

Cleansing the Inside of the Cup

By: Jay Wilson

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CLEANSING THE INSIDE OF THE CUP

“Helping Christians transform good intentions into living practice”

Preface

In the realm of the spiritual, there are certain laws - cause and effect relationships - which are just as true and inviolate as the laws of physical science. The law of gravity, the laws of thermodynamics, and a host of other rules govern the physical universe for which there are no exceptions, and no recourse other than to submit to their governing. But the same God who causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, who applies His laws indiscriminately to the material universe, also has spiritual laws which are justly and unflinchingly imposed upon the race of men. Hence it is, that whatever a man sows, this he also reaps.

The Christian needs to thoughtfully consider the implication of God’s application of His spiritual laws. “Do not be deceived,” God says four times to His children of faith; and in each of those four statements God makes it clear that He will not suspend His spiritual truths to the children of favor, or grace. The message is clear: either the Christian can find himself continually beat down by running afoul of the objects in spiritual orbit; or he can humbly submit to the spiritual order of things, and find himself excitedly following the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

What the believer in Christ of today seems to need is an understanding: first, of the “theory” - the general picture painted by God’s mighty outstretched hand; and second, of the “mechanics” of implementing God’s picture in his own life. The following pages, in an attempt to meet these needs, will focus the Christian’s attention on the brilliance of the resurrected Christ, and then help him draw rays of practical strength from that glory. In the process he will learn a powerful and important lesson: the difference between the law and the faith. The believer will be able to understand why the gospel succeeds where the old covenant failed, and how to apply the principles of the new and living way to the assistance and edification of others.

But we all need to hearken to the words of Jesus to the Pharisees: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the dish, so that the outside may become clean also” (Matthew 23:25,26). The covenant of Christ is powerfully designed to drive its truths deep into the inner man, so that change in behavior and character is real, flows naturally, and is not merely cosmetic. The goal is that we “may prove [ourselves] to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [we] appear as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). And may every bit of positive performance redound to the glory of God through the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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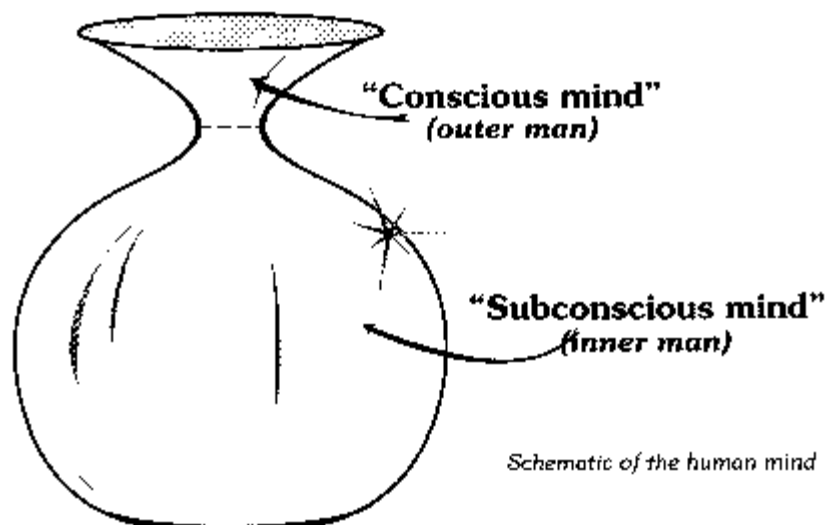
Chapter 1 - Imaging and Change

“For as he thinks within himself, so he is” (Proverbs 23:7)

Treasure In The Inner Man

It has been stated that man’s three pound brain is the most complex and orderly arrangement of matter in the entire universe. This packet of nerve cells has not only been wonderfully designed by the Creator to serve as the control center and switchboard for all the functions and operations of the body; but it also contains the machinery for the complex mediation among the body, soul, and spirit of the individual. And we have no more comprehension of how love and fear, or right and wrong spring from the brain’s elaborate electrochemistry than we do of how the seed sprouts up and grows. But, although we may not know the details of the brain’s minute toggle-switch operations, we know much about the usage of our God-given “user friendly” computer. With help from above, and direction from the scripture, we can change our thinking and perform at the joyous high levels which our Father expects from us.

To make consistently permanent changes in our lives which are in accordance with the will of God is going to require an understanding of certain powerful scriptural precepts. To begin to comprehend the power and mechanism of the gospel of God, let’s begin with a schematic representation of the human mind. As we append precepts from the word of God, we shall better understand the importance of proper imaging for improved performance, and how real changes can be accomplished in our lives.



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I have chosen to depict the mind somewhat like a wide-mouthed vase with a small neck, the bulk of the vase representing, in modern vernacular, the subconscious mind. It is easy to see that people are like icebergs - it is the 90% below the surface which can not be seen that is dangerous! The important point is that any mechanism for helping us to change must be powerful enough to punch through the conscious mind and be driven deeply into the subconscious, or inner man. As Peter exhorted Christian women to win their husbands over by chaste and respectful behavior, he indicated in passing where the character of the woman really is: "Let it be the *hidden* person of the heart" (I Peter 3:4).

It has been well said that what a person is under pressure is what he really is. When the fiery trial strikes, the buffer of the conscious mind is temporarily stripped away. Then the individual acts in accordance with the deeply rooted habits and attitudes of his real character. As our Lord Jesus said, "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned" (Matthew 12:33-37). Over all, the heart and the mouth say the same things; the treasure, which is in the inner man, overflows. That is why the individual is called to account for the "careless word." The careless word is the indication of the current condition of the inner man.

At this point many say, "If what I am under pressure indicates what I really am, I am in trouble. Show me how to change." Patience, my friend. We need to look more deeply into imaging, and the all-important principle expressed in the opening quote, "As [a man] thinks within himself; so he is."

Deep inside each person is an inner picture, the "self image." This image is so controlling that the individual consistently acts in accordance with that picture; he is internally consistent even though he may appear eccentric to everyone else. As Jesus said, "The good man out of his good treasure brings forth that which is good; and the evil man brings forth what is evil." The good man is good because his "treasure" is good.

If a man views himself as a failure, he must fail. We have known people who have failed at almost everything in life. One of these men finally is hired at a good paying job. At first the individual does well, and others around are saying, "At last he's going to make it." Then pressure begins to mount, and our man does something or says something which gets him fired from the position. As he kicks himself halfway across town and back, he says, "Why did I do that idiotic thing?" What our man does not realize is that as long as he views himself as a failure, he must fail. When he starts to succeed, that success is not consistent with his inner picture, and he must *unconsciously* do something to fail. "As he thinks within himself; so he is."

Correspondingly, in the general course of affairs, if a man views himself as a success, he

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must succeed. We have known people who have generally achieved their goals, and have a steady stream of accomplishments to their account. Then a situation arises where one of these individuals is pitted against “impossible odds.” Others around are saying, “The score is finally going to be evened; he’s going down in flames this time.” But our man reaches deep within himself; finds the necessary resources, and somehow “pulls it off.” And those others are now saying, “He gets all the breaks.”

There is a poem which expresses this general truth:

Success

If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don’t.
If you would like to win, but you think you can’t,
It’s almost a cinch you won’t.

If you think you’ll lose, you’re lost;
For out in the world we find
Success begins with a fellow’s will;
It’s all in the state of mind.

Life’s battles don’t always go
To the stronger or faster man;
But soon or late the man who wins
Is the one who thinks he can.

(Anonymous)

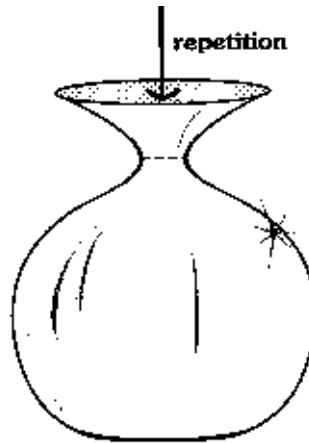
Continued success will not occur without the blessing of God. As the psalmist says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1). And as wise Solomon again noted, “I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise, nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

Against that cautionary backdrop, what our man realizes is that as long as he views himself as a success, he must succeed. Should he start to fail, it would be inconsistent with his inner picture, and he would *unconsciously* do something to succeed. “As he thinks within himself, so is he.”

It is clear, then, that the key to upgrading performance and behavior is to find the mechanism for changing the inner picture to cleanse the inside of the cup so that good fruit can flow naturally from the good treasure. Hence we move to the only mechanism found in scripture which will accomplish the desired change: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and

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acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).



God always works through our minds to accomplish His purpose. Prophetically looking to the time of the New Testament, God spoke through Isaiah, “Come now, let us *reason* together” (Isaiah 1:18). In our lost condition He reasons with us about our sins. Following our entrance into Christ, God still continues to work with our minds. “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” said He.

One of the best ways to understand how the transformation process occurs is to compare the mind to a computer. In fact, computers are extremely simple reflections of the human mind. There is an expression from the world of computers which really illustrates our point: GIGO - “Garbage In, Garbage Out.” If you put “garbage” - falsified data, for example into the computer, you are going to get “garbage” results, regardless of wonderful software and powerful computer memory banks. The same principle applies to the mind of the Christian: GIGO - “Garbage In, Garbage Out.” Or, positively, “Good stuff In, Good stuff Out.” The renewing process, then, is simply a systematic program of putting “Good stuff In” so that “Good stuff Out” automatically follows. In fact, we could say that the transformation process occurs by *reprogramming* the mind.

But there are some important lessons to be learned from the word of God in regard to what steps to take in reprogramming or renewing the mind. The mind is so powerful that whatever it locks in on, for good or for evil, that is where the individual must inevitably “end up.” So we must pay close attention to three important principles to ensure that we arrive at our proper destination, instead of someplace exactly opposite.

Change Through Present, Positive, Affirmative

One technique for change that I have used on myself and helped others to use involves index cards. By writing a certain statement on this index card, and reading this statement out loud 12

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times every morning and 12 times every evening for minimum of 21 days, men and women can acquire a characteristic, quality, or habit which they want to possess. People have overcome sexual problems, drugs, alcohol, and weight problems through the use of this simple but powerful repetitious process. Remember, the only mechanism the word of God provides for change is this renewing process.

But in this repetitious process, there are three important factors: present, positive, affirmative.

Present

One common mistake people make in trying to change is to speak to themselves in the future tense. "I am going to lose weight," or "I am going to start saving money," are common expressions. But they fail to produce long-term change in behavior.

The inner man - the subconscious mind - accepts words literally. Hence, if it is told repetitiously that it is going to do something, it accepts the programming that in the near future it is going to begin this new habit. The problem is that tomorrow never comes; the future, like the rainbow, continually moves just out of reach.

For change to occur, all repetition must be stated in the present tense. "I am," and "I do," are the words which must appear on the index cards, or in the phrases repeated day after day. *The individual must view himself as already possessing the quality which he intends to make his own*

This powerful principle of using the present tense comes to us in general terms from the word of God. "If any man is in Christ, he *is* a new creature," says the scripture. "The old things passed away; behold, new things *have* come" (II Corinthians 5:17). The idea expressed is not that the Christian will become a new creature, but that he already is! "He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me," stated Jesus, "has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). Many times, and in many ways, God's word tells the Christian that he really already possesses certain qualities; the Holy Spirit speaks in the present tense.

As we apply this general principle to the smaller details of our lives, we understand that we must also speak of ourselves in the present tense. "I am," and "I do," are the words which must appear on the index cards, or in the phrases repeated day after day.

Positive

Another important aspect of repetitive statements is that they must be positive; that is, they must communicate to the inner man what you want to come into being rather than what you want

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to avoid. For example, suppose an individual wants to break the nicotine habit, and give up smoking cigarettes. He decides to use the present tense in reprogramming his mind. He may say, "I am the kind of individual who doesn't smoke cigarettes," or "I don't smoke." The problem with these statements is that they are negative; they communicate the wrong picture to the inner man.

Notice that the phraseology creates a picture of a cigarette in the mind. Because the subconscious mind only picks up the image, the message of the cigarette is now being ground *more* deeply into the treasure of the man's heart. Even though he sincerely wants to quit smoking, he is actually entrenching the habit more firmly by his reprogramming process. Whatever picture we regularly present to the subconscious mind will govern our future in so far as it lays in our hands. We inexorably move toward the image that beckons repetitiously to the inner man.

Occasionally, in a counseling session, a scenario similar to the following will occur: The woman will say, "Last week my husband said to me, 'You're just like your mother.' At first I was angry with him because all my life I said that I did not want to be like my mother. But after I cooled down and thought about it, I realized he was right; I am just like my mother." Every time she said, "I do not want to be like my mother," the image of her mom was burned more permanently into her brain. Even though she did not want to be like her mother, because those were the snapshots she regularly delivered to her mind, she had to end up being like her mother.

Sales people use this technique of imaging. They know that if they can get you to see yourself actually driving the new car, or wearing the new coat, you will buy it. We inexorably move toward the image which beckons repetitiously to the inner man.

Hence it is absolutely vital that we begin to renew our minds by putting in the picture of what we do want rather than what we don't want. Our repetitious statements must not only be present tense, but they also must be *positive*. To overcome the nicotine habit, our man would use I Corinthians 6:19,20 to form a present, positive statement:

"My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and I am free to do only those things which glorify God in my body." When this new image is driven deeply enough into his mind, he will not smoke any more because to do so would be inconsistent with his inner picture.

This principle is used many times in the inspired pages of the New Testament. For example, in Paul's letter to the church in Colossae, the apostle used present, positive imaging to help the Colossian Christians please God. After listing a number of practices to be put aside, he then creates the dual image which will make his exhortation reality in their lives: "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Colossians 3:9,10). Note that all the elements we have discussed are found in this statement:

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1. Present tense - qualities we currently possess
2. Positive picture of old self laid aside
3. Positive picture of new self
4. The image of Christ as the beckoning image to the inner man
5. Renewal process

Whatever picture we regularly present to the inner man will govern our future in so far as it lays in our hands. We inexorably move toward the image which beckons repetitiously to the inner man. It is critical that we use present, positive statements over and over to reform our lives and upgrade our characters.

Affirmative

It is also important to recognize that these repetitive statements are affirmative - statements of *faith*. While the individual is in the process of developing a new characteristic, quality, or habit, he obviously does not yet possess that which he is currently developing. Faith has not yet become sight. A woman may say to herself, or write on her index card, "I weigh 125 pounds." Her husband may overhear her, and not understanding the process, reprimand her. "Lady, there is no way you only weigh 125 pounds. Quit lying to yourself, and start being realistic." What he did not comprehend was that her statement was not one of her present condition, but that it was an affirmation, a statement of faith.

But statements of faith are not just idle statements; they are the power mechanism for change. A basketball team must affirm again and again, "We're number one!" on the road to the national championship. Noah saw the ark by faith before it became the reality of salvation to him and his house. Moses saw himself as the deliverer of Israel from Egypt long before it came true (see Acts 7:25).

"Now faith," says the scripture, "is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). For Noah the ark was a "sure" thing; there was absolutely no chance that his affirmation would not come true. Because he was certain that the ark would come into existence, he had the conviction necessary to overcome the obstacles and make his dream reality. That's faith.

Our affirmations become reality by the same process. When the present, positive statements are made with the assurance they will come true, the individual will also develop the conviction necessary to overcome the obstacles and make his quality, characteristic, or habit a reality.

This present, positive, affirmative process is one of those spiritual laws which can be used by the non-Christian to further his ends, for good or for evil. This is a principle which is indiscriminately imposed upon the race of men. The Christian who continues to put "garbage" into his mind will continue to perform at a low level; the non-Christian who puts "good stuff"

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into his mind can elevate his performance to a very high standard.

But if the Christian will follow the scripture in using present, positive, affirmative statements to transform his life instead of being conformed to the world, he has some significant and powerful advantages. Let's work with one of God's present, positive, affirmative concepts, and illustrate just what those advantages are.

In Romans 6, the apostle Paul asks two very relevant questions: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?" (Romans 6:1). The answer, "May it never be!" indicates in strong language that the Christian is to overcome sin in his life. And, as may be expected, what follows is a sweeping mechanism for abolishing all sin in the Christian's life. The means of overcoming sin involves two powerful present, positive, affirmatives: first, the death of the old man of sin; and second, the resurrection of an entirely new creature.

Death of the old man of sin: "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" the apostle asks. He then makes the following points (Romans 6:3-7)

- All of us who have been immersed into Christ have been immersed into his death.
- We were buried with Him by immersion into death.
- We have become united with Christ in the likeness of His death.
- The old self was crucified with Him.
- The body of sin was done away with.
- We are no longer slaves of sin, because he who has died is freed from sin.

The powerful image, connected with the agonizing death of Christ on the cross, is divinely designed with all the present, positive, affirmative elements in place as part of the mechanism for overcoming sin. It is *present* - From the point of the believer's immersion into Christ onward, his status *is* that the old man of sin *is* done away with. It is *positive* - A picture has been created of dead weight falling away, and the individual is now *free* from sin. And it is *affirmative* - The image of the old self crucified and the body of sin done away with has been generated in the mind. However, another individual, looking at things as they are outwardly, could say, "You're lying to yourself. Your body of sin hasn't been done away with. Anyone can see that!" But those who will walk by faith and not by sight know that this beginning picture of the old man of sin crucified in immersion is an absolutely essential ingredient in overcoming sin.

Resurrection of an entirely new creature (Romans 6:4-11): "As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father," explains the inspired apostle, "so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Having drawn a picture of our death with Christ in immersion, he concurrently paints one of our resurrection with Him:

- Having been buried with Christ in the likeness of His death, it is certain that we are raised in the likeness of His resurrection.
- Having died with Christ, by faith we now live with Him.
- Christ, in His resurrected state, is described as dead to sin, and alive to God.

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- Even so, then, a Christian is to consider himself as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ - he is to picture himself as *already resurrected*.

Again you will note that this even more powerful image - this time connected with Christ's resurrection from the dead - has been divinely designed with all the present, positive, affirmative elements in place for abolishing sin. *Present* - From the point of the believer's immersion into Christ onward, his status is that of one who has been raised from the dead. *Positive* - A picture has been created of the individual arising to walk in *newness* of life. This is the ultimate positive, to walk as if resurrected! *Affirmative* - The image of having been raised with Christ has been generated in the mind. However, another individual, looking at things as they are outwardly, might say, "You're lying to yourself. Your body has not been resurrected with Christ from the dead. Anyone can see that." But those who will walk by faith and not by sight know that this beginning picture of having been resurrected with Christ is an absolutely essential ingredient in overcoming sin.

The power of God: As was stated earlier, the present, positive, affirmative principle will work for anyone who desires to use it, be he Christian or non-Christian. This powerful mechanism will get results for athletes, insurance salesmen, big bankers, and New Agers. It will work because it is a basic spiritual law which is built into man's framework.

But the Christian has some significant advantages. One that the Christian possesses, if he is truly following the Bible, is that he is not using the principle for self-glorification. When an individual is giving himself to serve others and to glorify God, there is a motivating power in that unselfishness which never can be duplicated in the man who is interested only in his own personal performance and gain.

Another significant benefit which accrues to the follower of Christ is this ultimate in present, positive, affirmative images which motivate and fire his desire, but which would not interest the unbeliever. The fleshly man's thinking is centered on earth, and is at most elevated to the best that secular history and literature can offer. But the Christian, in contrast to the earth-bound and body-bound among men, has set his mind on things above where he is released from the body of sin and shares in the resurrection of Christ. This elevated thinking by itself will result in elevated performance.

But one who has truly been born from above has one more advantage that far outweighs all others combined: The power of God in his life. When the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians, he referred to the same putting away of the body of sin and sharing in the resurrection of Christ as he did in his epistle to Rome. But in so doing he adds an important piece to our little pile of information: "In Him [Christ] you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you were raised up with Him through faith in the *working of God*, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11,12).

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The point here is that the Christian is not just “psychocybernetically” raising his performance, although psychocybernetics is involved. God has actually engaged in a creative act; in Immersion God worked to raise the new creature up just as He worked to raise Christ from the dead. This, of course, is the tremendous advantage that the saint has over the one who is still outside of Christ. As Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians: “For we are His workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus* for good works” (Ephesians 2:10).

By faith: Even though God’s awesome creative power is at work in bringing into existence a new creature in Christ, that power remains dormant unless the Christian is active. The examples from the Old Testament, written for our admonition, show us that we must be active in our participation with God. By faith Noah prepared the ark. By faith Abraham obeyed by going to the land of Canaan. By faith Moses left Egypt.

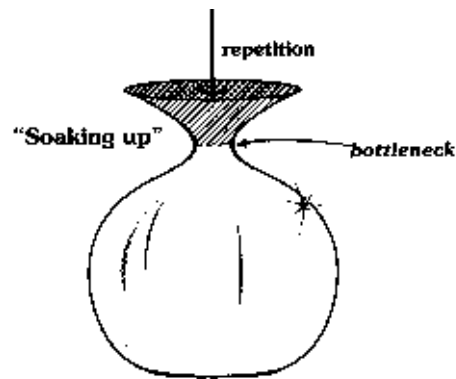
It is true that each of those men had a specific command from God which was carried out to its successful conclusion. But each of those men had the responsibility to act upon the given command, and his failure to do so would have resulted in his name joining the lists of the faithless with whom God is not well-pleased. What we need to realize is that it is likewise true that each of us under the new covenant has also been given a command. May it be written of us: “By faith we were transformed by the renewing of our minds.”

God uses the principle of present, positive, affirmative to generate the ultimate in elevated thinking and high performance in us. We need to recognize the unseen nature of God’s mechanism, and through faith implement in our lives both the general picture given to us and specific details.

Repetition and the Conscious Mind

The metamorphosis which the Christian is to undergo must, however, be accomplished through the mind. In the wisdom of God the individual must initiate the change himself, or God’s mechanism for change does not operate. And the mechanism for this change centers in a process called *renewal*. “Be transformed by the renewing of the mind,” Paul told the Romans. “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self,” he said to the Ephesians. “Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day,” he informed the Corinthians. The process of change involves *daily* renewal of the mind. In other words, a repetitive process in use every day is a necessary ingredient for improvement.

