disease destroyed Asa's health, but his pragmatic decision destroyed his revival.

13 And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

14 And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

A lesson on Pragmatism

This account is a spiritual warning against being guided by the principle of pragmatism:

Pragmatism is an approach that assesses the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application. It is closely akin to utilitarianism, the belief that usefulness is the standard of what is good. To a pragmatist / utilitarian, if a technique or course of action has the desired effect, it is good. If it doesn't seem to work, it must be wrong.

Just because something works does not mean it is of God and just because an option has undesirable outcomes does not mean the decision is wrong.

Asa's pragmatic decision worked, but it exposed his lack of reliance on the LORD God.

Abel died by the hand of Cain, but the consequence does not mean Abel was wrong in his approach to God.

Telling children that Santa keeps a Naughty and Nice list may provoke temporary acceptable behavior among children, but that myth may backfire as the child matures.

Slavery worked to increase agricultural growth in the nineteenth century . . . but it backfired in the twentieth century.

Beware of the world view, "If it works, it must be true." When applied to ethics, pragmatism is just another form of moral relativity.

Fake science may explain a phenomenon, but it does not mean it is true.

Taking amphetamines may work to keep you from falling asleep, but the long term effects can be deadly.

Right is not determined by our feelings, outcomes, or our experiences, but by the sure Word of God. Do what is right and learn to accept the consequences, good or bad.

Isaiah 8:20 If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Faith is not increased by man's achievement, but man's achievement advanced by faith. Revival is not accomplished by good decisions, but good decisions are the result of reformation and revival. The pious do their best to make good decisions, but results do not define what is good.

Study the Scriptures for reformation; practice prayer and piety and revival is around the corner.

7 References

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