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God has provided a number of daily activities which accomplish general renewing, and consequently, general change:

- Daily reading of scripture
- Regular prayer
- Memorizing scriptures
- Family devotions and conversations about the word of God

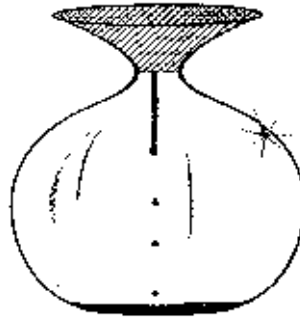
These daily activities are augmented by other general church-related programs which help general change to occur:

- Preaching
- Bible studies and classes
- Singing
- Sharing groups

When the Christian himself leads a class, this preparation and direct participation on a regular basis is a powerful renewing agent in itself, and the individual will often make great forward strides. Listening to tapes of key messages several times can also really help the struggler to change.

But there are times when the Christian must single out and specify the change to be made. That's the time to dig out the index cards, write out a present, positive, affirmative statement, and start reading that statement out loud 12 times in the morning, and 12 times in the evening. This repetitious process will result in a real metamorphosis of character.

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But there is a bottleneck. After a certain amount of repetition the conscious mind gets bored, and wants to quit. But that is the time when the Christian really needs to “bear down.” It is not until the conscious mind gets “soaked up” that the repetitious phraseology can begin to drip down into the inner man and real, permanent changes of personality begin to occur.

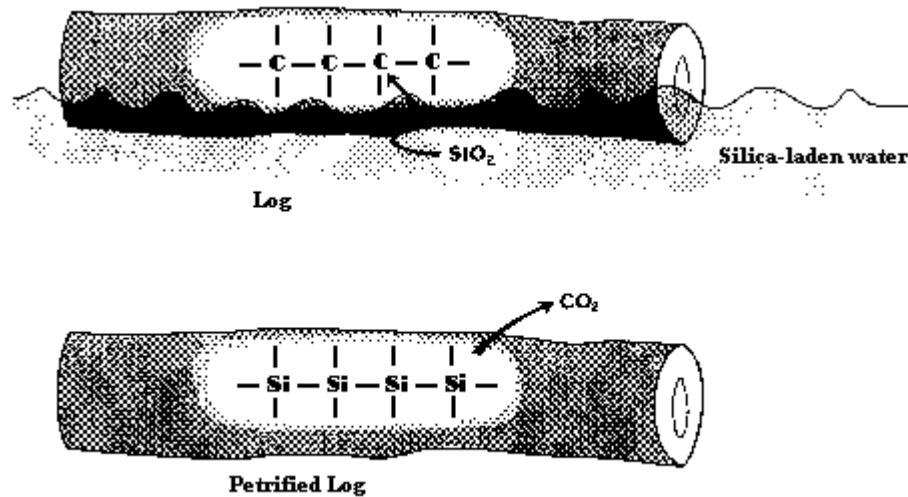
The force of repetition in accomplishing change is illustrated in the case of preparing a spy. The individual is given a whole new set of background experiences for his mental references. Grandparents, cousins, immediate family, and job experiences are created for his dossier. He is given a new name, and a new identity. He then is repetitiously drilled and drilled and drilled in this new identity until he can respond as the new person under even the most demanding and strenuous conditions.

If the spy can change, much more so can the Christian. Again the key is repetition, the renewing process. The Christian must desire the metamorphosis so much that he *voluntarily* drills and drills and drills himself in this new characteristic until he can respond in the new way under even the most demanding and strenuous conditions.

Thought Exchange In The Inner Man

Through the process of repetition, new images begin to soak up the conscious mind and trickle down to the treasure of the inner man. This activity, sometimes known as “internalizing the word” - where it is systematically and continually applied to the Christian’s way of thinking - is the means by which he becomes the new creature in practice.

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In Yellowstone Park there are quite a number of petrified trees and fallen logs. In some of them, you can count the rings and feel the knots where the branches were broken off. But if you try to lift one of those logs or chop it with an ax, you would find that it was in fact solid rock, just as solid and heavy as the granitic cliffs nearby.

The basic building blocks of trees are long chains of carbon atoms, and the basic ingredient of rocks are silicon atoms. When the tree fell into the hot, silica-laden water of Yellowstone Park, the silicon atoms which have been dissolved in the water one by one replaced the similarly shaped carbon atoms in the log. The result is that the organic material step by step became inorganic, and this which was once living became stone.

Through renewing the mind the Christian goes through a process I call “reverse petrification.” He begins in a deadened, hardened state. Then, as good thoughts one by one replace bad thoughts, the individual is transformed - in conjunction with the life - giving power of the Holy Spirit and His word - into that which is truly alive in Christ. “It is the Spirit who gives life,” said Jesus, “the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). The outer shell is still there; the wrinkles can be counted, and the scars where some of the branches have been broken off can be felt. But that which really counts is being transformed from the dead into the renewed life of Christ thought by thought. “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (II Corinthians 4:16).

Exhortation

Real change cannot be accomplished by half-hearted desires and occasional good intentions. Real change occurs when the Christian is diligent as a willing partner with God in all that the Lord has instructed him to do in His word.

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It is possible for a person to be born again in obedience to the gospel, but not change because he does not carry out the disciplined requirements for renewing the mind. It is possible for a person to make changes in his life by applying the principles of transformation found in God's word, and yet not be a Christian because he has not been immersed for the remission of his sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We must, in the words of the apostle Peter, "Be diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you" (II Peter 1:10). We must make certain we are following scripture, and we must be diligent on our part in renewing the mind in order for the full power of God to work in transforming our lives.

Summary

- Change by the imaging process is designed by God.
- True change in behavior can only be accomplished when new images are driven into the treasure of the inner man.
- The mechanism for change involves present, positive, affirmative statements.
- Repetition is the only means of driving present, positive, affirmative statements into the subconscious mind.
- The systematic replacement of bad thoughts with good thoughts will transform the dead being into one who is truly alive in Christ by "reverse petrification."
- There must be a very strong desire on the individual's part to be willing to work hard, and to be willing to follow God's instruction given in the scripture.

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Chapter 2: The Image of Christ

“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (II Corinthians 3:18).

Christ, The Communication of God

“In the beginning was the Word,” says John, “and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). And this Word, he continues, “became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Why is Jesus called the Word? It is significant that the Greek word is *logos*, which is the root for our English word logic. All communication is essentially the movement of one set of logical thought processes from one person’s mind to another’s, and this logic rides upon the carrier of words. Hence it is that the essence of God is manifested to man through the Word, Jesus Christ, and that this manifestation rides upon the carefully reasoned presentation of the Son of God to the world. “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation” (Colossians 1:15).

The purpose of all scripture, then, from the opening lines of Genesis to the closing verse of Revelation, is to expose Jesus to the view of man, that man might fall on his face before the revealed glory of the risen Son, turn from his wicked ways, and be saved from each perverse and crooked generation. “For the testimony of Jesus,” says John, “is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). And concerning the Word of life, he writes, “What we have seen and have heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I John 1:3). To communicate this life the Father put Jesus through three stages, for our benefit and understanding:

1. Jesus in the flesh
2. The recognizable resurrection
3. Jesus in glory

In sending Jesus to us, the loving Father had more in mind than simply saving us from our sins. He wants us to cease behaving like members of the fallen race, and take on His character. “Grace and peace be multiplied to you,” says Peter, “in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (II Peter 1:2-4). Note that the key factor in this process is “the *knowledge* of God and of Jesus our Lord” and “the *true knowledge* of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” It is

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clear that we really need to understand Jesus in order to be what God wants us to be. Let's walk with Jesus through these stages, that we "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that [we] may be filled up to all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:18,19).

Phase I: Jesus in the Flesh

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). In order for Jesus to communicate the character of God to us, He met us at the most basic level, the flesh. When He was born - in the most humble of circumstances - at the manger in Bethlehem, they spanked Him to start His breathing just like the rest of us. The basic idea of the incarnation is that Jesus experienced every problem and every emotion we encounter in the flesh. He was tired; He was hungry; He slept; He wept; He was amazed; and He was disgusted. By coming in the flesh, He established common ground with us, so that He could begin to communicate spiritual thoughts and ideas to us, and thus elevate our understanding.

Jesus became flesh to meet us at our level. In order to do that, He had to drop down two "rungs" in the ladder of God's order, from God to angel to man. An angel is a spirit being, and does not die; but man, because he also is flesh, dies a physical death. "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:9,10). Physical death and the suffering connected with it is the greatest physical representation of the consequences brought to mankind because of sin. Jesus participated in the agony of death as a further demonstration of His commitment to us.

Not only did Jesus live in the flesh, and not only did He experience death, He also faced temptation. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). More importantly, He faced the temptation successfully. It is a simple but important fact: if you are stuck in a ditch, someone else stuck in that same ditch cannot pull you out. We need Jesus to pull us out, and to show us how to live successfully. "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, *He is able to come to the aid* of those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17,18). These ought to make us fall on our faces before Him in thanksgiving.

Thus Jesus, in the form of man, exhibited the beginning stages of the character of God. "If you had known Me, you would have known the Father also," Jesus told Thomas. "From now on you know Him and have seen Him" (John 14:7).

- Jesus was made flesh; He became a man.

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- Jesus, the Creator, was made a little lower than the angels.
- Jesus voluntarily experienced the suffering of death.
- Jesus faced temptation, yet without sin.

There is much to be learned from the record of Jesus as He walked in the flesh. We can learn much about kindness, compassion, mercy, and goodness. We can learn from Jesus how to preach the word, how to create a movement, how to pray, and how to deal with hostile situations. We can understand from Jesus how to manage time, how to love people, how to plan events, how to relate to the heavenly Father, and how to die. We can learn about His coming kingdom from His teaching; we can learn about repentance and immersion, and we can learn about the Lord's Supper. There is much we can learn about the character of God through studying Jesus in the flesh as revealed in the four gospel accounts. But that's not all.

Phase II: The Recognizable Resurrection

The idea of a resurrection was tough to understand in the first century. Centuries of lilies, dresses, and parades have acclimated most Bible believers to an easy acceptance of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. But sometimes we need more of an example to bring us to a realization of why the followers of Christ in the first century tended to be blind to His rising from the dead, and why they needed a recognizable resurrection.

If you had watched one of your close relatives die, and had seen him buried, you would hesitate to believe reports from others that they had seen him driving around town. Thus it was with the followers of Jesus. "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus [twin], was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe'" (John 20:24-28).

While Thomas has been called "The Doubter," he was just a truth-seeker who wanted to be certain that the man the others had seen was in fact Jesus. And in his case it took seeing the nail holes and the spear wound.

The appearances of Jesus following His resurrection were all designed by God to establish one fact - that the One who was standing in the presence of the disciples was the same One who had been crucified. And the emphasis of that point was to prove that the most incredible event of history had occurred: Jesus' permanent resurrection from the dead. Note some of these emphases in the inspired word:

- The women who went to Jesus' tomb were met by Jesus on the way back to the other

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disciples: “And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and *took hold of His feet* and worshiped Him” (Matthew 28:9).

- After two disciples had met the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus, Jesus appeared suddenly in the midst of the assembled followers. “But they were frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, *that it is I Myself*; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they still could not believe it for joy, and were marveling, He said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and He took and ate it before them” (Luke 24:36-43).

Jesus firmly established that He was physical in His resurrection, and that He was the same One the disciples had known and loved in His life and crucifixion. Luke summarizes the second phase of God’s communication of His essence through Jesus Christ in His opening of Acts, and uses it as a foundation of the beginning of the church: “To these [apostles] He presented Himself alive, after His suffering, *by many convincing proofs*, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

In Phase I, Jesus appeared in the flesh to meet us at our level to begin to communicate the character of God to us. By demonstrating His physical resurrection, in Phase II Jesus gave us assurance of our own resurrection, and elevated our thinking one notch above the purely physical in preparation for Phase III.

Phase III: Jesus in Glory

The third stage in the life of Christ is the most powerful and exciting; but its significance is also the most difficult to understand. When Jesus ascended to the throne at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He left the realm of the physical entirely. In leaving the earth for the eternal, He became no longer visible to the physical eye, and it requires a further elevation in our thinking to comprehend His being. But that elevation in our thinking is precisely what He intended to accomplish as the Word - the communication of the essence of the Father to man.

Where Jesus Went

In Jesus’ final appearance to the apostles, “He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you

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into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven' ”(Acts 1:9-11). The important question for us at this point is: What happened when Jesus burst through the cloud on the upper side? An examination of scripture shows that He ascended to what the word of God calls “glory.”

- *Jesus had to be glorified to enter “glory”* - “If I glorify Myself,” said the Christ to the Jews, “My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me” (John 8:54).
- *While Jesus was in the flesh, He was not yet in glory* - Speaking to the crowd assembled at the last Feast of Tabernacles Jesus would attend, He said, “If any man is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘from His innermost being shall flow rivers of living water’ ” (John 7:37,38). To which John adds these explanatory words, “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39).
- *Jesus entered glory when He ascended* - Before Jesus crossed the Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane, He also prayed to the Father. As part of that prayer, He made this request: “And now, glorify Me together with Yourself, Father, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5). Jesus had not yet entered that glory in His resurrection, as He said to Mary when she first saw Him on that awesome first day of the week, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father” (John 20:17). Jesus did not return to the glory which He had before He left heaven until He ascended.

It is, as we shall see, very important that we understand glory. And glory is best defined for us as Jesus’ state following His resurrection and ascension. In Phase I - Jesus in the flesh - He met us at our level to form a bridge of understanding between us and Him. In Phase II - Jesus in the recognizable resurrection - Jesus raised our level of thinking by exhibiting Himself bodily, and permanently, resurrected. But it is Jesus’ ascension to glory that He really wants us to understand, and Phases I and II were necessary and preparatory steps in elevating our understanding.

The Nature of Glory

Paul gives us an introduction to the nature of glory in writing to the church in Philippi: “For our citizenship is in heaven,” says he, “from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with *the body of His glory*, by the exertion of the power that He has to subject all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20,21). Paul’s point is clear; Jesus’ body is now a body of glory, and our bodies will be changed into the likeness of that same glory.

Speaking of Jesus in glory, the apostle John adds to our information: “Beloved, now we are

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children of God, and *it has not appeared as yet what we shall be*. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because *we shall see Him Just as He is*" (I John 3:2). John's information lets us know that no one, including the beloved apostle John himself, has seen Jesus in glory with the physical eye.

Listen, then, to these words from Paul to Timothy. "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time - He who is blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; *who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light*, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen" (I Timothy 6:13-16). Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, dwells in glory - in immortality and unapproachable light. The brightness of that glory, more brilliant than a billion suns, has never been seen by human eye.

In the Old Testament, Moses asked God, "I pray, show me Your glory" (Exodus 33:18). The Lord replied, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." Then He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (Exodus 33:19,20).

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:21-24). There is something about the glory of God which no man can see, and still live.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai after seeing the passing glory of the Lord, His face shone. At first the sons of Israel were afraid to come near him, but Moses persuaded them to approach and listen. "When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord [at the front of the tabernacle, the tent they carried with them in the wilderness] to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him" (Exodus 34:33-35). "And it came about, whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:9-11). In this smaller-scale illustration of God's glory, the Almighty teaches us that the nature of His glory is such that it transforms the one who sees it into the likeness of that same glory.

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That's why no one can see, with his physical eye, the face or the glory of God, and live. When we see Him as He is, we shall be instantly transformed into the likeness of that same glory. If a person had seen God's face in the Old Testament times, he would have been vaporized!

The nature of the glory by which Jesus was glorified is unapproachable light whom no man has seen or can see. That glory of Christ will transform anyone who sees it into the likeness of that same glory.

Character of God

Jesus, as the Word of God, emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, to communicate the character of God to us. In coming in the flesh, He met us at our level; in rising from the dead, He elevated our understanding and gave us tangible evidence of the life beyond this one; but in ascending to glory He raised our comprehension to its proper spiritual standing. For it is the Jesus in glory who is the illustration of the character of God. Listen to the writer of Hebrews: "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the *radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature*, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Hebrews 1:1-3). It is Jesus in glory - it is Jesus on the throne - who is the complete communication of the Father's nature!

This is an extremely significant point. In order for us to understand the nature of God - which is why Jesus came - we are going to have to be able to comprehend Jesus in glory. We need to comprehend that unapproachable light. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:1-5).

"For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you' " (Ephesians 5:14)

The Old Testament Prophets Saw His Glory

The sleeper who wants to rise from the dead and see the light of Christ in glory gets some help from the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah, for example, tells us he "saw the Lord [Adonai] sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted with the train of His robe filling the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). Seraphim stood above the Lord, and one called out to another, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the

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LORD [Jehovah or Yahweh] of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:13).

Isaiah’s response to the glory of the Lord was to cry out, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord [Jehovah] of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah, of course, was “in the Spirit” when he saw the glory of Jehovah. After having his lips cleansed, Isaiah was commissioned with a message to the people: “Keep on listening, but don’t perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim; lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed” (Isaiah 6:9,10).

Eight centuries later, this same passage is quoted by the apostle John. But in quoting it, he adds significant insight for our benefit. “These things Jesus spoke, and He [Jesus] departed and hid Himself from them. But though He [Jesus] had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him [Jesus]; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ‘He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them.’ These things Isaiah said, because he saw His [Jesus’] glory, and he spoke of Him [Jesus]”(John 12:36-41).

Isaiah said he saw the glory of Jehovah. John, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus. There is only one correct conclusion - Jesus is Jehovah! Significant insight number one.

Secondly, John says Isaiah saw the *glory* of Jesus. In other words, he saw the resurrected and ascended Christ! He saw the King on His throne!

It shouldn’t surprise us that Isaiah saw the resurrected Christ. Let Peter instruct us concerning David, in a somewhat parallel illustration. We join Peter as he speaks to the crowd assembled in the temple area on the day of Pentecost, 30 A.D. Listen as he tries to convince them concerning the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, that it occurred as predicted in the Old Testament. “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, *because he was a prophet*, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne, *he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ*, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:29-32).

That’s what a prophet does - he looks ahead. Many of the Old Testament prophets saw Christ in glory, and we can study their writings for a clearer picture of Christ on the throne.

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The Begotten Son

The golden verse of the Bible: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus is the only begotten son of God; but in what sense is He “begotten”? Is He begotten in the sense of virgin-born?

It is best to let the scriptures define themselves, which they will if we are patient enough to let them. Thus it is with “begotten”.

Psalm 2 is a Messianic psalm; that is, the whole psalm prophesies the coming of the *Messiah*, or Christ. “He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them [those rulers of people on earth who take their stand against the Lord and His Christ], then He will speak to them in His anger, and terrify them in His fury; ‘But as for Me,’ [says the Father], ‘I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.’ ‘I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord,’ [says the Son]; ‘He said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have *begotten* You.” ’ ” (Psalm 2:4-7).

So, when was the “today” in which Jesus was begotten? We join the apostle Paul in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, in what is now south central Turkey. “Brethren, sons of Abraham’s family, and those among you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation is sent out. For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. And when they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that *God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus*, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘Thou art My Son; *today I have begotten Thee.*’ And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: ‘I will give You the holy and sure blessings of David.’ Therefore He also says in another Psalm, ‘Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.’ ” (Acts 13:26-35).

Paul quoted Psalm 2:7 to establish from Jewish scriptures that Jesus was to rise from the dead. And through His inspired usage, we now understand that Jesus was the “begotten Son” in His resurrection from the dead!

The use of “begotten” to describe Jesus’ resurrection is consistent with other New Testament writings. “He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, *the first-born from the dead*; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything” (Colossians 1:18). And Paul emphasizes the same point in his opening comments in the letter to the Christian community in Rome: “Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy

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Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, *who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead*, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:1-4).

God wants the “begotten-ness” of Jesus to be the definition of His divine power. He wants us to know “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, in accordance with the working of the strength of His might, which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:19-20). God defines His strength in the expressions connected with raising Jesus from the dead and seating Him at His right hand; His *begotten-ness*, in other words. And what awesome words! Thus it is written, “So also Christ did not *glorify* Himself so as to become a high priest, but He [the Father who did glorify Christ] who said to Him ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten You;’ just as He says in another passage, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’ ” (Hebrews 5:5,6). Jesus was begotten - glorified - to be a priest forever, as the scripture says by “the power of an indestructible life” (Hebrews 7:16).

From now on, when you think of the begotten Son, don’t see the “bambino” in His mother’s arms at the manger. Visualize the first born from the dead, the great High Priest of the order of Melchizedek, passed through the heavens, seated - glorified - on the throne, waiting for His enemies to be a footstool under His feet, possessing immortality and dwelling in unapproachable light, to whom belongs honor and dominion forever! “For to which of the angels did He ever say, You are My Son, today I have begotten You?” (Hebrews 1:5).

The New Testament Writers Saw His Glory

Jesus, in glory, “dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see” (I Timothy 6:16). This glory cannot be seen with the physical eye. But there is such a thing as a spiritual eye, which can see. Paul, writing to the congregation in Ephesus, says, “I pray that the *eyes of your heart* may be enlightened” (Ephesians 1:18).

Let’s go back to a verse that we quoted at the beginning of the chapter, and note the impact it now has. The apostle John writes, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, *glory as of the only begotten from the Father*, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). John said he and other apostles beheld Jesus’ glory, the glory of the begotten - resurrected and ascended - Son. Both John and Paul affirm that no one saw Jesus in glory with the physical eye. So, the question arises: How did they behold the glory of the begotten Son? The answer has to be that they saw the glorified Christ with the spiritual eye - seen, in their cases, by revelation from the Holy Spirit.

Pay particular attention to these instructions of Jesus given to the apostles the night in which He was betrayed. “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth,

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whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him” (John 14:15-21). Note these points:

- Jesus promised the apostles the Holy Spirit, or Helper.
- They already knew the Holy Spirit because He was living with them [in the form of Jesus].
- Through the Holy Spirit, He would not leave them orphans, but would come to them.
- In the day in which they would behold Jesus, they would know that Jesus was in the Father, He in them, and they in Jesus.
- It was not until the day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, at the coming of the Holy Spirit, that the apostles knew that Jesus was in them, and they in Him.
- It follows that Jesus really disclosed Himself to the apostles through the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.
- That Jesus was really disclosed to the apostles at the coming of the Spirit is verified by John 16:13: “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”
- Furthermore the purpose of the disclosure is to glorify Jesus: “He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you” (John 16:14).

Here is the point: When the apostles lived with Jesus in the flesh, they saw Him, but not His glory as the only begotten Son of God. When the apostles witnessed Jesus’ resurrection, they saw Him and touched Him; but that was not when they beheld His glory. They only beheld His glory with their spiritual eyes through revelation by the Holy Spirit.

Transformation Through Seeing Jesus

The writer of Hebrews tells us to be “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). What Jesus are we to see? Jesus in the flesh? Jesus freshly risen from the dead? The answer is, of course, Jesus on the throne - Jesus in glory.

With what eyes shall we see Jesus, the author and - through being made perfect in glory - perfecter of faith? Not with physical eye, but with spiritual eye. Listen to the prayer of Paul on behalf of the Ephesians: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may

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know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:18-20). The eyes of our heart do need to be enlightened to *see*.

How shall we see the Christ on His throne? The gospel accounts - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - tell us of Christ in the flesh. These accounts plus the first chapter of Acts describe for us Jesus in His resurrection. But it is the preaching of the Spirit - inspired apostles and New Testament prophets in Acts, and their writings in the epistles and Revelation, with some help from the Old Testament prophets, which paint for our spiritual eyes the brilliant, radiant Christ in glory. We, who once were blind, should be shouting, “Now I can see!”

- Christ, the Word of God, came in the flesh to meet us at our basal level.
- In the flesh, Jesus elevated our understanding, and stirred our interest in heavenly things.
- In His recognizable resurrection, He established the certainty of bodily resurrection from the dead and He increased our comprehension another step.
- Having built a base for our understanding, then Jesus ascended to glory.
- The blazing, unapproachable light is the body of His glory, and the character of God. “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). Listen to the emphasis John puts on this point: This is *the message* . . . God is light!
- Our tendency is to view God in physical terms. Seeing a physical Father with a physical Son at His right side, with a more or less physical Holy Spirit hovering in the background is the way we would visualize Him with the physical eye.
- But God takes us through the three phases of Christ to move our understanding above the range of the physical to see Him with the spiritual eye as He really is, possessing immortality and dwelling in unapproachable light.
- As our comprehension of the divine nature of the Almighty moves from the physical to the spiritual, we as individuals are able to drop the physical and become increasingly spiritual.

With the eye of the heart, we can see the glory of God - we can see that light - expressed through Christ. But, remember this: the nature of the glory of God is such that whatever sees that glory is transformed into the likeness of that same glory. Thus, if we really can see the glory of God through Christ, we ought to be transformed, and there should be a scripture verse which states something to that effect. Praise God! “But we all, with unveiled face, [contrasted to the veil which Moses used to put over his face] beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, *are being transformed into the same image* from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (II Corinthians 3:18).

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Consider carefully the significant points brought out in this one verse of scripture:

- All of us, as Christians, with unveiled face, see the glory of the Lord. There are three thoughts connected with the unveiled face: the first is that we can clearly see Jesus' glory - there is no covering between us and His face; the second is that our spiritual faces can shine, just as Moses' physical face shone; and the third is that our faces can shine with an unfading glory!
- It is the glory of the Lord we see. It is not Jesus in the flesh, nor Jesus in His bodily resurrection, but it is Jesus in glory - risen, ascended, seated on His throne.
- This glory is seen "as in a mirror." This "mirror" can be established to be the completed New Testament. Those who had the gift of knowledge and those who had the gift of prophecy in the first century church only knew in part, and only prophesied in part. But the apostle Paul averred that when these partial things were put away in favor of that which was by contrast complete, the Christian would be able to see in that complete mirror clearly. That complete mirror is the New Testament (I Corinthians 13:8-12). James concurs, calling the mirror into which the Christian looks intently "the perfect [complete] law, the law of liberty" (James 1:23-25). The general idea being communicated here is that when we see the glory of the Lord revealed in the pages of the New Testament, we are really looking at ourselves!
- When we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into that same glorious, spiritual image.
- The transformation is from glory to glory. In being immersed into the death of Christ, we were then raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3,4). Thus Christians are referred to as those who have been raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:4-6). We are already, in one sense, raised from the dead and in a state of glory. But at Jesus' second coming, the last trumpet shall sound, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and the body of this humble state shall be transformed into the likeness of the body of His glory. We are said, therefore, to be transformed into Christ's image "from glory to glory" - the glory that is by faith to the glory that is by sight.
- All this is "from the Lord, the Spirit." Obviously the metamorphosis occurring here is beyond what could be humanly accomplished. No matter how much effort Moses would have put into it, he never could have made his face shine. Similarly, no amount of effort we could put into it would ever transform us into the image of Christ; it takes powerful action from the very Spirit of God Himself.

What we have stumbled onto here is the most powerful life-changing, world-changing principle there is. God is offering us, through the renewing process established in the first

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chapter, the opportunity to be changed into His likeness by understanding the three phases of Christ, and seeing, with our spiritual eyes, His glory. And while we must be active, willing, disciplined participants, it is the Spirit of God - through revealing the Christ in glory in the pages of the New Testament and by the work He accomplishes internally in us - who is the transforming agent. It is clear that, in all phases of our movement from the flesh to the ultimate likeness of God, God receives all the glory and praise - what is being achieved is far beyond what man could ever do.

Children Of Light

Early in this chapter we discussed becoming partakers of the divine nature. Let us note once again the verses from the apostle Peter: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (II Peter 1:2-4). After understanding the three phases of Christ as God’s communication to us, certain points now stand out which previously lay flat on the printed page:

- The grace and peace of God is going to come to us through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. But we really only know the Father through following Christ in our understanding into His ascended glory. Hence the apostle Peter speaks of God’s divine power operating “through the *true knowledge* of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”
- The precious and magnificent promises of which Peter speaks include and are predicated upon the true knowledge of God through the three phases of Christ. Thus, in order to fully become a partaker of the divine nature, we must understand the glory and excellence of the risen Christ; and, correspondingly, if we do understand, we shall take on His glorious character!

God is light. His children, therefore, are properly called “children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). Let us listen once again to Paul the beloved as he gives us some details concerning the beacon of God’s love: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine in the darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Corinthians 4:3-6). Note these thoughts:

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- The gospel is called “the gospel of the glory of Christ.” Part of the preaching of the gospel is preaching Christ on the throne in glory. The first time in the history of the world the gospel was preached was on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, 30 A.D., to the thousands gathered in the temple area. On this occasion, which set the stage for all preaching following, Peter particularly pointed out that Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of the Father, and quoted from the Old Testament Psalm pointing to Christ in glory: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet’ ” (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:34,35).
- Christ in glory is the image of God.
- A person who does not see the light of this gospel has had his mind blinded by Satan, and is perishing.
- It is Christ in glory who is Christ Jesus as Lord. This ties in with Peter’s statement referred to earlier; after quoting Psalm 110 about Jesus being seated at the Lord’s right hand, he says, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).
- At the beginning of creation, God said that light shall shine out of darkness, while the Spirit of God moved over the waters. Similarly, in bringing each new creation into existence, the Spirit of God hovers over the waters of immersion, and upon being immersed for the forgiveness of his sins, the new creature in Christ received the indwelling Spirit and is now a child of light. God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.
- The knowledge of the glory of God is revealed in the face of Christ.
- We see that face of Christ when we see Him risen and ascended as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the inspired pages of God’s word.

The Christian becomes a partaker of the divine nature through the precious and magnificent promises connected with the true knowledge of Christ. The purpose of preaching and teaching must be to bring each disciple to a clear understanding of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence, to see with the spiritual eye the shining face of Him who sits on the throne. This is the Christ of the apostles’ teaching in Acts; this is the Christ of the epistles; this is the Christ of Revelation. “Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Romans 8:34).

Unity in Glory

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Before Jesus crossed the Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed His longest recorded prayer, preserved for us by the apostle John and the Holy Spirit. In this prayer, *glory* was on His mind. “Father, He began, “the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You . . . I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work which You have given me to do. And now, glorify Me together with Yourself, Father, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:1,4,5). Jesus’ clear desire for Himself was to return to glory, having accomplished His work during His stay on earth.

But, as He closes out His prayer, He adds to His prayer for glory for Himself. Praying first for the apostles, He then prays, “for those also who believe in Me through their [the apostles’] word, that they may all be one...” (John 17:20,21). Jesus wants all those who claim His name to be one. But how is this unity to be accomplished? Listen: “And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as we are one; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them even as You loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, in order *that they may behold My glory*, which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:22-24).

- The glory which the Father has given Jesus has now been given to us.
- This glory will make it possible for us to be one, just as Jesus and the Father are one. It is impossible to have unity of Christ apart from that glory.
- Jesus’ ultimate desire was that we might be with Him where He is, that we might behold His glory.

The means by which Christians are perfected in unity is by becoming partakers of His divine nature, by truly appropriating His glory. Any other means of attempting to achieve oneness must necessarily at some point end in futility.

Exhortation

It is God’s earnest desire that each of us partake of His divine nature. He sent Jesus in the flesh to die for our sins, and to go through the agony of death for each of us. In this way He demonstrated His love for us, and His willingness to communicate His glory to us - meeting us in the flesh, and at the fleshly level. Then, as He carried out His gospel of glory, He lifted our understanding when He rose from the dead, and ascended to the throne.

In effect, then, God has formed the present, positive, affirmative image of Christ in our minds. By allowing this image to be formed, and by focusing on that image, we are changed into the likeness of Christ. All the principles of imaging and change, on a small scale, are really just step by step lessons to prepare us for the great and ultimate step, to take on the glory or character

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of Christ.

Beyond this, He has given us His word; His divine power created us in immersion a new creatures; He has given us His Spirit; and He perfects us in unity through glory. Is this not enough to motivate us? Is this not enough to stir in our hearts the desire “to *know Him*, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, in order that [we] may attain to the resurrection from the dead”? Press on, then, brother, press on “toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:10,11,14).

Summary

- The character or divine nature of God is communicated through Christ, the Word.
- Jesus has gone through three steps or phases to communicate to us the fulness of God.
 1. He became flesh.
 2. He was bodily resurrected.
 3. He ascended to glory.
- Jesus, by meeting us at the fleshly level, enables us to move from the carnal nature to the sublimely spiritual by understanding the transition from earth to glory.
- It is Jesus, on the throne in glory, who is the exact impress of the Father’s nature.
- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John describe Jesus’ life in the flesh. The gospel accounts, plus the opening portion of Acts develop Jesus in His transitional, resurrection body. But the picture of Jesus in glory is painted with the brush strokes of the apostles’ preaching in Acts, their and the New Testament prophets’ writings in the epistles and Revelation, with some help from the Old Testament prophets.
- The great message of the word of God, then, is that God is light - the light of the glory of Christ.
- As we see the glory of Christ in the New Testament, we are transformed into the image of that glory through the Spirit, and are thus children of light.
- By acquiring that glory, and by becoming partakers of the divine nature through the true knowledge of Jesus, we can be perfected in unity.
- The principles of imaging and change developed in the first chapter are to apply to the ultimate goal and challenge of taking on the character of Christ in glory.

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Chapter 3 - Turning to the Lord

“But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (II Corinthians 3:16)

Starting Into The Turn

The mechanism for change and improvement, which God has provided for us involves a new picture in our minds. When this new picture is properly generated and implemented, then change automatically occurs. But the Almighty has gone even beyond that - through the scripture, He has given us the image of the risen Christ, and has said that this likeness is our new picture. If anyone has been immersed into Christ, he truly is clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27).

The righteous Father furthermore ensures that the proper picture of Christ is developed for us. Christ meets us in the physical realm, moves into a transitional realm in His bodily resurrection, and ultimately ascends to the throne in glory where, dwelling in brilliant and unapproachable light, He is the complete revelation of the character of the Father. “This is *the* message... God is light...” (I John 1:5). Through the writings of the Old Testament, and through the writings of the apostles and New Testament prophets, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to “behold” Christ’s glory with the eyes of the heart, or spiritual eyes. As we believe in and obey the gospel, we are also moved from being fleshly-minded to those who, having been born of water and Spirit, now have our minds set on the things of the Spirit. This last point - what we do in relationship to the gospel of the glory of Christ, and what God does - is what we want to explore further in this chapter as we let the word of God define what it means by the expression “turning to the Lord.” But to put the significance of the expression in the right context, and to appropriately jog contemporary readers, we need a brief review of some important history.

Historical Overtones

The Reformation

One of the most important inventions ever was the printing press. Johann Gutenberg, having to invent printer’s ink as well as many details in the press itself, developed the concept of moveable type, and Was able by 1455 AD to produce the world’s first printed book. Significantly, the book he printed was the Bible - in Latin, to be sure, but the Bible none the less.

All over western Europe, men were triggered to begin producing the Bible in the language of their own people. Men such as Tyndale had earlier begun the work of translating the New Testament into English, for example; but with the development of printing, it was now really worth a man’s time to translate the Bible, because his work could now be comparatively easily disseminated. Thus, as men read and pondered the word of God, and as printed messages concerned with the teaching of the Bible were circulated, the peoples began to throw off the shackles of Roman Catholicism as they saw how deviant from scripture its practices were.

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The rejection of Roman Catholicism was not without a fight, however. The burnings at the stake, the inquisitions, the tortures, and the pressures are well-documented in Western European history, as Roman Catholic officials tried, by force, to stop the drive to return to the Bible as the ultimate authority in religious matters. Therefore, a major movement for political liberty also arose, because Roman Catholic clergy used the muscle of “the state” to try to crush religious liberty.

But, as is also well-documented in Western European history, the Protestants and Protestant states proved no more tolerant in many senses than their Catholic predecessors. Thus the Protestant nations of western Europe had state churches and national denominations, and those who held other beliefs were discouraged or prosecuted. The raids continued, the beatings and the imprisonments went on, and many of those who really wanted to follow their understanding of the scriptures began to immigrate to the British colonies in America.

As the colonies freed themselves from British oppression, one of the deepest drives among the people was the continued desire for religious freedom. When the U.S. Constitution was finally ratified in 1791, the very first line in the Bill of Rights was that a state church could not be established, and the second line stated that the free exercise of religion could not be prohibited. Thus, for the first time in modern history, men were free to try to understand the Bible without the sword of the state hanging over their heads. As a result, in America there arose a very strong movement to eliminate all “human elements” in religion, and to return to the teachings of the very word of God itself.

The Restoration Movement

At first, those who desired to return to the teachings of the New Testament called themselves “reformers.” Gradually, however, the idea began to dawn upon them that they were not really reforming existing institutions, but rather cutting through tradition and the confusion generated by creeds to restore Christian doctrine and practice as it was in the days when the first century church operated under the guidance and inspiration of the apostles of Jesus. This restoration, called by later men *The Restoration Movement*, has been identified as taking place in four stages.

Restoration of the ancient name - With their western European heritage and denominational affiliations, most Americans in the early days of the republic called themselves by some sectarian name. There were Anglicans (changed to Episcopalian with the separation of America from England and the Church of England), Presbyterians, Methodist Episcopalians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and other smaller groups. As early as 1793 Methodist preachers in North Carolina by the names of Rice Haggard and James O’Kelly had concluded that the Biblical name for God’s people was “Christian” (*The Cause We Plead*, J.M. Powell; 20th Century Christian, 2809 Granny White Pike, Nashville, TN 37204; pp.29,30). In Kentucky Barton Stone, a Presbyterian minister, noted that in the inspired record that the combination of Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ were called “Christians” in Antioch, and that they were divinely

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called by this name. From 1803 on, Stone impressed upon thousands of people the importance of the name “Christian,” and persuaded them to drop sectarian or denominational appendages (*Ibid.*, pp.49-62.) The first phase, the restoration of the *ancient name*, was well under way.

Restoration of the ancient book - Written creeds were a part of Roman Catholicism. With a background steeped in the Nicean Creed, the “Apostles’ ” Creed, and others, it was natural for each of the Protestant denominations, as they were formed, to write their particular doctrines as creeds also. The Augsburg Confession became the basis for Lutheran beliefs, the Heidelberg Confession that of the continental Reformed churches, the Westminster Confession for the Reformed Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), and in America the Philadelphia Confession governed the Baptists. The practical effect was that the creeds themselves rather than the sacred writings guided each denomination, and the interpretations and opinions of men resulted in divisions among those who claimed to follow Christ. In 1807 a Presbyterian minister - Thomas Campbell, who had just come to the United States from Ireland - was censured for serving communion to members of the “wrong branch” of the Presbyterian Church. As he contemplated the action taken by the Presbytery, he withdrew from the group, and with others in 1809 formed “The Christian Association of Washington” in western Pennsylvania, later reorganized as the Brush Run Church. Campbell produced for the association the “Declaration and Address,” in which he developed his thesis on how those who claimed the name of Christ might be united. One of the key points was the concept that, “where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are silent” (*Ibid.*, pp.70, 71). As this concept was accepted in increasing degree by thousands, the creeds were swept away, and the authority of *the ancient book*, the Bible, and the Bible alone as the source of authority, was firmly established.

Restoration of the ancient order of things - With the establishment of the scripture as the sole authority, the next logical step was an examination of the fashion in which the church of the Bible was governed and in which it conducted itself. Thomas Campbell’s son, Alexander, was the man destined to lead the charge in this arena. A powerful preacher and debater, Alexander Campbell in 1823 began to publish a monthly magazine, *The Christian Baptist*, in which he called upon men to forsake all human elements in religion and to return to the Biblical order. There were, he maintained, sufficient and complete instructions in the pages of the New Testament for the functioning of the local congregations. Ecclesiastical orders and denominational traditions, where inconsistent with the word of God, needed to be set aside, and to be replaced by the divinely approved practices recorded in the writings of the new covenant. These practices he called the ancient order of things. “To bring the societies of Christians up to the New Testament, is just to bring the disciples, individually and collectively, to walk in the faith, and in the commandments of the Lord and Saviour, as presented in that blessed volume; and this is to restore the ancient order of things” (*The Christian Baptist*, Alexander Campbell; College Press, P.O. Box 1132, Joplin, MO 64801; p.128). “Now, in attempting to accomplish this, it must be observed, that it belongs to every individual, and to every congregation of individuals, to discard from their faith and their practice every thing that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Saviour; and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined” (*Ibid.*, p.133). “But to come to the things to be discarded, we observe that, in the

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ancient order of things, there were no creeds or compilations of doctrine in abstract terms, nor in any terms, other than the terms adopted by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Therefore, all such are to be discarded” (*Ibid.*, p.133). By this time many thousands were willing to follow these principles, and the third phase of the restoration moved with great power.

Restoration of the ancient gospel - America in the early 1800’s was strongly Protestant, with basic Calvinistic leanings. John Calvin - a French reformer based in Switzerland, and mentor of John Knox, the founder of the Presbyterian Church - believed in “unconditional election” and “irresistible grace.” These twin concepts essentially eliminate freedom of choice; if you are one of God’s “chosen,” you are one of the elect, and God’s “irresistible grace” will at some point overshadow you, the Holy Spirit will perform a “born again” operation on you, and only then you will be able to “repent and believe the gospel.” Thus, during the Great Awakening in America’s early history, Jonathan Edwards would preach his famous message, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” convicting men of their need for Christ; but, as a Calvinist, would close his message by essentially saying that there was nothing a person could do about his condition but pray and hope that God had somehow chosen to save him.

In 1827 an evangelist named Walter Scott was preaching on the Western Reserve for the Mahoning Baptist association. In his preaching he regularly encountered the dilemma regarding the response of his audience to the gospel. He would convict the people of their sins, and convince them of their need of redemption through Jesus Christ; but, in accordance with the custom of the time, most believed that there was essentially nothing they could do. This bothered Scott, because it seemed inconsistent with the call for action found in the preaching recorded in the New Testament. With the emphasis on the restoration of the “ancient order of things,” he decided to examine the beginning of the church recorded in Acts chapter 2, and to offer the invitation the way Peter offered it on the day of Pentecost, 30 AD. Thus, when he completed his discourse, instead of telling the audience that they had to wait for God to act, he told them, in the inspired words of the apostle Peter, to repent and be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). And people responded.

Alexander Campbell and others, through publications such as *The Christian Baptist*, had been establishing that men must be active rather than passive in seeking God’s grace. Consequently, when word spread that Walter Scott offered Peter’s invitation to the gospel, the scriptural connection between man’s responsibility, repentance, and the necessity of immersion for forgiveness of sins was immediately recognized. This cleared away the shackles of Calvinism, and made it possible for a man to know, with Biblical authority, exactly where he stood in relation to the Almighty God. This positive, clearly delineated response – repentance (or reformation) and immersion in Jesus’ name for remission of sins - to the preaching of the message of the cross was excitedly accepted by thousands of Americans who had been trained up in the word of God. The fourth phase, called the restoration of *the ancient gospel*, was now in place. Referring to the day when he first preached it in New Lisbon, Ohio, Walter Scott wrote: “... the church of God on that day, had restored to it, publicly and practically, the ancient gospel,

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and a manner of handling it, which ought never to have been lost by the servants of Jesus Christ' (Powell, *op. cit.*, p.155).

Restoration of the ancient power - We candidly submit to the reader that the movement to restore the first century church with the first century gospel has to some degree faltered and fizzled. We could bring out some growth statistics since, for example, World War II, and demonstrate fizzle within the U.S. Look at the so-called "middle branch" of the restoration, who list their membership or attendance in the Directory of the Ministry for Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. In a good year 5000 plus congregations will show a total increase of approximately 5000 people, for a good year growth rate of one person per congregation. If that is not close to fizzle, what is? We are suggesting that there has been a missing element in the restoration, and we are calling it *the ancient power*. We are not hinting at or indicating outward signs, such as "speaking in tongues" or "healings" or any other modern fabrications of those miraculous gifts which confirmed the spoken word in the first century. We are speaking of what the apostle Paul called "power through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).

Removing The Veil

In one of the great passages dealing with the law vs. the faith, the apostle Paul comments that he and others were made adequate as "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter [of the Law], but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (II Corinthians 3:6). This "ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones" (II Corinthians 3:7), "which was to result in life, proved to result in death" (Romans 7:10). The basic purpose of the law, in its practical application, is as a "tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Hence, in the preaching of the gospel of the glory of Christ, the hearer's face must be turned to the great stone wall of the law wherein his sins are written in detail, and he is convicted of his need for a Savior. "I would not have known sin," says the apostle, "except through the Law" (Romans 7:7). "But we know that the Law is good," he says in another place, "if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted" (I Timothy 1:8-11). The Law, as part of the proclamation of the gospel, is to condemn the unrighteous and rebellious.

But having established the spiritual death of the individual by turning his face into the Law, then what? The apostle Paul goes to great lengths to emphasize the glory of the Law in order to establish the superiority of what follows. Note these parallelisms:

- "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with

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glory?” (II Corinthians 3:7,8). That glory, shining in Moses’ face, with which the Law came, was so intense that Israel could not look at it; yet that was a paltry glory compared to what Paul called “the ministry of the Spirit.”

- “For if the ministry of condemnation [the Law] has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory” (II Corinthians 3:9).
- For indeed what had glory [the Law], in this case has no glory on account of the glory which surpasses it [the gospel]” (II Corinthians 3:10).
- “For if that which fades away [the Law] was with glory, much more that which remains [the gospel] is in glory” (II Corinthians 3:11)

It is clear that the Holy Spirit wants us to understand the greatness of what He calls “the ministry of righteousness” in the new covenant. The comparison is that the Law by itself is a bright light, but that glory fades into nothingness compared to the brightness of the gospel of the glory of Christ, which is, say, a million times or more brighter. The spiritual man will mark this as an important foundational point.

Having established the surpassing greatness of the gospel through a comparison of respective glories, the apostle uses another metaphor to further illustrate the superiority of the new covenant; he uses the veil which Moses used to put over his face. When Moses went into the tabernacle to speak to the Lord, “he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him” (Exodus 34:34,35). Moses had to put a veil over his face because his face shone with a fading glory. We in Christ have an un-veiled face; the conclusion is that our faces shine with an unfading glory.

- “Having therefore such a hope [hope for unfading glory], we use great boldness in our speech, and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away” (II Corinthians 3:12,13).
- “But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart...” (II Corinthians 3:14,15). The veil here is obviously a spiritual veil, a covering in the mind. Israel’s minds were hardened; they did not want to understand. Even at the time Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth, Israel was in rebellion - the veil lay over their heart. The old covenant spoke of Jesus, as Jesus Himself said when He walked in the flesh: “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:46,47). Until a person understands Christ, he does not understand what he reads in the old covenant.

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- “But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (II Corinthians 3:16). This is the key - to *turn to the Lord!* A man’s face is first turned to the Law, wherein his death sentence is read. He has been, by that Law, plunged into the blackness of despair; a veil lies over his heart. But if he will now turn to the Lord, the veil will be taken away, and his spiritual face will shine with an unfading glory. But what does it mean to turn to the Lord?
- “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (II Corinthians 3:17,18). The Lord is the Spirit, says the apostle Paul in this context, and those who turn to the Lord see the glory of the Lord.

It is worth pausing here to emphasize the meaning of the phrase *turn to the Lord*. There are millions today who use the expression “turn to the Lord” to mean something equivalent to “accept Jesus into your heart and be saved.” This is of course an unbiblical modern concept; to be saved by God you must “repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). It is important that Biblical terms be used with Biblical meaning; since the whole idea of “accepting Jesus into your heart” is an unbiblical precept, the phrase “turn to the Lord” cannot mean that.

To “turn to the Lord” means to see the Lord. It means not only to have seen Him in the flesh, and to have seen His bodily resurrection, but to “behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.” To “turn to the Lord” means to see with the spiritual eye, as revealed in the pages of God’s sacred word, the brightness of Jesus’ unapproachable light as the One ascended to the throne of David on high. Until a person turns to the Lord, the veil still lies over his heart, and he is in darkness.

Turning in Acts

When the apostle Paul appeared in his own defense before King Agrippa, he described his meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. Jesus said to the blinded Saul of Tarsus [as he was then known], “But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may *turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God*, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:16-18). In this version of the great commission to Paul, there are some significant considerations:

- Jesus was sending Paul to *open the eyes* of both the Jews and the Gentiles. The eyes he

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was to open were their spiritual eyes, or the eyes of their hearts.

- The goal was to *turn* them.
- They were to turn from darkness to light. This is consistent with the points we established earlier. God is light, and Jesus in glory is this light and dwells in this light. The sinner's face is first turned to the law, and the darkness of his condition is firmly established. Then, as the gospel of the glory of Christ is preached to him, and "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [is seen] in the face of Christ" (II Corinthians 4:6), the individual *turns to the Lord*; he turns from darkness to light.
- He turns from the dominion of Satan to God. Only Christ in glory can set us free from the captivity of Satan. "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34). Only in turning to the glorified Christ, "who is the image of God" (II Corinthians 4:4), do we turn from Satan's dominion to God.

But is "turning to the Lord" more precisely defined? Is there some mechanism or procedure involved in this turning? Is there more information? Consider this comparison of Acts 2:38, preached on the day of Pentecost at the beginning of the church, and Acts 3:19, preached not long after.

Acts2:38

Repent

Be immersed by Jesus' authority Return

For forgiveness of sins

You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

Acts3:19

Repent

[turn again]

That your sins may be wiped away

In order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord

The parallel is obvious - turning occurs in immersion. And just as immersion is for forgiveness of sins, turning is for forgiveness of sins. Note in Acts 3:19, "Repent, and *return [turn again]*, that your sins may be wiped away..." Again in Acts 26:18, "... to open their eyes so that they may *turn* from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, *in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins...*" Thus, in the inspired record, those who became Christians are spoken of as those who "when they heard were believing and being immersed" (Acts 18:8). Because turning to the Lord is for forgiveness of sins and occurs in immersion, those who were born again in the first century were described not only as immersed, they were in equivalent form referred to as those who turned to the Lord. For instance, in the city of Lydda, Peter healed a man who had been paralyzed eight years. "And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon *turned to the Lord*" (Acts 9:35). And in Antioch of Syria, men from Cyprus and Cyrene were preaching the Lord Jesus to the Greeks as well as the Jews. "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed *turned to the Lord*" (Acts 11:21).

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The Importance of Turning to the Lord

It is important to have verified that turning to the Lord occurs in immersion. No one has turned to the Lord in order that he may receive forgiveness of sins unless he has been immersed in Jesus' name for forgiveness of sins.

But the mere act of immersion for forgiveness of sins does not mean that the individual has turned to the Lord. The Holy Spirit used the expression "turn to the Lord" to ensure that a concept was communicated from the beginning to the believer in Christ. If that concept is not preached, a veil still lies over the heart of the immersed.

- When the gospel is preached, it must include Jesus' appearance to selected witnesses following His resurrection, and it must include His ascension to glory. The gospel which is going to turn a man to the Lord is called "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (II Corinthians 4:4).
- The preaching first turns the hearer's face into the law, which has as its ministry that of condemnation.
- In immersion, the hearer's face is to be turned from the law to the shining glory of the ascended Christ.
- If the hearer is not turned to the Lord, then the gospel is still veiled to him, and he is perishing (II Corinthians 3:16; 4:3).

There is a tendency among those who teach and preach the word of God to keep emphasizing the forgiveness of sins. This is particularly true when the assembly of the saints is used as the primary means of evangelizing the lost. But there is a huge long-term cost paid when this is the continuing emphasis to those who hear the word. When forgiveness of sins is the constant subject, that which defines sin must be greatly emphasized. And that which defines sin is the law. When the law is preached, the faces of the hearers are continually turned into the law. And what does the law do? It kills! The faces of the hearers must be turned to the radiance of the glorified Christ. In the words of Paul to the Philippians: "Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14).

The Effect Of Turning To The Lord

When the individual, in the Biblical sense, turns to the Lord, he with unveiled face beholds in the completed New Testament the glory of the Lord. It is significant that, in viewing the image of the glorified Christ, through that which the Holy Spirit provides, the Christian is

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transformed into the image of the glorified Christ, as Paul stated, “[We] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (II Corinthians 3:18).

The Old Testament type from which this illustration is drawn is the earlier - mentioned change in Moses’ face when the Lord descended in a cloud and spoke to him in the tabernacle. The question here is, “How much work could Moses do to make his face shine?” The answer, of course, is that Moses could never do enough work to change his face; it took an act of divine power to transform his countenance. In the same way, there is no amount of work we in our age can do to make our “spiritual faces” shine; it takes an act of divine power to transform our spiritual countenances.

Those changes and attempted changes which a person makes outside the transformation connected with beholding the Lord are the “dead works” of the Law (Hebrews 6:1). Those changes are humanly possible changes which affect the external performance of the individual. But the transformation which God recognizes is that which the Holy Spirit accomplishes when the Christian beholds the glory of the Lord. This continual refocus on the radiance of the risen Christ is what the apostle had in mind when he wrote, “And do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). Paul further emphasizes the point: “...you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who *is being renewed* to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Colossians 3:9,10). And he exhorts the community of saints in Ephesus that “in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you *be renewed in the spirit of your mind*, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Ephesians 4:22-24). There is no other mechanism for real, spiritual changes from the pages of God’s new and complete covenant.

If change can only occur through the process of beholding the glory of the Lord, the corollary in this case is that change is guaranteed if one beholds the Lord in glory. Since the Holy Spirit is the One who performs the divine transformation, and since this transformation is humanly impossible to accomplish, it follows that any individual - regardless of his present performance or condition - who will turn to the Lord in immersion is guaranteed to be transformed.

Repentance is not turning. Repentance is a mental decision preceding turning - a mental decision to change the mind, or to change the way of thinking. Biblical turning follows repentance and initially occurs in immersion. When the individual thus repents and then turns, he is guaranteed by the power of the Holy Spirit to be transformed, with noticeable change in behavior. As the apostle Paul indicated in his defense before King Agrippa: “Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should *repent and turn to God*, performing deeds appropriate to

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repentance” (Acts 26:19,20).

- As in Acts 3:19, repentance comes first, followed by turning to the Lord. It has been commonly taught that repentance is “the turning state,” but Biblical turning follows repentance, and occurs in immersion. In Acts 2:38, immersion for forgiveness of sins follows repentance. While repentance and immersion are part of the same package, they are separate and distinct concepts, and each must be considered, understood, and acted upon by the follower of Christ. In Acts 26, turning to the Lord for forgiveness of sins follows repentance. While repentance and turning to the Lord are part of the same package, they are separate and distinct concepts, and each must be considered, understood, and acted upon by the follower of Christ.
- Since repentance is not the actual turning, it must be understood as the mental decision to change preceding turning. Repentance is the decision to “set the mind on the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5-8).
- Every time God’s plan of salvation is presented, immersion by Jesus’ authority must be presented (this is not to exclude the necessity of belief from the heart, repentance, or the confession that Jesus is Lord). Without immersion, there simply is no forgiveness of sins.
- Every time God’s plan of salvation is presented, *turning to the Lord* must be presented. Without turning, there simply is no forgiveness of sins - the veil still lies over the heart of the individual.
- If an individual repents and turns to the Lord, deeds appropriate to repentance are guaranteed to follow. We have established earlier that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, anyone who beholds the glory of the Lord will be transformed into the likeness of that same glory. When any step forward in this transformation occurs, the character of the individual improves, and his performance more closely matches his image as a child of light. And “the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ephesians 5:9). But what is this but performing deeds appropriate to repentance!

The effect of turning to the Lord is that the Christian will now perform deeds appropriate to repentance. It is important to remember the comparison of the change in Moses’ face (when he saw the passing glory of the Lord) to the change in the Christian when he sees the glory of God in the face of Christ. There was no amount of work Moses could do to make his face shine; the Lord had to accomplish that. But Moses had to look at the glory of the Lord; otherwise his face would not have been changed. Today, when the child of God meets the Lord in the tabernacle (and he turns to the Lord), and the Lord speaks to him face to face through the written word, his spiritual countenance is guaranteed to change. There is no amount of work he could do to accomplish this transformation; the Lord must accomplish that. But we all, with unveiled face, must behold the glory of the Lord; otherwise there will be no transformation. Our responsibility

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is to look. The effect of our turning will be that God will carry out His responsibility and accomplish super-human transformation in us. “Whoever will” may come!

Faith vs. Law in Accomplishing Change

“For what the Law could not do,” said Paul, “weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3,4). The scripture always comes back to a basic point: the Law could not bring about righteousness in the sons of men. But God sent His Son in the likeness of flesh and for sin in the first phase of Christ to condemn sin in the flesh; by being bodily resurrected, and ascending to glory, the Son could then send the Spirit. And it is the Spirit of Christ who produces those who fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law.

Any discussion in scripture regarding law as a means of producing righteousness and life always lists the law as a failure, and attributes success to the Spirit. Hence, in speaking of turning to the Lord, Paul notes that our transformation into the image of the glorified Christ comes from the Lord, the Spirit (II Corinthians 3:18). And the work of the Spirit is connected with the faith that is in Christ Jesus, as contrasted to the works of the Law. Paul, then, would put the issue right into the faces of the congregations of Galatia.

- “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you *receive the Spirit* by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:1,2). Those who would not make the connection between faith and the Spirit, in juxtaposition to the Law, were said to be bewitched.
- “Are you so foolish? Having *begun by the Spirit*, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). Those who would try to be perfected by the Law working in the flesh were said to be foolish in this rhetorical question.
- “Did you suffer so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who *provides you with the Spirit* and works miracles among you, do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:4,5). Again the apostle emphasizes that the Spirit was given by hearing with faith rather than by works of the Law.
- It is important to note that Biblical faith includes immersion. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were *immersed into Christ* have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26,27). A person becomes a son of God by being immersed into Christ; when he is clothed with Christ, he then looks like Christ, the Son of God. This is how we become sons of God through faith. This is why receiving

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the indwelling Spirit in Galatians is coupled with faith, and with immersion in Acts 2:38: “Repent, and let each of you *be immersed* in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall *receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*”. This is also why Biblical faith can refer to receiving the Spirit in the obedience of faith as contrasted to works of the Law. “And we are witnesses of these things,” said Peter, “and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who *obey Him*” (Acts 5:32).

Recognizing that the Spirit is the One who accomplishes the superhuman changes in our lives, and recognizing that the Spirit is given in accordance with faith rather than in accordance with Law, we readily understand that faith is vastly superior to Law. But, then, what is faith? There are those who tend to consider “the faith” as simply a substitution of one set of rules for another - a “New Testament Law” as contrasted to an “Old Testament Law.” The Law, of course, has as its ministry condemnation. The mere substitution of one set of rules for another does not set aside the principle that Law produces death. What is necessary is to understand “the new and living way” which Jesus inaugurated for us, the way of faith.

Faith, in simple terms, is a picture; faith is a picture held in the mind until it becomes reality. Thus it is that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The Bible records the exploits of men and women of faith; in each case the individual of faith had a mental picture - a vision - which he maintained through many difficulties until he achieved his goal as far as he could in this earthly life. Three individuals stand out as illustrations of men of faith, each of which was given a picture from God. Each held this picture faithfully ‘til death, and thus serve as examples for us, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

- **Noah** - “By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7). What Noah had was a picture, a picture given to him by God by which his deliverance would be accomplished. In Noah’s case the picture implanted in his mind was that of a wooden boat 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high, with three decks (Genesis 6:4-6). Note that at the beginning the ark did not physically exist; it merely existed as reality in Noah’s mind. But, even though it existed at that point only in Noah’s mind, the construction of the ark was a “sure thing”. If Noah did not waver in his conviction, the ark - because of God’s backing - was going to be built. Thus, in Noah’s case, his picture (his faith) was the *assurance* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen.
- **Moses** - According to Stephen, “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in word and deed. But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was

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granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand” (Acts 7:22-25). Moses had a vision of being the deliverer of his people forty years before he began that great task. We do not have the details as to how Moses acquired this picture, but we know that God worked with him in the salvation of Israel. “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them” (Hebrews 11:24-28). Even though the release of Israel at first existed only in Moses’ mind, the crossing of the Red Sea and passing through the wilderness was a “sure thing.” If Moses did not waver in his conviction, Israel - because of God’s backing - was going to be delivered and safely brought to the promised land. Thus, in Moses’ case, his picture - his faith - was the *assurance* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen.

- **Abraham** - “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3). What was it that Abraham believed? God had promised Abraham a son, Isaac, through whom the other promises would come. Specifically, God had set forth the picture that Abraham would be the father of many nations through Isaac, and that his descendants would be numberless as the sand of the seashore. Thus, because Abraham believed this picture, and held this picture, he is the father of all who have faith. He is “the father of us all (as it is written, ‘A father of many nations have I made you,’) in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead, and calls into being that which does not exist. In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being *fully assured* that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:16-22). Abraham believed that God was able to make him a father of many nations through Isaac, even though at one point God requested Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah. He was fully assured - it was a “sure thing” - that what God had promised, God was able to perform. “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your descendants shall be called.’ He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type” (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham held his picture under the most difficult of circumstances. “In hope against hope he believed.” And the promise to Abraham that he would be a father of many nations was never realized in his lifetime; it took the coming of the Gentiles into the church of the living God for this promise to begin to be fulfilled. As the great example of faith, “he is the father of us all.” Thus, in

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Abraham's case, his picture - his faith - was the *assurance* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen.

The question for us is: what is the picture we have been given? God did not implant in our minds the picture of an ark as he did for Noah. He has not set forth for us a vision of delivering Israel from Egypt as He did for Moses. He has not offered us the promise of being the father of many nations, as He did for Abraham. Each of these men was justified by faith; even though each was given a different picture by God, the common denominator was that each was given a picture and that each carried that picture through, with God's help, to fruition. Each believed God, and it was reckoned to each as righteousness. For us to be justified by faith, then, we must believe God when He has told us to hold in our minds the picture of the glorified Christ as revealed in the pages of God's word. Faith, indeed, "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

- We hear about the death, burial, resurrection, appearance and ascension of Christ in the scripture. This "word of Christ" is the testimony borne at the proper time, verified by all the appropriate witnesses, both earthly and heavenly.
- Our faith begins to take shape when we believe the testimony God has borne concerning His Son. As we have shared earlier, the Holy Spirit in succession paints for us a picture of Christ in the flesh, His bodily resurrection, and ultimately Christ in glory.
- Having set this picture of the glorified Christ before us, God in effect says, "This is you." In His infinite wisdom, God walks us through each of the steps with Christ. We are first children of flesh, as He was flesh. As He was crucified, so we are crucified with Him; as He was buried, so we are buried with Him in immersion; as He was raised, so we too are raised to walk in newness of life; as He appeared following His resurrection, so we too are to appear as lights in the world; as He ascended to glory to take His seat on the throne, so we too are raised with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places.
- As Noah, Moses, and Abraham were each given a picture by God, so we also are given a picture. Noah was given the image of the ark; he maintained that image until the ark was completed, and thus was saved by his faith. Moses held in his mind the concept that he would be the deliverer of Israel from Egypt until it came to fruition, and thus he was saved by his faith. Abraham believed God that he would be a father of many nations, and was saved because he kept that picture before himself without wavering, and was justified by his faith. Each of us has, by the word of Christ, been given a picture of ourselves as bearing the image of the glorified Christ, and we shall be saved by maintaining this image without wavering.
- This image of Christ in glory is faith. For us this is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). By holding this image continually before us, we are transformed as we walk by faith, live by faith, and are justified by faith.

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Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Knowing that faith is a picture - particularly *this* picture - unlocks the door of understanding to the great truths exhibited in Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Law, even that given on Mt. Sinai, cannot impart life. Decrees, even "New Testament decrees," have the appearance of wisdom in self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. Children of God are exhorted "to lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Change in performance is produced by change in image, which law is powerless to accomplish. But divinely powered change is fired by faith - the image of Christ in glory - and sustained by that which the Spirit of Jesus supplies. No law, even God's, can compete with faith; it has no glory in comparison. Those bound by law will, in spite of good intentions, continue to evidence deeds of the flesh. Only those of faith can produce fruit of the Spirit.

This intimate connection between faith and the Spirit of God is consistently sustained throughout the words of the new covenant. "For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (Galatians 5:5). "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if *by the Spirit* you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:12,13). To live by faith, then, is to set the mind on the things of the Spirit of God, the Spirit-inspired image of Christ. "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:5-8).

Power In The Inner Man

Faith is a word which tends to be nebulous. And when words or concepts are nebulous, they have no more power in our lives than if they had no meaning. For this reason, the Spirit of God has written a whole book on the subject of faith, presenting accurate accounts of men who held powerful pictures continually before their minds, and who thus "conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight" (Hebrews 11:33,34). These often seemingly impossible feats are presented to us, so that we, children of God through the words of the new covenant, might be able to believe in the "ultimate picture," the glory of the ascended Christ.

Once again, note the contents of II Corinthians 3:17,18: "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a

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mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” The Spirit, who is the Lord, transforms us into the image of Jesus on the throne when we behold His glory in the mirror of the completed word of God. This faith, which has come through the “word of Christ,” is generated by the Spirit, and our transformation into His likeness is accomplished by the same Spirit. The Holy Spirit is thus intimately connected with our faith.

The apostle Paul prays “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:17-20).

- The spirit of wisdom and revelation for us is what is written in the pages of God’s word. The true knowledge of everything there is to know this side of our resurrections on the last day has been made available to us, confirmed by signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit to those who spoke and wrote in the first century.
- The eyes of our hearts are enlightened when we see the glory of the risen Christ, who is light.
- The hope of His calling is our own resurrection from the dead, and the transformation of the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory (Philippians 3:20,21).
- The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints also has to do with our resurrections, when this mortal shall put on immortality. The spiritual body, raised at the last trumpet, can share in the great blessings of the glory of this inheritance, delayed so long as some brethren must still carry the natural body with them.
- The surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe is demonstrated by God’s raising Jesus from the dead and seating Him at His right hand, with all the attendant description of just how exalted that position is.

The power of God is briefly mentioned here in the opening portion of the letter to the Ephesian Christians. But this is the power which we need to function effectively in the great challenges before us, and which we need to see with the spiritual eye. There are, then, some aspects of this power which are worthy of more detailed attention:

- God’s power in the Old Testament was defined by the creation. “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Psalm 19:1).

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Therefore the Lord is continually exalted in the pages of the Old Covenant record as the One who created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. Even the Sabbath day, the sign between God and Israel, was a commemoration of God's creative power.

- God's creative power is significant. God's handiwork of the fourth day, when He created the sun, moon, and stars, is awesome. If we thoughtfully consider the tremendous energy radiating from the sun every second, and remember that there are billions more stars radiating equal or more energy, and that this has been going on since creation, we begin to have an inkling of the power God exerted in the six days of creation.
- The power of God exerted in the beginning only brought into existence that which is temporary. But when Jesus was raised from the dead and seated in glory, that which was permanent - a kingdom which cannot be shaken - came into being. Just as more power and effort was required to establish the permanent house of God in Jerusalem under Solomon than was required to erect the tabernacle (the temporary) under Moses, just so more power was required in raising Jesus from the dead than was exerted in the creation.
- Thus, while glory is ascribed in the Old Testament to God as the Creator, His Majesty in the New Testament is described as the One who raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him on the throne. Here, for example, is how Paul opens his letter to the churches in Galatia: "Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)" (Galatians 1:1).
- While the Sabbath was a commemoration of creation, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is held on the first day of the week, the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. Not only is the death of Christ remembered in the loaf and the cup, but His resurrection and ascension are implicit in the words, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26). The first day of the week remembrance is a recognition of the power God exerted in bringing into existence the permanent creation in comparison to the Sabbath remembrance of the temporary. The thrust of the New Testament is not centered on the death of Christ, but on what follows: "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34).
- The same power God exerted when He raised Jesus from the dead is exerted in bringing us into existence as new creations at our immersions. "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11,12). Each child of light is therefore spoken of as

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“created in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:10). This creative power is not visible to the physical eye. It is visible only to the spiritual eye; and that is what that “faith in the working of God is,” seeing with the eyes of the heart. In immersion the individual has faith in the non-visible working of God.

- This power continues to operate in the life of the Christian, sustaining him and transforming him. For this reason the apostle Paul prayed, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe” (Ephesians 1:18-19).
- The evidences of God’s power exerted at creation are evident to the physical or natural man; this is why he is without excuse (Romans 1:18-20). But in connection with Jesus’ death, resurrection, and especially His ascension, there are no evidences left behind for man to apprehend by his physical senses. There were multitudes who did actually see Jesus die on the cross, but they are all gone. There were a few, comparatively speaking, who saw Jesus after His resurrection; these too are gone. But there was no one who, with his physical eye, saw Jesus in radiant glory take His seat on the throne. This ascension of Jesus was revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit, who saw it with their spiritual eyes - this is John’s meaning when he commented, “And we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth,” (John 1:14); and of Peter and the other apostles before the Sanhedrin, “We are witnesses of these things [Jesus’ exaltation to the right hand of God as a Prince and a Savior]” (Acts 5:32). These things are now visible to us also by the spiritual eye, by faith, by what is revealed in the written word.
- The power of God which operates in bringing forth a new creature out of the waters of immersion and which continues to operate in sustaining him likewise is not visible to the natural eye. This world did not recognize the spirituality of the Son of God when He dwelt among us; this world will not recognize the power of God at work in producing the character of God in children of light either.
- This power of God is not visible to the fleshly-minded Christian. People are blind to that which they cannot see. When a veil still lies over their heart, they cannot see the transforming effect of the glory of the Lord on a spiritually-minded Christian, and they are often even hostile to the attitude, teaching, or preaching of one following the upward call of God. “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is *hostile toward God*; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:5-8).

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- The child of light sees the spiritual power of God exerted in raising Christ from the dead and seating Christ on the throne of glory. The eyes of his heart have been enlightened, and he truly looks upon that which is spiritual and eternal. “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:18).

The power of God, the working of the strength of His might, is visible to the eye of him who has an unveiled face. This spiritual power, exhibited in the inner man, is the subject of the apostle Paul’s earnest prayer: “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:14-16). Again, note that the Holy Spirit is the prime agent in this power in the inner man.

A Divinely Powered Army

But what is the purpose of this power? What is the reason for being transformed into the likeness of the glory of God? Speaking of the dry bones’ coming to life, Ezekiel prophetically looks to our immersions into the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. “So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army” (Ezekiel 37:10). This army, standing on its feet, marches and conquers (as might be expected) through the strength of the Spirit of God. “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.” Therefore prophesy, and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. And *I will put My Spirit within you*, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it,’ ” ’ declares the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:11-14). In the great spiritual battle looming on the horizon, God needs a truly spiritual, divinely powered army to accomplish His purpose. God needs an army of spiritual men, each of whom can say with the apostle Paul, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (II Corinthians 10:3-5).

Each of us, as individuals, is involved in this great spiritual struggle - waged on every imaginable front - for the souls of men. And if we choose to fight this war as mere men, as men of the flesh and men in the flesh, we shall lose. Our adversary, the serpent of old, is capable of winning over a man who fights in the flesh. Satan, in fact, is capable of winning a battle were all men of all ages to collectively rise against him. Only the spiritual power exhibited in raising

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Jesus from the dead and seating Him at the right hand of the Majesty on high is capable of defeating the prince of darkness. The Spirit of God has communicated to us that this same spiritual power is operative toward those who are being transformed into the image of Christ (Ephesians 1:18-21).

But it is not God's intention that there be only one individual who has his eyes enlightened. It is the Father's intention that there should be an army of such individuals who exhibit the fullness of the character of Christ. It is therefore written, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the *fulness of Him* who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22,23). This army, the body of Christ, is the resurrected host prophesied by Ezekiel, as he refers to those who have been buried with Christ in immersion and who have come out of this watery grave in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection, and thus filled with the Holy Spirit. These spiritual troops are the only ones, by God's grace and power, able to win the victories in the great spiritual war against the forces of darkness.

The battle indeed belongs to the Lord. It is not by might, nor by man's power, but by God's Spirit. And here is how He is going to accomplish His great victory through those who believe and know the truth: "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20,21). This power works in those who understand what it means to turn to the Lord in immersion, and to hold by faith the image of the glorified Christ ever in the forefronts of their minds. God, yes, is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, but we must ask and think. And when we do, there will indeed be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever!

Exhortation

The "inside of the cup" cannot be cleansed by any human means or contrivance, nor can the individual be transformed (as God speaks of transformation) by any system of law. The cleansing techniques of psychology are somewhat akin to putting a band-aid over an open cancer. And even God's law, in the words of the apostle Paul, is a "ministry of death." So when men try to effect real change in themselves or help others to be transformed by any means other than turning to the Lord, they are engaged in activities which have the appearance of wisdom, but have no value against fleshly indulgence.

The purpose of the law is to bring, forcibly, the human being to a recognition of his failure to attain to the glory of God. Once the ministry of condemnation has done its job, the function of the gospel of glory is to turn the individual from darkness to light. This turning, as it is defined in the word of God, occurs in immersion, following repentance. Repentance is not turning, and a person cannot turn to God apart from immersion for the remission of his sins.

One of the modern dangers is that it is possible for a person to be "immersed for remission

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of sins” without really turning to the Lord. The gospel is not simply the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; it also includes a particular emphasis on His ascension to glory. The individual’s attention, through what scripture calls “the gospel of the glory of Christ”, must be turned from the Law, which had no glory in comparison, to the glory of the ascended Lord. If a person is immersed but still has his focus on the Law, a veil lies over his heart and he has not turned to the Lord.

The image of Christ glorified is the picture which has been given by God to His disciples, and is the basic element of the faith which saves, sustains, and transforms the believer. These principles were taught and preached from the very beginnings of the church as recorded in Acts 2 and 3, and verified in the epistles; and they must be inculcated today by any individual making a claim to restoring first century Christianity.

It is important to note that the transformation connected with seeing the glory of the Lord is a result of God’s power, and beyond the pale of mere human mechanisms. It is exciting to understand, then, that this alteration of character is guaranteed to occur for anyone who will look intently into the glory of God as seen in the face of Christ.

God will have an army of truly resurrected new creatures to stand with Him in the coming days. Become one yourself. Then preach to others and teach others what it means to turn to the Lord, and let us together restore the ancient power. God is “able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen!”

Summary

- The Protestant Reformation was fueled by the distribution of the Bible in the language of the people. The desire of people to follow the Bible as they understood it resulted in an exodus of such individuals to the British Colonies of America.
- The freedom of religion in America, following the Revolutionary War, allowed for a return to what was called “the ancient order of things,” meaning a return to the teaching and practices of the church as recorded in scripture in the first century. The restoration took place in four stages:
 - * A restoration of the ancient name: the return to the usage of *Christian* rather than a denominational appendage to describe God’s people.
 - * A restoration of the ancient book: the discarding of manmade creeds as authoritative documents, and a return to using the Bible as the sole source of inspiration and authority.

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- * A restoration of the ancient order: a recognition that all the elements necessary for the formation and functioning of the local congregation are found in the pages of the New Testament; and that the leadership of the local congregation is subject directly to Jesus as the Head of the church, with no man-made substitutes standing between.
- * A restoration of the ancient gospel: a recognition that man must be active in pursuing his salvation, and that forgiveness of sins is granted at immersion in water in Jesus' name as declared by the apostle Peter in the first proclamation of the gospel.
- We propose a fifth point in restoration, a *restoration of the ancient power* of the Spirit in the inner man through an understanding of the Biblical concept of turning to the Lord.
- The transforming power of the gospel of glory is the glory of God seen by the spiritual eye in the face of Christ. But if a man has not turned to the Lord, a veil lies over his heart, and he cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.
- Turning to the Lord is accomplished only as a repentant believer is immersed into Christ, as defined by its usage in the book of Acts and the epistles.
- A person may be immersed, but still have his attention fixed on law and forgiveness of sins. Such a person has not turned to the Lord.
- When the individual turns to God and beholds the face of Christ, by the supernatural power the Holy Spirit supplies he is transformed into the likeness of that image.
- New Testament faith is maintaining in the forefront of our minds the image of the glorified Christ as revealed in scripture.
- Real change as contemplated by God can only be accomplished through this faith. The Law, and the dead "good works" produced by the Law, never produce the change in the inner man contemplated by God. Only the Spirit-inspired image of the glorified Christ, in conjunction with what the Spirit Himself accomplishes in the inner man, can produce those who are partakers of the divine nature.
- Though the power of God in the inner man is not visible, the awesome display of His might evidenced in the Creation points to that greater display of spiritual power which cannot be seen. This is the power which God exerted when He raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His right hand, and this is the same power which God exercises when He creates the individual anew in his immersion into Christ, and which He continues to exert on behalf of the child of God.

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- God, through the transformation which occurs when an individual turns to the Lord, is raising up an army of such transformed, divinely powered citizens of the kingdom. These spiritual troops are the only ones, by God's grace and power, who are able to win the victories in the great spiritual war against the forces of darkness.

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Chapter 4- Getting to the Inside of the Cup

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

First the Natural, then the Spiritual

God is Spirit, and in the realm of His habitation, there is nothing physical. “The God who made the world and all things in it,” explained Paul to the frequenters of the idol temples of ancient Athens, “since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). Thus the word of God speaks of “the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (Hebrews 8:2), and of Christ entering “through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation” (Hebrews 9:11).

Man, by contrast, is physical, although he is also a spirit being formed initially in the image of God. In the words of Paul, “I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin” (Romans 7:14). “Now I say this, brethren,” said the apostle in another place, “that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (I Corinthians 15:50). That which is flesh cannot pass through the impenetrable barrier to the spiritual realm of God.

But it is God’s desire that man be moved from the flesh to the Spirit; it is His desire to produce a people for His own possession, who can see His face and live. “And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it [the New Jerusalem], and His bond-servants shall serve Him, and *they shall see His face*, and His name shall be on their foreheads” (Revelation 22:3,4). To produce such a people, even the Almighty has had to move slowly and patiently, working with the human race as a whole, developing it in stages through the millennia. At first man was in a short-lived state of innocence. Following his exit from the Garden of Eden, man was essentially pitted against his conscience and the principles built in by the Spirit of God. But as the race continued its descent into darkness, God said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh” (Genesis 6:3). With the Flood and its extinction of a race permeated with violence, God instituted a fresh beginning. This time the Gentile world carried with it not only a conscience, but also a deeply impressed memory of the Flood and its wrath wreaked upon sinful men. Furthermore, the All Wise began to develop the nation Israel, and step-by-step implemented the Law and the foundation for Christianity. Thus, before “the faith” came, Jews and Gentiles alike were declared to be “in bondage under the elemental things of the world” (Galatians 4:3). But when the race was sufficiently prepared, the political and linguistic elements in place, and the dispersed condition of the Jew just right, God moved. “But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman [for the Gentiles], born under the Law [for the Jews]” (Galatians 4:4). “But before faith came,” explained Paul, particularly looking to those of Jewish background, “we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed” (Galatians 3:23).

So God has functioned in a step-by-step fashion to upgrade man, to carry his thinking upward, to move him from the physical to the spiritual. “The first man,” stated Paul of Adam,

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“is from the earth, earthy” (I Corinthians 15:47). And all his descendants, “every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26), bear “the image of the earthy” (I Corinthians 15:49). The visage of Adam is not merely stamped on our faces; the weaknesses of his character have passed on from generation to generation. “As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy” (I Corinthians 15:48). Through Christ, however, the Father has intervened. While the first man was from earth, Christ “the second man is from heaven” (I Corinthians 15:47). So while those born of the flesh bear the impress of Adam, those who have turned to the Lord in glory are transformed into His image. “And as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (I Corinthians 15:48,49). “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam, Christ, became “a life-giving Spirit” (I Corinthians 15:45).

In this grand process of upgrading man, in this awe-inspiring record of God’s patient dealing with man, from Adam through Christ the Spirit, the great principle is laid down: “However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual” (I Corinthians 15:46). The grand design of the Father of the spirits of all flesh is to produce a people who are willing and capable of offering Him the worship He desires and deserves, a spiritual people for His own possession, a spiritual people who can indeed see His face, and live forever.

Worship through the Centuries

Importance of Worship

Worship of God, then, is the grand, imposing topic of the scripture in terms of man’s response to God. The great commandment of loving the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind fits underneath the heading of worship. The new commandment of loving one another as Christ loved us fits underneath this heading of worship. The goal of the Most High is to seek and prepare for Himself a people who will “worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). The subject of *worship*, therefore, is not a merely interesting intellectual side-note in the Bible. It is critical that everyone making a claim to being a child of God understand *worship*, as the Lord Himself said, “The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers” (John 4:23). To be a true worshiper, the individual must first understand what true worship is, according to God’s definition. Let us follow the steps of God as He works through the ages, following His principle of “first the natural, then the spiritual.”

In Abraham’s Day

The English word *worship* in the New Testament is generally translated from the Greek word *proskuneo*. Alexander the Great, for example, when he had fully conquered Persia and had installed himself as emperor, began to require *proskinesis*, the physical act of prostration at the feet of the king. His loyal Macedonian troops, however, nearly mutinied before he finally

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abandoned the practice because they felt *proskinesis* was such an act of obeisance that it should be reserved for “the gods” alone. While at this point we are simply looking at the Greek term, it gives us a clear physical picture of what it would be like to flatten ourselves on the ground at the feet of King Jesus, who is in fact worthy of such expression of honor and homage. *Proskuneo* and its derivatives carry the basic idea of physical prostration before the Mighty One, the King of Israel.

Thus it was that the magi from the East, having followed the star from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, came into the house where Jesus was (not at the manger, where He was born at least a month earlier), and they fell down and worshiped Him. Here they carried out, in the use of the word *worship*, the physical act of prostration before the King.

Similarly, in the book of Revelation of John the apostle, *worship* is used in the physical expressions describing the spiritual events which he saw “in the Spirit.” One of the pictures is that of the twenty-four elders prostrating themselves “before Him who sits on the throne,” and who “worship Him who lives forever and ever” (Revelation 4:9). And in another parallel usage of the physical prostration in Revelation, John still “in the Spirit” tries to worship the angel. “And when I heard and saw,” John writes, “I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God.’” (Revelation 22:8,9).

God begins with the physical, and moves progressively to the spiritual. Hence the worship of the patriarchs was the basic meaning of *proskuneo*, the physical obeisance to God. “By faith,” explained the author of Hebrews, “Jacob, as he was dying, blessed the sons of Joseph, and *worshiped*, leaning on the top of his staff” (Hebrews 11:21). Jacob, an old man, bowed before God as best he could, bracing himself with his staff; his worship was his physical prostration before God.

Under the Mosaic Law

With the giving of the Law of Moses at Sinai, the Father began the next step in upgrading the meaning of worship. But, before we examine this next phase in detail, let us consider the way God through the centuries worked with another important concept to impress upon the mind of man the importance of the spiritual over the physical.

Working with the idea of *salvation*, God began with the physical. Thus it was that salvation, or redemption, or deliverance was initially conceptualized as being victorious over or set free from an enemy. With Pharaoh’s chariots thundering down on a frightened Israel from the rear, and with the barrier of the Red Sea before, as Moses prepared to stretch forth his rod over the Sea and part the waters, he said to the nation, “Stand by and see the *salvation* of the Lord” (Exodus 14:13). The Lord caused confusion among the chariots; Israel was safely delivered to the other

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side; and the Egyptians were drowned in the Sea. Note that this was a *physical deliverance*, or *salvation*. Consequently, when Israel read of a Savior riding on a donkey's colt in the prophecies of Zechariah, they expected a Deliverer who would free them from Roman oppression.

But it was not to be. The incarnation of God was indeed given the name *Jesus*, "Yahweh saves," but not because He was to deliver Israel from the hands of its physical enemies; He had a much greater salvation in mind. "It is He who will save His people from their sins," declared the angel to Joseph (Matthew 1:21). Hence it is that Christians are spoken of as the redeemed, the saved, or the delivered because they are spiritually set free from Satan's snare. God began with the physical concept of salvation, and by working with Israel through the scripture, He eventually gave it a higher order, more spiritual meaning.

He used the same technique with *worship*. With the coming of the Law, worship was moved from the physical homage of Abraham's day to the participation of the people in the festivities of the feast days, first at the tabernacle, and later at the temple in Jerusalem. "Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to me," said the Lord. "You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread ... Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest... also the Feast of Ingathering... Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God" (Exodus 23:15-17). This appearance of the people before the Lord, eventually at the temple in Jerusalem, was the *worship* of Israel in its next upgraded sense.

As the writings of the New Testament describe the activity of first century Jews, some significant points concerning Old Testament worship stand out. Jerusalem was the only place where this worship took place. At the last Passover for Jesus on earth, the apostle John records, "Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast" (John 12:20). These were all going up to the temple in Jerusalem. Again, the Ethiopian eunuch "had come to Jerusalem to worship" (Acts 8:27). And Paul, speaking of himself from a Jewish perspective, describes how in coming to bring alms to his nation, to present offerings, and to be purified, "I went up to Jerusalem to worship" (Acts 24:11). Thus, in John 4, as Jesus discussed worship with the Samaritan woman, whose ancestors had worshiped for centuries at the false temple on Mt. Gerizim near Sychar, He explained, "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). In answering this way, the Lord verified a portion of her query: "You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20).

Jerusalem was the only place where the Jew could worship God from the time that He established it as the place where He made His name to dwell; furthermore that worship specifically took place in connection with the ceremonies at the temple. While each man of Israel could physically prostrate himself before the Lord any time in any place, the upgraded and more spiritual concept of worship was the singing of the Psalms of Ascent and participation in the activities of the temple on the feast days.

One other significant note: the assembling of the people in the synagogues on the Sabbath

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following the Babylonian captivity was not worship; worship took place only in the temple during feast weeks. Hence the New Testament writers never use the expression *worship* to describe the synagogue. The meeting is styled as for “the reading of the Law and the Prophets” (Acts 13:15).

Under the New Covenant

While the writings of the New Testament have little to say about worship, what is taught is of emphatically signal importance. Jesus Himself introduced the spiritual upgrading of worship from the participation of the people in feast week ceremonies at the temple in His discussion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. Her query, as previously alluded to, was in regard to the Samaritan practice of worshipping God at their false temple on Mt. Gerizim as contrasted to the Jewish claim that men ought to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. “Woman, believe Me,” He said, “an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father” (John 4:21). What kind of worship would there be in the hour that “is coming,” since it would neither be in Gerizim nor in Jerusalem? Would the location of worship simply change? Or would just the time change, or some combination of the two? Jesus answers with eternally important words: “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23,24).

Jesus here uses an expression occurring several times in John’s gospel account: “An hour is coming, and now is ...” This is His way of speaking of the onrushing new covenant, which was just about to sweep away the old. Looking beyond the cross to the church age, the Lord upgrades *worship* from its Mosaic covenant concept. No longer would worship occur at the temple “in Jerusalem;” worship would be “in spirit” and in “truth.”

We need to pause here, and let the significance of these words “sink into our ears.” What does the expression “in spirit and truth” mean? Perhaps we can best begin to illuminate this by asking, “When is a Christian not to be ‘in spirit’?” The answer is obvious that a son of God is to be “in spirit” at all times. Similarly, “When is a Christian not to be ‘in truth’?” Again the answer is obvious: those who are truly redeemed are to be “in truth” at all times.

Worship under the New Covenant has been driven inward, “in spirit.” Those under Moses worshiped at the temple; the body of a Christian “is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you” (I Corinthians 6:19). Hence it is that the worshiper of God, “in spirit and truth,” as one of the people of God, perpetually spiritually prostrates himself before the spiritual throne of God, in spiritual obeisance to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

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Serving God

Service of the Priests

Paralleling worship of God is service to God. Service is connected with the offering of sacrifices to God, and is described by the Greek word *latreuo* and its derivatives. Because *worship* and *service* are so inter-twined, commentators and occasionally translators confuse the two. But there is considerable distinction between them, and understanding the meaning of *service* is of major significance in trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

The writer of Hebrews, in describing the Old Testament tabernacle, to show the superiority of Christ's priesthood over those descended from Aaron, offers this commentary: "Now when these things had been prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services" (Hebrews 9:6, NKJV). These *services* were the activities of the priests, not the people; the people could not enter the tabernacle, and were not permitted to present offerings to the Lord under the law of Moses. The writer of Hebrews continues, speaking of the Old Testament tabernacle and its replacement, the temple: "It was symbolic for the present time, in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the *service* perfect in regard to the conscience - concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:9,10, NKJV). The Old Testament priesthood was a physical priesthood, offering physical sacrifices at a physical house of God; they served God physically. And thus it was - from the firstlings of Abel's flock, to the sacrifices of Noah after the Flood, to the offering of Isaac by Abraham, to the burnt offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, grain offerings, and libations by the Aaronic priesthood - men served God by what was offered up at their physical altars.

In the Gentile world, the men of the nations were permitted to serve God by their offerings. But in Israel only the priest could offer sacrifice. In Israel, then, the people *worshipped*, while the priests *served*. Thus Israel collectively worshiped and served the Lord of hosts, while the Gentiles, in their descent into pagan idolatry, in parallel fashion "worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (Romans 1:25).

New Covenant Service

The short, but powerful, panorama exhibited in the death of Christ, His subsequent resurrection from the dead, and ascension to glory marked the transition from the physical to the spiritual. Of Christ, it was noted that "as a High Priest of the good things to come," He offered "His own blood" in the true tabernacle (Hebrews 9:11,12). The blood He offered, however, was not the physical, or natural, blood He shed on Calvary's summit; nothing of this earth could be offered according to law by an earthly Jesus. "Now if He were on earth," intones the author of Hebrews, "He would not be a priest at all" (Hebrews 8:4). Jesus on earth was of the tribe of Judah, and not of the physical line of Aaron. He was, therefore, a spiritual priest by virtue of His

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resurrection and ascension, and He offered spiritual sprinkled blood in a spiritual holy of holies for a spiritual people.

The spiritual Israel (the church), in contrast to physical Israel, are all priests. “But you are a chosen race,” writes Peter, “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (I Peter 2:9). “You also,” he instructs, “as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (I Peter 2:5). This spiritual priesthood *serves* God with spiritual sacrifices.

What then is the service to God from this spiritual priesthood? What sacrifices shall each offer to this holy God? “I beseech you therefore, brethren,” pleaded Paul with the Roman brethren, “by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable *service*” (Romans 12:1, NKJV). The spiritual service of the spiritual priest is to offer his *body* as a living and holy sacrifice. And when should this body be offered? Or, if the reverse question offers clarification, when should the body not be offered as a living and holy sacrifice? The answer again is obvious: the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, is to be offered to God - to serve God - all the time!

Worship and Service under the New Covenant

Clearing Away Confusion

Many a church building contains the written or implied exhortation: “Enter to worship; depart to serve.” The implication is that when the individual comes to the “house of God,” he comes in to worship, and he leaves to serve God. In other words, he worships God at specific times, and he serves God at all times. Thus there are “worship leaders,” signs proclaiming “Worship - 11:00 am,” and concepts such as “channels of public worship.”

But all of this is foreign to the writings of the New Testament and much more in consonance with worship at the temple under Mosaic law. Worship under the law was participation by the people in the festivities at set times in a set place. The priests led the festivities in presenting sundry ministrations to God, while the Levites played their instruments and led in song. It is easy to see the Catholic adaptation of Old Covenant style, in the adoption of a separate priesthood presenting ministrations, and calling the assembly area “the sanctuary.” The carry over from Rome into Protestant and Restoration practices is also obvious.

But what says the scripture? New covenant worship is “in spirit.” No longer is worship at a physical temple, a physical “house of God;” worship is the full time presentation of the spirit of the redeemed before the throne of grace. There is no external activity carried on by the Christian called *worship*; worship has been driven inward. Thus the congregation in the New Testament is recorded as assembling to break bread, not “to worship.” Not once in the pages of the inspired writings of the New Testament will you ever find the church coming together to worship, or

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worshipping. All the teaching in the New Testament on the subject of Christian worship is found in the words of Jesus in John 4:20-24. And He said worship would no longer be at a physical time and a physical place; He said worship would be “in spirit and truth.”

Under the Old Covenant, Israel was divided into people and priests. The people *worshipped*; the priests *served*. But under the New Covenant, all Christians are both priests and people, clergy and laity. Thus the Christian worships in *spirit - internally*; he serves God in his external actions as he offers his *body* a living sacrifice. Hence the child of God both worships and serves God at all times. He does not “enter to worship; depart to serve.” He enters worshipping and serving and departs worshipping and serving.

Service flows from worship. In Old Testament times, even though the priestly offerings were done in accordance with the Law, the service was unacceptable if the hearts of the worshipers were not right, as illustrated in this long quotation from Isaiah: “Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah. ‘What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?’ says the Lord. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer; incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts; they have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood’ ” (Isaiah 1:10-15). The Lord never has been able to endure iniquity and the solemn assembly; when the people were merely externally going through the motions, the Almighty would not accept the offerings. Thus the principle of the new covenant is that the service offered to the Lord, whether it be the Lord’s Supper or working on the job Monday morning, is unacceptable if the person making the claim to godliness is not worshipping internally, in spirit and truth. Holiness does not consist of mere walking in “right” external patterns; holiness flows from within, from the inside of man. When the apostle Paul spoke of “following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us” (Philippians 3:17), he was speaking of those who have the inner man focused rightly, who were “the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3). The thrust of the scripture is not so much as to engage in “holy actions” as to “*be holy*,” as the heavenly Father *is holy!* Holy action, true service to God, will automatically flow from one who is holy, who worships in spirit and truth.

Five “Channels Of Worship”?

The early men of the Restoration tried hard to get out of Babylon, but stumbled at the lip of the brim. In their desire to “restore the ancient order of things,” they assumed worship under the New Covenant was similar to the Old, and looked for specific items or “channels of worship” in

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public assemblies of the saints. Finding somewhat superficial proof texts for their presumptions, they hastily retired from the field of inquiry, leaving their spiritual descendants in a state of confusion and division.

Let us consider, then, each of the five “acts of worship”: praying, singing, giving, Bible teaching and/or preaching, and the Lord’s Supper. We will establish that each of these is external (though of course fueled by the internal), that each is a form of spiritual sacrifice, and that each therefore falls under the Biblical category entitled *service*:

- **Singing and praying** - The book of Hebrews, in establishing the superiority of the spiritual nature of the new covenant over the physical nature of the old covenant, offers keys to our understanding. Having discussed the weakness and worthlessness of sacrifices offered by the Levitical priesthood from Moses onward, the writer then comments concerning our offerings through the spiritual High Priesthood of Jesus Christ: “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a *sacrifice of praise* to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15). Note that both singing and praying are fruit of the lips, and are called sacrifices. Sacrifices are the offerings of priests, and thus singing and praying fall into the category of *service*.
- **Giving** - While the New Testament never directly levies a tithe of spiritual Israel, it speaks of furthering the gospel through “sharing.” For example, Paul exhorts the Galatian faithful, “And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches” (Galatians 6:6). And he commends the church in Philippi in similar terms: “And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs” (Philippians 4:15,16). Thus the writer of Hebrews again speaks: “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such *sacrifices* God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). This financial fellowship in the spread of the gospel and doing good, this physical outward action, is specifically designated a sacrifice, and therefore falls into the category of *service*.
- **Bible teaching and/or preaching** - The Old Testament tabernacle was but a copy and a foreshadow the true tabernacle, the church of the living God. As the word records of those in Christ, “We have ... a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (Hebrews 8:1,2). Similarly, the Old Testament priesthood was but a copy and a foreshadow of those who are truly priests, those in the church of the living God. The priests of the order of Aaron were a physical priesthood, offering weak physical sacrifices, and were prevented by death from continuing. But those of us who are immersed into Christ have “passed out of death into life” (John 5:24), and have, in Christ, become apart of the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek under the High Priesthood of Him who is alive forevermore. Hear the apostle comment on the relation-

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ship of the preaching of the gospel to sacrifices: He refers to himself as “a minister of the gospel, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:16). Note then that the preaching of the gospel ascends as smoke from the altar, presided over by a ministering spiritual priest, and that even those who become Christians as a result of teaching the word of God are part of the sacrificial offering. This ministration of the word of God is a physical action by the true priests of God, is called a sacrificial offering, and falls into the category of *service*.

- **The Lord’s Supper** - The Lord’s Supper, sacred and important, is the central feature of the assembly of the saints, calling them to do this in remembrance of Jesus. But because it is an external act, it also fits in with those things the New Testament describes as service, and the word of God appropriately teaches about the Supper in such terms. Writing to the church in Corinth about the dangers of idolatry and warning them not to fraternize with the pagans at their demonic idol temples, the apostle Paul injects the topic of the Lord’s Supper in I Corinthians 10:16-21. “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?” he asks. The meat and blood of the sacrificial offering are represented here. The apostle calls them away from competing sacrifices and emphasizes their oneness and uniqueness in Christ in these terms: “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.” Drawing upon their knowledge of Old Testament practices, he further demonstrates their uniqueness in sharing in the sacrifice of Christ. “Look at the nation Israel,” he writes. “Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?” Going even further, he draws upon Greek sacrifices at their altars to drive the point home. “What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.” The thrust of his teaching is that one who shares in the sacrifice at the altar is a sharer in the god to which the sacrifice is offered. He therefore appends this strident warning: “You cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of the demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.” If an individual is going to participate at the pagan altars with his relatives, then he is going to be a partaker of the pagan gods; if an individual is going to participate in the Lord’s table, then he is going to be a partaker of the God to whom the sacrifice of Jesus was offered. This passage of scripture clearly establishes that participation in the Lord’s Supper is a participation in a sacrifice. The writer of Hebrews hammers the point home: “We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat” (Hebrews 13:10). Participation in the Lord’s Supper is an external activity in which the individual shares in a sacrifice, and this falls into the category of *service*.

There are no channels of public worship because worship is internal in the individual. The activities during the assembly of the saints are spiritual sacrifices, carried out through external action, and are means by which the saints individually and collectively serve the Lord.

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Instrumental Music In Worship?

One of the basic truths of logic (and God communicates to us using words as conveyers of logical thought processes, as He said through His servant Isaiah: “Come now, and let us reason together” - Isaiah 1:18) is that if you begin with a false premise, and reason correctly from that false premise, you are guaranteed to arrive at a false conclusion. It is critical, then, in the examination of any question, to check the initial premise in the reasoning process. Now, over the last century and a quarter there have been many debates about the propriety of instrumental music in the “worship assemblies” of the saints. The issue has never been really resolved (although victories have been claimed by both sides) because both the instrumental and non-instrumental brethren have been reasoning from the same false premise. In the question, “Is instrumental music acceptable to God in worship?” the key is not focusing on the instrumental music part of the question; the key is to focus on the New Testament definition of worship. Once worship is defined, then the question about instrumental music can be asked. But both instrumentalists and non-instrumentalists have basically blithely assumed New Covenant worship to be quite similar to Old Covenant worship, and have argued correctly or incorrectly from sundry false connected premises.

But having shown that worship is internal, and continually ongoing, we have rendered the question of instrumental music in worship moot. It is not a question of whether God accepts vocal music only as worship; vocal music is not worship; it is service to God, one of the spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

Is instrumental music acceptable to God as service? Can a Christian play a musical instrument and still be acceptable to God? When it is recognized that the child of faith offers his body as a living and holy sacrifice to God, it is also recognized that this offering is not an on-again-off-again presentation. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and is to be continually holy, with the parts of the body serving as instruments of righteousness. “For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness,” wrote Paul to his brethren in Rome, “so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (Romans 6:19). The one who has been added to the family of God is to be holy and righteous at all times, as his heavenly Father is holy. If the Christian can serve God by playing a piano at a classical concert, then he can serve God by playing a rendition of “The Old Rugged Cross” on that same piano. They are both equally offered up as service to God; and it is impossible to make a scriptural distinction. If one is acceptable, then both are acceptable; if one is unacceptable, then both are unacceptable as service to God.

“But,” someone may object, “you do not have any scriptural authority for adding instrumental music to the worship of God.” You have missed the point; neither instrumental music nor non-instrumental music is worship of God under the new covenant. Worship is the

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ongoing, full-time prostration of the inner man, who never sleeps, before Him who is the image of the invisible God, Christ the Lord in glory. And that, my brother, is the worship which must not be added to nor taken away from! “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Is instrumental music acceptable service to God? There are those who try to argue (from the aforesaid false *worship* premise) about the unacceptability of instrumental music “in worship” by charging that the Greek word *psallo* (the verb form from which *psalms* comes) shifted its meaning by New Testament times to mean “sing only” without the accompaniment of a harp, for example. That argument breaks down at Ephesians 5:19, where, to be filled with the Spirit, Christians are exhorted to speak “to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing (Greek *adontes*) and making melody (Greek *psallontes*) with your heart to the Lord.” The thrust of the passage is to sing and play (make melody) with your whole being to the Lord (which is what being *filled* with the Spirit is all about). But, up to this point, our arguers have maintained that *psallo* and its derivatives mean only to sing. But it would not make sense to “sing and sing with your heart to the Lord.” So our creative arguers have tried to say that here *psallontes* does mean to *play*, but that the instrument played is the heart. But if *psallontes* means to *play* here, then its meaning did not shift to mean “sing only” at the time of the New Testament. *Psallo* and its derivatives mean just what you might expect they mean; they mean “to sing with accompaniment.”

The real question here is not whether something that is neutral like instruments are involved. The real question here is what kind of music is involved. “To the pure,” writes Paul, “all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled” (Titus 1:15). The emphasis of the word of God is on “psalms and hymns and *spiritual* songs.” The pure will fill their minds and their lives with that kind of music; the impure will use the justification that they are “not worshipping” to bring “country and western,” “rock,” and who knows what sort of anti-God music into their spiritual environment, with the resultant destruction to their souls.

Let us understand the meaning of serving God with a body that is a living and *holy sacrifice*, that we may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Sabbath Day Worship Or Lord's Day Worship?

One common question is whether or not a Christian is to worship on the first day of the week, or whether he is to worship on the Sabbath. The Jews, it is said, worshiped on the Sabbath in the synagogues, and Jesus and Paul honored that worship by themselves worshipping in the synagogues on the Sabbath. Therefore we should worship on the Sabbath.

There are two logical hooks in the above propositions, either of which will snag the unsuspecting and draw them into the realm of destruction. The first error is that the Jews did not

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“worship” on the Sabbath. They assembled on the Sabbath in the synagogues for the reading of the law and the prophets. They worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem on feast days. The second error is that Christians do not “worship” on either a Saturday or a first day of the week; Christians worship internally at all times in spirit and truth.

The language of the New Testament writings establishes that the Jews *assembled* on the Sabbath; in fact that is the reason the assembly place of the Jews was called the *synagogue*, from a Greek word meaning *assembly*. In Acts 16, Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke and others in the company at Philippi “sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled” (Acts 16:13). Earlier, in Antioch of Pisidia, after the first preaching of the word in the synagogue, “nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:44). There is not one reference to the Jews “worshiping on the Sabbath;” when the Jews and others came together for prayer and/or the reading of the word of God, they *assembled*

The language of the New Testament writings establishes that the Christians *assembled* on the first day of the week. In fact a congregation was called the *ekklesia*, from a Greek word meaning *assembly*. In Acts 20, Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke and others in the company at Troas met “on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together [assembled] to break bread” (Acts 20:7). Brethren are strongly encouraged against “forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some” (Hebrews 10:25). “When you come together as a church [assembly],” Paul excoriated the Corinthian brothers, “I hear that divisions exist among you” (I Corinthians 11:18). And James similarly disciplines the faithful for playing favorites when “a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes” (James 2:2). There is not one reference to Christians “worshiping” on the first day of the week; when the brethren came together for the apostles’ doctrine, for fellowship, for prayer, and the breaking of bread, *they assembled*. The Gentile, convicted of his sins through the preaching of the word, might “fall on his face and *worship* God, declaring that God is certainly among you” (I Corinthians 14:25), but he is still a non-Christian, and he is engaged in the direct physical act of prostration before God.

The Christians *assembled*, or *gathered together* on the first day of the week. Let us bring our terminology in line with the word of God. False terminology leads to false doctrine.

Sacred And Secular, Holy And Profane

To The Root Of The Problem

God, in keeping with His dictum of first the natural, then the spiritual, declared certain animals, for example, clean and certain animals unclean under the old covenant. Thus the Aaronic priests were to “make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean” (Leviticus 10:10). The life of an Old Testament Israelite was split into that which was sacred, and that which was secular. There were, then, vessels for use in the

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sanctuary which were holy and for use only by the priests in their temple service, as contrasted to those which were for common, or profane, use in every day activity. And the Sabbath day was to be kept holy, as contrasted to the other six common days.

Jesus Himself began to introduce the concepts of the new covenant during the days of His flesh. In giving the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in the gospel according to Matthew, He would often quote from the Law, but taking the external prohibition, He would drive it inward. "You have heard," He would say, "that the ancients were told, 'you shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court..." (Matthew 5:21,22). The external prohibition was murder; Jesus, in dealing with anger and rage, drove inward to the heart.

Later in Jesus' earthly life, He had an encounter with some Pharisees and scribes who were carping at Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands ceremonially before eating. These men were concerned that "the cup" be externally clean; that those who looked on the outward appearance be satisfied that the rigors of ceremonial law were observed. Our Lord unflinchingly called these play actors hypocrites, and went on to deal with the root of the problem. "Do you not understand," He asked, "that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" The gospel writer, Mark, then parenthetically injects this poignant remark: "Thus He declared all foods clean."

Neither food nor leprosy nor touching a dead body makes a man or woman unclean. Those were mere physical figures the All Wise was using so that men could eventually understand the dreadful separating effects of sin, and the cleansing power of loving reconciliation. "That which proceeds out of the man," emphasized the Lord, "that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:18-23). Cleanliness or uncleanliness, holiness or unholiness are internal, heart problems, not external physical problems. "This people," the Savior quoted Isaiah, "honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship [with appropriate fear and reverence, to honor the Lord] Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Mark 7:6,7).

New covenant cleanliness and holiness is going to be produced by a system that deals with the heart of man. Faith in Christ is going to produce a people who indeed love the Lord their God with all their heart, and who can fulfill the requirement of the Law by walking according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh. The gospel is going to produce a people for whom everything is holy, for whom there is no sacred-secular split life, for whom every thought is taken captive in obedience, and for whom whatever is done in word or deed is done by the authority of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

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Needing A New Heart

Jeremiah the prophet rightly commented that “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). God in His wisdom does not try to change this deceitful heart; He simply yanks it out and replaces it with a new one. “More-over,” prophesied Ezekiel, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you” (Ezekiel 36:26). The apostle Paul, using more urbane language than this author, speaks thusly about the process: “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God” (Romans 2:28,29).

How is this process of “circumcising the heart” carried out? Using a slightly different metaphor to describe the elimination of the carnal nature, the elimination of the evil heart which defiles the man, Paul writes: “In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11,12). Immersion is not a physical act in which the individual demonstrates that God has “saved him;” immersion is the point at which the Almighty gives him the new heart in which Jesus can be sanctified as Lord! Immersion is the point at which the Holy Spirit is given as an indwelling gift, and who accomplishes the circumcision of the heart! Peter describes this new beginning in these words: “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart” (I Peter 1:22). This new heart can love with the love of Christ, without selfish motive or need for personal gain.

Worshipping God

The cleansing process begins from within, from the creation by God of a new heart. The children of God, in being born from above, “have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Colossians 3:10). This new self, in the image of the glorified Christ, is capable of the full-time spiritual prostration before the throne of grace. This new self, in the continual presence of the Holy One of Israel, is continually holy, as He Himself is holy. This new self, created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth, brings its holiness with it into all places at all times, and because it is pure, for it all things are pure.

Worship of God is the entire purpose of God’s working with man. It is His desire to produce a people who can and will worship Him continually before His throne. Satan has endeavored at every step to destroy this concept, confusing men’s minds with all sorts of trickery and deceptive reasoning. Because both instrumentals and non-instrumentals did not go back and let the scripture define *worship*, the devil has been able to misdirect and destroy much good work.

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Sincere non-instrumentals, in an effort to be consistent, have been driven to an Old Testament sort of concept about worship, and have in general split their lives into times when they are “worshiping” and times when they are not “worshiping.” When they are “worshiping,” sacred songs sung *a capella* only are acceptable. When they are not “worshiping,” secular songs may be sung with any sort of accompaniment. Because every word represents a concept which governs a person’s life, this piece of deceitful trickery on Satan’s part concerning *worship* has caused many to split their lives into secular and sacred, and produces a slavery to hypocrisy which tragically impacts the eternity of each soul trapped in this black quagmire.

Sincere instrumentals - because it does not make sense that “Crocodile Rock,” with instrumental accompaniment, could be sung or listened to by a Christian, but a stringed instrumental version of “The Old Rugged Cross” would not be acceptable - are caught on the other horn of the dilemma concerning *worship*. In order to get to a conclusion which makes sense to them, they tend to overthrow the scripture and become somewhat lawless. They have the general sense that a Christian should worship God at all times, but because they do not check the New Testament definition of *worship*, they do not know how to honestly arrive at that conclusion. This piece of deception on Satan’s part has destroyed thousands of souls, and tragically sends many down the road of licentiousness instead of liberty.

The words of Jesus need to be firmly impressed on our minds, so that we experience the full truth and significance of His exhortation and warning: “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23,24).

Exhortation

Sometimes, when an individual faces the spiritual concept of worship as simply stated by our Lord, he balks at the idea of worshiping at all times. Generally the thought is expressed that it is impossible. But I submit that our Lord Himself prepared for the new covenant by being in constant fellowship and therefore, for our example, in constant worship of the Father. “The Son can do nothing of Himself,” He said, “unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner”(John 5:19). He lived a life of constant prayer, constant communication, with the One before whom He poured out His Spirit with loud crying and tears, and who was heard because of His piety. In preparation for raising Lazarus from the dead, He declared, “Father, I thank You that You heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that You sent Me” (John 11:41,42).

The question then arises, “Because Jesus could worship God at all times, does it mean we can do it also?” We never could be the kind of people God wants us to be operating under our own power. But in being born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

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from the dead, we are new creatures, created in the image of the Lord of glory, and the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us. By being strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, we can in fact do all things through Him who strengthens us. We can be imitators of Paul, as he was also an imitator of Christ. We can be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. We can be holy, as He is holy. We can, through the strength and discipline He provides, spiritually prostrate ourselves constantly before the throne of grace, and walk as He Himself also walked. “For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us” (II Corinthians 1:20).

Let us lay aside, then, brethren, every encumbrance, every excuse, every negative “you can’t do it” thought, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance this race that is set before us. Let us indeed fix our eyes upon Jesus in glory, drawn with Him spiritually to the throne, and let us worship Him with these fixed eyes in spirit and truth.

Summary

- The Father’s eternal purpose is to produce a spiritual people who can worship Him eternally in spirit and truth.
- God uses the principle “first the natural, then the spiritual” to move men from an emphasis on the physical realm to desiring the spiritual realm.
- The word generally used for worship, *proskuneo*, at its basic level, means to prostrate oneself before a ruler. Thus worship in the days of Abraham and the other patriarchs consisted of physical homage before God.
- Working with the physical nation Israel, God upgraded worship, making it more spiritual and less physical. Worship under the Old Covenant was the participation of the people in the festivities at the temple in Jerusalem during feast days.
- Worship under the New Covenant is no longer participation in festivities at a set time and set place. Worship has been driven inward, and is the full time prostration of the spirit of the Christian before the spiritual throne of God.
- Service has to do with the offering of sacrifices by priests to the Lord. Thus, in Old Covenant Israel, the priests served the Lord by their various offerings at approved altars.
- Under the New Covenant, every Christian is a priest, and offers his body as a full time living sacrifice to God as his service.
- Under the Old Covenant, the people worshiped while the priests served. Under the New Covenant, each Christian is both “people” and “priest”; he worships full time internally

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while he serves God full time externally.

- The so-called “channels of public worship” actually fit the scriptural category of service to God, not worship, and are spiritual sacrifices carried out by the external man.
- Neither instrumental music nor a *capella* music is worship of God; music is a spiritual sacrifice, and fits the scriptural category of service under the terms of the New Covenant.
- Instrumental music and a *capella* music are both acceptable service to God, provided that the inner man is worshiping in spirit and truth, and that what is being offered can be presented to God with a pure heart.
- There is no such thing in scripture as “Sabbath Day worship” for the Jews, or “Lord’s Day worship” for first century Christians. The Jews *assembled* for prayer in the absence of a synagogue, or at the synagogue for the reading of the law and the prophets. Christians gathered together on the first day of the week to break bread and to encourage one another to love and good deeds.
- It is the inner man, or the heart of man, from which spring evil thoughts, adulteries, slanders, envyings, foolishness, etc.
- In immersion into Christ, God eliminates the old, deceitful heart of man, crucifying the body of sin, and gives the new creature a new heart, capable of carrying out the holy will of God.
- This new self, with a new heart, can worship God at all times, as Jesus demonstrated in His relationship with the Father.
- For this new heart, there is no secular-sacred split life; all is sacred, or holy, to the Lord.
- The failure of non-instrumentals to understand worship has generally sent them down the road of law rather than liberty, and developed within them the split life of times when they are worshiping” and times when they are not; times when they are sacred, and times when they are secular.
- The failure of instrumentals to understand worship, and in trying to reach what they consider a correct conclusion beginning from a false premise, has generally led them to overthrow the scripture, and has caused many to be sent down the road of licentiousness and lawlessness rather than liberty.
- God is seeking only those who will worship Him in spirit and truth.

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Chapter 5 - Formation of Good Habits

“and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:18)

The Reign of Sin

Make no mistake about it, sin is a major problem. Indeed, it is the bane, the destruction of the human race. And sin is a deeply entrenched enemy. Having entered the world through the disobedience of Adam, sin has since been burrowing into the depths of the human heart, setting up battlements and defenses, so that, once dug in, no amount of human goodness can root it from the hole of its darkened headquarters. From its hide-out sin wields the wrecking bar, destroying relationships between man and man, and throws the cleaver which splits asunder the God-ordained union of man and wife. Out of the blackened fastnesses of unregenerate hearts flows rapacious greed, the love of money being a major “root of all sorts of evil” (I Timothy 6:10), including the production and distribution of the drugs which are destroying modern society. From the walled-in fortresses of sin-twisted human hearts ooze the evil thoughts which produce life-destroying pornography, the drive for power which ruthlessly plots wars and rips civilization to enslave others, and the pride and foolishness which plunge men and women into the declivity of eternal ruin. Sin chortled mercilessly in the blackened hollow of Adam’s heart as it forced him who had been in Eden to clean up the remains of his son Abel, and witness the banishment of his older son, the murderer Cain. Sin is the bane, the destruction of the human race.

Since no amount of human goodness can root it from the hole of its burnt out headquarters in the unregenerate heart, what champion shall enter the lists and destroy this dark adversary? What white knight is capable of bearding this dragon in his prickly lair? And who would believe the reports of such a white knight’s victory were it to be heralded from heaven?

Hence it is that the great God parades before our eyes a succession of deliverers. We read of David as a youth slaying the giant, and God through him granting deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. We peruse the account of the Almighty’s freeing the nation from the Egyptians during the night of Passover, and of Moses’ leading them across the Red Sea. We examine the angels’ rescuing Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah just before the raining down of fire and brimstone from heaven. Great and awesome works were performed by the Lord of hosts through Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel, and the prophets to increase the faith of later listeners, so that when the Deliverer comes from Zion to remove ungodliness from Jacob and to take away the sin of Israel, it is now believable. After all, what are chariots of Pharaoh in comparison to the entrenched forces of sin in the human heart, and what is Goliath in comparison to the outcast commander of rebellious angels?

The spirit world watched in great expectancy as the Son of God became flesh. Even the hill country of Judea buzzed with reports of all the words prophesied by Zacharias, father of John the Immerser: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,” said he, when his tongue was loosed, “for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation in

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the house of David His servant ... “(Luke 1:68,69). But this time the salvation was not going to be mere deliverance from the Egyptians, or from the hand of the Philistines. “And you, child,” prophesied Zacharias concerning his son John, “will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins...” (Luke 1:76,77). This time salvation was going to be spiritual; the year of jubilee was going to be a deliverance from the bondage to sin, and true believers were going to be rescued from the hand of Satan himself.

Consider the magnitude of the situation. The whole world lay entirely in the power of the evil one (I John 5:19). Sin had conquered and was firmly entrenched in each man’s life. So Jesus entered the world as the Savior. But what was it going to require of Him, even, to destroy the works of the devil? Jesus, in order to overcome sin and the power of Satan, lived a perfect, sin-free life, underwent all the temptations, betrayals, and persecutions the devil could offer, died on the cross, was buried, was resurrected, and ascended to glory. Boiling it down to a single point: it took the death of God in the flesh to deliver any soul ever trapped by one sin! Sin is not a minor menace, nor to be taken lightly.

But to one who, on the other hand, looks carefully at the power of sin, two questions arise: Do all have to sin in the first place?, and, Can a Christian through the power of Christ truly overcome the grip of sin in his own life? There are those who have looked at the pervasiveness of sin among humankind, and have essentially thrown up their hands in despair, concluding that all must sin, or inherit sin, and that there is no escape from its power or its ravages.

But let us delve deeper into the sacred writings. First, the word of God is emphatic that personal sin is not inherited. Adam and Eve chose to sin in the first place, and guilt enters each of their descendants in the same way, by choice. As the great verse from the prophet avers: “The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself” (Ezekiel 18:20). It is obvious that sin cannot be inherited, and that the so-called “doctrine of original sin,” that all are born with Adam’s sin, is bogus. James is equally emphatic: “But each one is tempted when he is carried away by *his own lust*. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (James 1:14,15). That, in simple terms, is why the gospel is directed toward those who are old enough to be responsible for their own actions and able to make mature decisions.

Does each person have to sin? The scripture indicates that man has the capacity to meet the requirement of the law. “For when Gentiles who do not have the law do instinctively the things of the Law,” intoned Paul, “these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves...”(Romans 2:14). Hence God, the righteous judge, is just in delivering the sentence of eternal condemnation to those who have sinned. The apostle Paul again points out the problem: “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his

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deeds” (Romans 2:5,6). Man does not have to sin; he simply chooses to do so. “But sin,” said the apostle a little later, “taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting [for example] of every kind” (Romans 7:8). Again, “For sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me” (Romans 7:11). The yielding to the coveting, and being taken in by the deception were Paul’s fault. And the judgment of God is just as righteous in Paul’s case, or any other person’s case, as it was with Adam and Eve. So it is written, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and [spiritual] death through sin, and so [spiritual] death spread to all men *because all sinned*” (Romans 5:12). And so, “sin reigned in death” (Romans 5:21).

Shall We Continue In Sin?

Once the individual is locked in sin’s death-grip, can he ever be set free? Once he has entered the blackened courts of sin’s domain, must he always continue to sin? Many would say the individual is always going to sin; he should strive to commit no sin, but he is always going to sin some how and in some way.

That’s what many would say. But what says the word of God? “What shall we say, then?” asked the inspired apostle. “Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” (Romans 6:1). The answer to Paul’s question is unacceptable to those who do not really understand immersion: “May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:2). The thrust of this passage is that each Christian is not to continue in sin, as the apostle Paul put it in another passage: “Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame” (I Corinthians 15:34).

The Christian does not have to remain in sin’s blackened courts. The great God expects that, as His child grows in grace and knowledge, he will be able to leave sin behind and walk in the footsteps of the Lord. In fact, the discussion on immersion early in Romans 6:1-11 is a prescription for living a victorious, sin-free life. As was discussed in chapter one of this book, immersion contains a double present, positive, affirmative thrust for not continuing in sin, for walking in a victorious new life.

- The first thrust of immersion is the burial of the failed descendant of Adam. Once the individual is caught in sin’s vise, he is described as a slave to sin, lives in a body of sin, and he can never, by his own power, extricate himself. But God can. And the way God has accomplished this rescue is to have that which bears the image of Adam buried with Christ in immersion, and to have the body of sin destroyed, with the result that “he who has died is freed from sin” (Romans 6:7). God does not try to “fine tune” or “tweak” the failure; He simply buries it.
- The second, and more powerful thrust of immersion is the resurrection of an entirely new creature. Having buried the old creature in immersion, the new creature arises to walk in

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newness of life. As Christ in glory is dead to sin and alive to God, the Christian, by faith, is to consider himself as Christ is in glory, dead to sin and alive to God.

- The new self is no longer a descendant of Adam. The new self is a descendant of God, a son of God, and capable, by the strength supplied by the Spirit of God, of walking as Jesus walked. “By this we know that we are in Him,” expounded the aged John, “the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (I John 2:6). And the Son of God walked without sin; the sons of God walk victoriously through Satan’s tempting traps.

Plan A Man, in the image of Adam, is prone to failure and justly condemned. *Plan J Man*, in the image of the glorified Christ, is guaranteed to succeed. Plan J Man is a spiritual man operating under the mercies of God, and is not subject to the limitations placed on earthy Plan A Man. The scriptures which establish the failures of Plan A Man do not apply to the Plan J Man. Plan J Man is never to forget that he once was a Plan A Man, and that he has been delivered from the consequences of his failures therein: “He who lacks these qualities,” warns the apostle Peter, speaking of spiritual ladder of faith-moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love; qualities characteristic of the growth of Plan J Man - “is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins” (II Peter 1:9).

Plan J Man may act like Plan A man under the following conditions:

- He is a babe in Christ and has not grown past his former carnal nature. “And I, brethren,” Paul addressed the Christians at Corinth, “could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?” (I Corinthians 3:1-3)... Failure to grow past this baby state over a period of time is fatal.
- Due to the pressure around him, Plan J Man goes back into law. A true Plan J Man is empowered by the vision he sees in the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, and is not driven by a specific list of “do’s and dont’s” characteristic of those who do not want to develop the maturity required of a Plan J Man. Those who do not want to grow up “turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things” which enslave all over again (Galatians 4:9). Under law, an individual does not have to show initiative; he in a sense mindlessly follows his list of what to do and what not to do imposed from the outside. Israel according to the flesh, under law, was a maintenance system which had to be separated from the world to survive, whereas spiritual Israel, the church, has the strength and initiative to go out and convert the world. For Plan J Man to go back under law is likewise fatal. “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

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- For some reason, Plan J Man gets tired of being a Christian, and just wants to “do his own thing;” he becomes lawless. “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (I John 3:4). Jude put it this way: “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). For a Plan J Man to turn lawless is fatal. Instead of abiding in Christ, he goes “too far.” “Any-one who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God” (II John 9).

A Christian who has turned back to law, or who has become lawless, has lost the vision of who he is; he has really lost his faith. When a person turns to the Lord in immersion, as established in chapter 3, he is now to view himself as taking on the image of Christ in glory. The babe in Christ may be fleshly because he has not yet been able to implement the picture; one who has gone back under law or one who has turned lawless has rejected the vision, as Paul wrote to the Galatian brethren who had gone back under law due to the influence of the Judaizers: “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). They had lost the image of the glorified Christ.

To this issue of sin and the rationalization of it, John addressed himself in his first and second letters. The apostle specifically dealt with people who denied that Jesus had come in flesh. The root of the denial was that these individuals wanted to justify their continuation in sin by claiming that the flesh was evil and had to sin, whereas the spirit of man was good; therefore Jesus, since He did not sin, could not have come in the flesh, and must simply have been an apparition. Of these John wrote, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist” (II John 7). The practical result of all this spiritual maneuvering was a mental caving-in to the idea that the body had to sin; the best that could be hoped for would be to strive to not sin, to think good thoughts while the body did bad things. The apostle John in these epistles had to deal with three general problems: 1) The tendency of some to deny their sin, and thus deny their need for Christ; 2) The tendency of some to deny the possibility of living a sin-free life through Christ as a father in the faith; and 3) The tendency of some to become discouraged when falling short of their potential in Christ.

- To establish the eternity of the Word, that the Word indeed took a human body, and that this body was flesh and not an apparition, the apostle stated point blank: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and *our hands handled*, concerning the Word of life...” (I John 1:1). The fact that their eyes beheld, and their hands handled Him, both during the years of His earthly sojourn and following His bodily resurrection, established absolutely that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. The apostle further established that this proclamation of the apostles concerning the Christ was the only true proclamation: “What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I John 1:3). Those who

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did not agree with what John and the other apostles preached had no fellowship with them or with God.

- The apostle then set forth the exalted position of the revealed Christ in these words: “And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). This great verse of the Bible, which we have dealt with extensively in earlier chapters, summarizes the whole plan of God to, in successive stages, reveal Himself through Jesus, culminating in a vision of Christ in glory as the complete revelation of the image of God. The Christian further understands that when he is immersed into Christ, he is immersed into this Christ in glory, and thus becomes a son of light himself, in whom likewise there is no darkness at all, no sin at all.
- The apostle, having set forth the full potential of the one created in the image of Christ in glory, began to deal with the problems. To handle the tendency of some to deny their need for the redemption found in Christ, John wrote, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and His word is not in us” (I John 1:8-10). This “over-the-shoulder-backward glance” is necessary so that each individual is forced to recognize that there was *the sacrifice of the physical body of Christ* on his behalf; and that *the physical blood of Jesus* was shed as an absolutely essential step to produce spiritual cleansing by the spiritual blood of Christ offered in the true holy place. Those who in the first century adopted the deceiving, antichrist philosophy that Jesus had not come in the flesh had gone too far, did not abide in the teaching of Christ, and were blind and shortsighted, having forgotten their purification from their former sins.
- But this backward glance is not the forward focus. When the child of God arises to walk in newness of life, it is no longer he who lives, but it is the Christ in glory who lives in him, and the life he lives in the flesh, he now lives by faith in the risen Son of God (Galatians 2:20). He is to consider himself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ; he is to view himself as clothed with the resurrected, sin-free Jesus in glory. As the apostle John therefore put it: “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin” (I John 2:1). The key to performing at the sin-free level is bluntly stated by John in several of his present, positive, affirmative statements: “No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him” (I John 3:6). “He cannot sin, because he is born of God” (I John 3:9). To deny this potential in Christ is a form of gnosticism, and a throwback to the destructive heresies which riddled the church as it moved into the second century AD.
- As the individual progresses in his faith in the Son of God, his performance level improves as he moves from “child” to “young man” to “father” (I John 2:12-14). The “little children” have many bad habits carried over from their days in the world, and

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those sins need to be recognized and confessed. But the purpose of imputed righteousness is to produce actual practicing righteousness. “Little children,” the apostle exhorted the new ones forward, “let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous” (I John 3:7). The deceivers were claiming that no one could practice righteousness, that the flesh, because it was inherently bad, was going to sin. John was repeatedly emphatic about the condition of those who promoted or believed this lie. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:6,7). “The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (I John 3:8). “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God...” (I John 3:10).

- But what about the Christian who recognizes his potential in Christ, who is willing to admit past mistakes, but who might have a tendency to become discouraged when he sins and falls short of the glory of God? “And if anyone sins,” the aged apostle wrote, “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (I John 2:1,2). Again he wrote, “We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure ourselves before Him, in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things” (I John 3:19,20). “Therefore having been justified by faith,” emphasized Paul, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1,2).

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” asked Paul. But the inspiration leads us on, pointing us to our potential: “May it never be!” (Romans 6:15).

God’s Broad Brush and Habit

God wrote one book for all people for all time, for all situations. So when He communicates, He necessarily paints pictures with broad brush strokes, expecting His sons under the covenant of faith to be able to take the general principles elucidated therein, and apply them to their specific situations. The apostle twice asked the question as to whether Christians should sin and twice emphatically answered, “May it never be!” Having given the foundational picture of the burial of the old man of sin and the resurrection of the new, the inspired apostle then began to discuss the mechanism for overcoming sin. In a carefully reasoned series of statements, Paul worked the whole issue of mastering sin to a simple concept he called being “slaves to righteousness.”

- “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,” insisted the

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apostle, “and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness” (Romans 6:12,13). Again the conclusion is obvious: the Christian does not have to sin, and indeed he is not to commit sin.

- “But present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:13). Christians are to be as those alive from the dead - fresh, sin-free, and powerful, imitators of Jesus. Now the members of the body can be useful to God, weapons of His righteousness.
- “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). The purpose of grace is to produce what the law could not, a spiritual person who step-by-step lays aside the practices of the old man of sin, and step-by-step adopts the morality and character of his Lord.
- “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know,” again queried Paul, “that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Romans 6:15,16). The issue is one of lordship. The one whom the individual obeys is his lord, regardless of what protestations he may offer to the contrary. The goal here is for Jesus to be Lord over all aspects of the Christian’s life.
- “But thanks be to God that though you were are slaves to sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17,18). Again the apostle discussed the means by which the child of promise secured his freedom from sin. Though he was enslaved to sin, each was provided a door way of escape by the Almighty, and that door way is termed “that form of teaching.” The basic teaching, or doctrine, concerning the Christ centers upon His death, His burial, and His resurrection (which includes His ascension to glory). That which is the “form” of the doctrine is that which is the likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; *i.e.*, immersion in water. And that is the door way to freedom. But it is only the door way when the individual is “obedient from the heart.” If the obedience to the gospel does not stem from the individual’s whole commitment to serve Christ, it is a waste of water and time. The purpose of the obedience is to set the slave of sin free, so that he can now wholeheartedly become a slave of righteousness.
- “I am speaking in human terms,” explained the patient Paul, “because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (Romans 6:19). The problem to overcome is the weakness of the flesh. Man, for example, can easily imagine himself running effortlessly for miles along some shady lane, but to actually move the body more than a couple of hundred yards

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“effortlessly” requires concentrated, long-term discipline. Because the flesh is bound under the laws of nature, such as the law of gravity and the law of death and decay, the flesh is a slave, either of sin or of righteousness. In other words, even the Christian is a slave of bad habits, or the slave of good habits.

Think about it. The apostle began this section by pointing out that the Christian is to “not let sin reign in [his] *mortal* body that [he] should obey its lusts.” Because of the physical nature of the *mortal* body, each person is chained to habit; most of what most people do most of the time is habit. The key to being righteous in Christ, then, is to be a slave to good habits; the way to go on presenting the members of the body to sin is to be a slave to bad habits. And our God, painting with broad brush strokes, has given us, in general terms, both the mechanism and the motivation for breaking the bondage of bad habits and the forging of the chains of the good habits of a perfectly righteous life in Christ.

Mechanism for Good Habit Formation

Bad habits are easy to form. Just do what you feel like doing, and avoid what you don’t feel like doing, and you will form them. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul summarized the issue thusly: “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another so that you may not do the things you please” (Galatians 5:17). When the individual does what he good and well pleases, he is going to follow the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, and he is rapidly going to become a slave of entrenched, addictive, destructive habits.

But the formation of good habits takes work; the flesh has to be overcome. The Christian who truly desires to systematically form good habits needs to seriously consider the steps involved, and be prepared for the long haul when dealing with the flesh. As Paul instructed Timothy, “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (I Timothy 4:7). The godliness was not going to automatically come; godliness was going to be imposed upon Timothy’s flesh by rigorous discipline.

Focusing on the Good Habit

The first step for one who claims the name of Christ following immersion, and the first step in a cycle to be repeated periodically, is for him to analyze his present performance in the light of the scripture. The purpose of this analysis is to determine objectively what changes in lifestyle and attitude need to be dealt with first, and developing a strategy for implementing the change.

Because of the tremendous variability in the strengths and weaknesses of Christians, the nature of the messes they have gotten themselves into, and the specifics of their circumstances and locations, God uses that broad brush of His to paint the general picture; each Christian must be absolutely honest in his dealings with God as to how he personally begins to implement the

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specifics of God's general plan. But here are some points to consider:

- All of this movement from being slaves to sin to becoming slaves to righteousness must be carried out under the auspices of God's grace. While the grace of God is not to be taken advantage of - "Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?" - grace is an essential ingredient to real change.
- It was the grace of God which offered the opportunity for repentance in the first place. "For if by the transgression of the one [Adam] the many died," explained Paul, "much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many" (Romans 5:15).
- Grace allows the individual to be open and honest in his working with God to form good habits. "We have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand" (Romans 5:2). Knowing that he stands in grace before God helps the child of faith deal openly with those things of which he is rightly ashamed, rather than shoving them under the rug, so to speak, while cowering in fear.
- Grace also makes it possible for the Christian to implement his good habits by focusing on one at a time. Under the banner of faith, "in accordance with grace," the judgment of the Law is withheld, as Paul stated, "Where there is no law neither is there violation" (Romans 4:15,16). Under this "perfect law, the law of liberty" (James 1:25), the Christian can begin taking those small individual steps which lead to long-term real change of character. The Old Testament law required an all or nothing performance. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point," averred James, "he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). The perfect law of the new covenant allows for much stumbling in many points as long as there is the proper mind-set and honest progress.
- It is also important to note the scriptural principle that the saint is not just to "stop doing" bad things. Bad habits must be replaced by good habits in order to really be eliminated, as Jesus illustrated in the case of a demon-possessed man. "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it *unoccupied*, swept, and put in order. Then it goes, and takes along with it seven spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first" (Matthew 12:43-45). The mind is much like a garden. If a plot of ground is plowed to eliminate the weeds, but no garden is planted, what is the result? Mega-weeds! As in the example our Lord gave us, if the "house" is merely cleansed of bad habits but not occupied with good habits, then those bad habits come roaring back multiplied. The focus of the son of God must necessarily be on the good habits replacing the bad ones.

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The Christian, standing in the grace of God, must do some honest soul-searching to determine what he really needs to work on first. If he needs to form a new habit, then he must follow the steps to implement that habit. If he needs to eliminate a bad habit, then he needs to carefully analyze what good habit will replace the bad habit, and focus his attention upon forming the good habit. This practical point is derived from the general principle laid down by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul; the thrust of immersion is not so much the death of the old man of sin as it is focusing on the resurrection to walk in newness of life.

In implementing the elimination of bad habits and focusing on the good habits, all the principles of *present, positive, affirmative* must be observed. Otherwise bad habits, poor lifestyle, and slavery to sin will be further entrenched by the habit formation process. The time invested by the Christian in careful analysis of the problem and defining the specific good habit to be formed is time well spent.

Pre-determination to Form the Good Habit

It has become a proverb: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” This poignant little barb simply points out the difficulty in the formation of good habits. The writer of Hebrews describes the challenge in terms of “the sin which so easily entangles us” (Hebrews 12:1). Once the imitator of Jesus has been able to analyze his condition and define the next good habit he wants to form, he must then really pre-set his mind to carry out those good intentions. The battle to overcome the natural desire of the flesh is a fierce one.

I was discussing the general problem of overcoming sin with a preacher who had spent more than 30 years delivering the word of God faithfully. He said, “It’s interesting how few people really change. Generally if they were grouchy before they became Christians, they were grouchy after they became Christians.” This sad commentary probably reflected more the frustration of a particular moment, but it underscores the necessity of a strong pre-determination to implement a good habit, or the waves of disappointment and weakness will turn the castle of will power to the flattened sand of a mere good intention.

“If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of earth” (Colossians 3:1,2). “Set your mind,” said the Holy Spirit. One of the main reasons the scripture delineates the material covered earlier in this chapter is to pre-set the mind of the Christian, to elevate his thinking to where he believes that through the power of Christ he can overcome sin. In practical terms it boils down to this: unless the follower of Christ believes he can overcome all sin and take on the character of his risen Lord in all aspects, then in the throes of his wrestling against the specific sin in front of him, his mind will tend to take the easy way out and say that this is “the one” that can’t be overcome. If the individual merely “strives for perfection,” but believes he cannot attain it, he has the wrong mind-set, and is defeated before he begins.

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Let us quickly review some key points from the word of God:

- In immersion God creates a new creature in the image of the risen Christ. That which bore the image of Adam is buried and done away with, and that which arises to walk in newness of life is to consider itself dead to sin, and resurrected and alive to God in Christ.
- Because the new creature presents himself to God as one alive from the dead, and presents the members of his body to God as instruments of righteousness, he recognizes that sin is not to be master over him in any sense, that his body is to obey no sinful lust, that he is to be absolutely sanctified and holy to his Lord.
- The new creature is not to allow his mind to play tricks on him. He is not to sin because he under grace rather than under law. Rather he is to recognize that what his body does is the telling mark of who his master really is, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness.
- The new creature is reminded that when he became obedient from his heart to the likeness of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, he was freed from bondage to sin, and became a slave of righteousness.
- The new creature has to be described as a "slave" of righteousness because of the necessity of good habit formation in order to overcome the flesh.
- The purpose of grace is to allow the new creature the opportunity to work on specific sins one at a time rather than be overwhelmed by trying to overcome all sins all at once. Changes then are real rather than cosmetic.

All of this is necessary to put the Christian in the proper frame of mind as he begins the process of either eliminating the bad habit and replacing it with the good one, or simply forming an entirely new good habit. He must absolutely believe with all his heart through the strength God provides, that he can and will and has overcome. "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). True repentance is the development of the proper mind-set.

Tracking Progress

The whole issue of becoming slaves to righteousness, or the ethos of good habits, is because of "the weakness of the flesh." The question of how many days the flesh must be specifically disciplined in order for the new practice to become habit is going to vary from person to person, and depend somewhat on the nature of the new habit to be formed. Human experience indicates that, generally speaking, a minimum of 21 days to one month of consistent, no exceptions

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allowed, buffeting of the body is necessary.

Making the flesh yield to such unwavering discipline sometimes can be a little like a wild bronco ride, or like keeping a boa constrictor in an open-topped cage. Because of the wide-eyed wildness of the bronco or the slithering sneakiness of the snake, a means has to be found of keeping score, or keeping track of progress. Charts, graphs, colored stars on days of the calendar, check marks on a list ... anything so that there is a daily record showing the progress toward the minimal 21 days of making the flesh yield to the discipline imposed by the spirit.

God Himself sets the program in motion, again with His broad brush strokes. The first century church had to deal with problems of people coming into Christ from an undisciplined lifestyle. “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons,” it was said. To which Paul added these inspired words, “This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:12,13). Can a modern “liar, evil beast, lazy glutton” take the severe reproof mandated by scripture, and not “quit the church”? It takes reproof from spiritual coaches to get the team members motivated enough to go through the unwavering discipline imposed upon the flesh.

“Now we command you, brethren,” said Paul to the faithful in Thessalonica, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an undisciplined life and not according to the tradition which you received from us” (II Thessalonians 3:6). Again, he added, “For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies” (II Thessalonians 3:11). And what was the Holy Spirit’s inspired solution? “For when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat” (II Thessalonians 3:10).

God has a major “habit formation workshop;” it is called the *workplace*. The competitive workplace forces the individual to develop good habits; otherwise he is out of business or out of a job. And in accordance with the Bible’s dictum, “if you don’t work, you don’t eat,” a man and his family starve if the breadwinner does not develop good work habits. And the scripture is emphatic; this is not a time for charity. “Take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (II Thessalonians 3:14,15). While necessity may be the mother of invention, it certainly is the father of motivation!

Because of what the inspired writer calls “the weakness of the flesh,” discipline is imposed in the workplace by a simple principle: the pain of doing the job over must exceed the pain of doing it right the first time. Here is an example from my personal life to illustrate the point: Colored inks (inks other than black) for printing presses used to be based on lead compounds. But when the dangers of lead poisoning became more clear, the manufacturers had to develop new compounds to carry the color in those inks. The problem with some of those early experimental inks was that they tended to dry very quickly on the rollers of the printing press. I had bought a tan colored ink to use on one of my print jobs, and the sales people told me to clean the press as

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soon as I finished my print job. But by the time I finished it was late at night, and I was tired, and I didn't feel like cleaning the press right then, and I thought I would just wait until morning. When next morning came and I tried to clean the press, the ink was almost glued on the rollers. Instead of a fifteen minute clean-up job, I spent over four hours scraping the dried ink off the rollers with a screwdriver. The discipline of the workplace was effective; the pain of doing it over so greatly exceeded the pain of doing it right in the first place that I have the habit of always cleaning the press regardless of how tired I am when I finish the job.

And God has a whole host of such disciplines built into the competitive marketplace. "He who is slack in his work," wrote Solomon, "is brother to him who destroys" (Proverbs 18:9). "I passed by the field of a sluggard," narrated the wise exponent of proverbs, "and by the vine-yard of the man lacking sense; and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. 'A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,' then your poverty will come as a robber, and your want like an armed man" (Proverbs 24:30-34). But by contrast, the wise king also wrote, "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men" (Proverbs 22:29). The individual who allows the rigors of the workplace to forge a lifestyle of good habits will indeed be a man skilled in his work. And when there is a collection of people who exhibit skilled workmanship, craftsmanship, good and prompt service, and a high level of efficiency pervading a productive society, this is called the *Biblical work ethic*, resulting from a reasonably morally sound, competitive marketplace. *Ethic* is derived, appropriately enough, from the Greek *ethos*, "habit, or habitual customs."

The lesson to be learned from the God-ordained discipline of the marketplace is the necessity of feedback in habit formation. In forming the habits of success in the workplace, the need for *daily bread* produces *daily feedback* which, when viewed with the right attitude, forces the elimination of bad habits and provides vectors and motivation for the implementation of new ones. Thus, when the faithful follower of Christ intends to follow the same process outside the discipline of the workplace, he needs to implement some mechanism for giving himself feedback on a *daily* basis. So let it be re-emphasized: Making the flesh yield to such unwavering discipline sometimes can be a little like a wild bronco ride, or like keeping a boa constrictor in an open-topped cage. Because of the wide-eyed wildness of the bronco or the slithering sneakiness of the snake, a means has to be found of keeping score, or keeping track of progress. Charts, graphs, colored stars on days of the calendar, check marks on a list ... anything so that there is a *daily record* showing the progress toward the minimal 21 days of making the flesh yield to the discipline imposed by the spirit. Businesses use these techniques; the one who is serious about consistent good habit formation must use charts, graphs, colored stars, or whatever creative means there is for keeping track of progress in the daily implementation of the righteous habit so that it finally becomes so ingrained that it is automatic. In that matter, then, the Christian is finally "a slave to righteousness."

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If at First You Don't Succeed

The bronco may prove difficult to ride, and the horseman may find himself embarrassingly sprawled in the dirt while his wild-eyed steed legs off to the distant prairie. The boa may find his master's eyes closed for one brief but unsuspecting moment, and in that deadly interlude be already in the process of strangling its watchman. Such is the nature of habit formation. Such is the nature of "the sin which so easily entangles us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Because of the embarrassment, shame, or frustration involved in trying and failing in good habit formation, many quit after a couple of attempts. And the tendency of the mind when it begins to weaken, encouraged by the prince of darkness, is to try to justify the failed condition rather than step to the line one more time to form the good habit. This one point, lest you think it insignificant, is the major source of all false doctrine and heresy. As the great apostle Paul explained to his son in the faith, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to *their own desires*; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths" (II Timothy 4:3,4).

Correspondingly, that is why so much time in this chapter was spent on establishing that any sin can be overcome. New Year's "resolutions," for example, fail because of lack of resolve; the good intention was not implemented because the one who so purposed was not firmly resolute in his mind to carry through. The scripture's purpose is to develop iron resolution in the heart of the believer by establishing conclusively that all sin (and therefore any sin) can be overcome through Christ as revealed in the Bible.

Once this mind set is fixed in the saint of God, then all the present, positive, affirmative, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" scriptures go to work in him who believes. Then he knows that God is able to keep him from stumbling (Jude 24), and has the confidence, if he should stumble, to pick himself and keep trying again in the grace, hope, and glory of God. (In my own case, I had to try about 35 times before I was able to implement the habit of doing scripture memory work every time I went jogging.) If he needs to try seven more times before he can implement the good habit, he tries seven more times. If he needs to try 70 times seven.....!

The "grace in which we stand" (Romans 5:2) exhibits God's desire for us to keep working at each habit until we implement it as a permanent part of our lifestyle. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try, try again!"

Good habit formation is the mechanism by which good intentions become a holy lifestyle. "Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, *resulting in sanctification*, and the outcome, eternal life" (Romans 6:21,22).

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Exhortation

Because of the weakness of the flesh, the Christian spends his earthly existence chained to habits. Either he is a “slave of sin,” as the Bible puts it, or he is a “slave of righteousness.” And the difference between the two is eternal life or eternal death. The apostle Paul exhorted the Roman believers in these words: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). The saint is not to continue in sin, that grace might increase; on the contrary, he is to be eliminating those bad habits and replacing them with good ones. “The wages of sin is death,” was the message of Paul to the beloved brethren in Rome, not a highway sign to the unbeliever (Romans 6:23). “So then, brethren,” he added later, “we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:12,13). The exhortation is plain: be in the process of forming good habits, or die eternally!

The all wise Father in heaven knows the size of the challenge in overcoming sin. Thus, through the gospel of Christ and the promised Holy Spirit, He has made provision for His children to conquer all sin. By knowing that he can be holy as his heavenly Father is holy, then the one who lives by faith is confident that he can eliminate the specific sin he has targeted, and replace it with the righteous practice intended for that slot. The only question is whether he really believes that God is able to perform that which he has promised.

Begin today. *Now* is not only the acceptable time; *now* is the only time. Target the specific bad habit to be eliminated. Identify the good habit designed to replace the bad practice. Set in motion the means by which you can track your progress. And if at first you don't succeed, pray to the Almighty for assistance, and try, try, try, try again!

Summary

- It is God's desire that each Christian become a “slave to righteousness,” laying aside sinful bad habits, and forming good habits that characterize a holy lifestyle.
- Sin is the bane, the destruction of the human race.
- Great physical deliverances were accomplished for Israel through a series of earthly redeemers to prepare mankind for spiritual deliverance through the great Redeemer, Christ. Jesus can set man free from sin.
- God, the righteous Judge, justly condemns man for sinning.

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- Death spread to all men because all sinned.
- Romans 6:1-11 is a prescription for living a victorious, sin-free life. The old man is crucified in the waters of immersion, and an entirely new creature is raised to walk in newness of life. “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (I John 2:6).
- I John, distributed to combat the idea that man must sin because he has a body, was written “that you may not sin” (I John 2:1)
- The grace of God is there to help the Christian to pick himself up when he falls down, and to help him through the occasional discouragement attendant to the process of overcoming sin.
- The purpose of imputed righteousness is to produce actual, practicing righteousness. “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!” (Romans 6:15).
- The purpose of obedience to the gospel is to set the slave of sin free, so that he can now wholeheartedly become a slave of righteousness.
- It is because of the “weakness” of the flesh that the scripture uses the term slave of righteousness. The body is either a slave to good habits or bad habits. God, painting with broad brush strokes, has given us both the mechanism and the motivation for breaking the bondage of bad habits and forging the chains of the good habits of a perfectly righteous life in Christ.
- The focus of the individual’s attention must be fixed on the good habit to be formed. Simply trying to stop a bad habit just creates a vacuum into which other bad practices flow. All the principles of present, positive, affirmative must be observed; otherwise bad habits, poor lifestyle, and slavery to sin will be further entrenched by the habit formation process.
- Because overcoming sinful bad habits is not an easy process, and the prince of darkness works in the minds of everyone possible, the mind of the Christian has to be solidly pre-set that he can overcome each specific sin. The purpose of all the aforementioned points is to provide that basis for that predetermination.
- The workplace is designed by God as a place where discipline is imposed by a daily feedback mechanism. If a man does not work, neither is he to eat.
- When the Christian implements a new habit, he needs a daily feedback mechanism in

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order to track his progress.

- “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try, try again.”
- Good habit formation is the mechanism by which good intentions become a holy lifestyle.

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Chapter 6 - Good Use of God's Time

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15,16)

General Thoughts on Time

Time, in a general sense, is defined by the movement of one heavenly body in relation to another. A year is the revolution of the earth about the sun. A month, originally, was the revolution of the moon about the earth. And a day is the rotation of the earth on its axis in relation to the sun. The record of Genesis is simple and exact: “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens,” said God, “to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years” (Genesis 1:14). Man has to fit inside this framework; he can break his day down to hours, minutes, and seconds, and set earthly time zones, but the orbs of the expanse are going to continue inexorably in their precise heavenly minuet. The universe was wound like a giant clock at the creation and has since been slowly unwinding, while all objects, living or dead, experience the creeping crunch of death and decay. “For the creation was subjected to futility,” explained Paul, “not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

So the physical side of the Christian is subjected to the rigors of an inflexible clock. The second just passed will not return again. Days cannot be saved up and then released together in a frolic spree. Each hour, each day, will be spent in regular increments; the 168 hours of this week will be productive or nonproductive, but they will pass with the steady motion of the second hand. The wise Solomon, peering as far as human wisdom can see, stated the conclusion: “Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). “Under the sun” each person on earth has the same 24 hours in a day and uses it wisely for the glory of God, or wastes it in trivial pursuit. “Therefore be careful how you walk,” exhorted the apostle, “not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15-17).

The Christian, desiring “to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:10), will work very hard to implement scriptural principles of time management in his life. To fail to do so is clearly to violate the will of the Lord and to become a foolish son or daughter.

Another way of looking at making the most of the time is to consider the character of God. God laid out His plan for bringing Jesus into the world in the writings of the Old Testament, then carried it out as revealed in the gospel accounts and the rest of the New Testament. In other words, God plans, executes, and rewards. Sons of God, then, as “partakers of the divine nature” (II Peter 1:4), are therefore also to be those who plan, execute, and reward.

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Another facet is that a Christian who manages his time perfectly will never sin; all his thoughts and efforts will be kingdom directed. In earlier sections we have focused on the “divine nature” of the Father revealed in the radiance of the glorified Son and how we can be transformed into the likeness of that glory; now in discussing time management we begin to draw practical rays of strength from that radiance.

Developing Purpose

Introduction

No one is going to be particularly concerned about the utilization of time unless he has a clearly defined purpose. He must have a clear sense of having many important things to be done, and the impression that there is comparatively little time to do them. Otherwise while the individual senses that he should probably make better use of his time, he will lack the motivation necessary to impose the discipline of time management upon himself.

A neighbor of mine had been a salesman of livestock feed and supplements for a long time. He had built a good working relationship with many cattlemen and feed lot operators over the years; therefore all he generally had to do was to make a series of phone calls each week and take their orders. He made good money and had earned great flexibility for his personal time. One day I was chugging through some projects in my yard, and I noticed that he was really “dragging things out.” He had his pickup truck parked on the opposite side of the street, and he would slowly carry a couple of pieces of paper to the truck. Dumping them off, he would mosey back inside his house, rummage around for awhile, then carry a couple more sheets out his pickup, and he was not a happy camper at all. I asked him what the problem was. He explained that his company had just hired a new sales manager who was demanding that each of the salesmen work at least 40 hours per week, and who furthermore was requiring each to keep a weekly time log. He told me, “So I’m just killing time.”

Most of the residents of earth and, unfortunately, many Christians, are “just killing time.” They have no strong purpose to motivate them and, therefore, are not truly interested in making *the most* of the days of their earthly sojourn.

A couple of bums were laying out in the park talking about how they had come to their low positions. One said to the other, “Oh, I have plenty of know-how. I just never had much *know-why!*” That is a great definition of purpose: know-why.

There is no use of anyone’s pretending that he is really interested in systematically making better use of his time until he develops strong purpose in his life. Purpose puts power in living for Jesus.

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Ultimate Purpose

To be properly motivated, each individual must have a purpose so lofty that it cannot be fulfilled in his lifetime. If the purpose can be achieved during the Christian's time on earth, then at some point it is an accomplished goal, and loses its motivating power. An ultimate purpose, by definition, is one which lives on after the child of God has moved on. Each citizen of the kingdom must spend some time working through his relationship to Christ and his fellowship with the brethren to determine his place in the body of Christ and his ultimate purpose. The apostle Paul, in a complimentary remark in his address to the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, stated, "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers ..." (Acts 13:36). What higher praise could be said of someone than that he had voluntarily served the purpose of God in his generation!

Our Lord Himself succinctly spoke of the necessity of an ultimate purpose. Approaching the last days of His earthly tenure, as the Gentiles were now seeking Him out in the temple, Jesus informed the apostles, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal" (John 12:23-25).

- The Lord had obviously been working on a plan, and was still working on a plan, which would not be carried out until after His death. One of His goals was to bring the Gentiles into fellowship with the Father through Him. Referring to truth seekers scattered throughout the nations, Christ informed a group of Jews in His train: "And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd" (John 10:16). As the grass-roots movement of Jesus spread, and as the Gentiles were now seeking Him out, a step Jesus had wanted to accomplish was reached, and He exclaimed, "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Jesus planned, and Jesus executed. But He planned and executed under the directive of an ultimate purpose.
- Jesus illustrated the principle of an ultimate purpose in these words: "...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit." Not only was He establishing the point that those who would follow in His steps would have to die to self, but in a much larger and more powerful sense He was exhibiting the principle that there must be a purpose which lives beyond time spent in this world. The Lord Himself was the perfect example; His great work of saving the lost really could not begin except through His death; the great Grain of wheat would have to fall into the earth and die before He bore major fruit.
- Unless the son of the kingdom can develop his ultimate purpose, his production is limited. Jesus' statement illustrates the contrast between those who develop a purpose that lives beyond this life and those who do not. Unless the Christian focuses his efforts

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to sowing in fields which will not be reaped until he has long since made his exit, he remains alone; his purpose is short-lived, and his impact is small. On the other hand, if the imitator of Christ develops his ultimate purpose in Christ, looking to those thousands who will be impacted by the legacy which he leaves behind, he will bear much fruit. Again our Lord was the great example. How many millions have taken up His standard, carrying out the purpose which Jesus could not accomplish during His years in the flesh?

- The whole concept of establishing an ultimate purpose involves a sacrifice of temporal goals and enjoyments for the sake of a harvest to come after the saint has passed on. Jesus' words were that the one who loved life on earth would lose it, but anyone who would hate his life in this world would be able to keep it in life eternal. And this is the point when the greatest difficulty in setting an ultimate purpose often arises. Most brethren, when they are being honest with themselves and God, want to have their rewards or be able to see the results of their efforts in this lifetime. But the wisdom of our God in the issue of time management is manifest; He forces us to look beyond our time on earth at the very core of maximizing effective use of each passing second. An ultimate purpose is one which cannot be fulfilled in this lifetime, and anything less than the development of an ultimate purpose will not provide the long-term motivation for "redeeming the time."

Each child of God needs to take time to determine his role in the kingdom of God. Jesus actually set the highest priority for each of His disciples in His famous statement in the "Sermon on the Mount": "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom of God (the church) and incorporating the righteousness which God expects into personal behavior are clearly first on each serious disciple's list; the challenge is to take the general statement, applicable to all Christians, and channel it into a personal set of goals and activities. The question each must ask himself on a periodic basis until he clearly fixes his ultimate purpose is: "What is *my* cross to take up and carry?"

Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, serves as an example. From the time of his immersion to wash away his sins, Paul preached Jesus in the synagogues, proclaiming, to the amazement of those who heard him, that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 9:19). Following this first proclamation in Damascus, he spent time in Arabia, then back to Damascus, after which he went to Jerusalem, thence to Cilicia, was brought by Barnabas to Antioch of Syria; and finally on the island of Cyprus did his purpose as an apostle of Jesus Christ become firmly established. Once his purpose was fixed, then the message and life of this imitator of Christ rocked the Roman Empire, and they have continued to impact the world nearly 20 centuries later. As effective as he was as a wise master builder in establishing multitudes of congregations, the main reaping of his efforts took place after the Romans, according to tradition, severed his head from his body in 67 AD. It took him some time after he became a Christian to determine his ultimate purpose, even though God had set him apart for this apostleship from his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15). And once that purpose was determined, Paul could then focus, and his

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productivity soared.

It can take a Christian quite some time in the body of Christ before he can determine what his ultimate purpose is. Consequently, the Lord has provided some specific, shorter term purposes, as well as common or shared purposes, into which the brother or sister in Christ can step while he is in the process of comprehending his ultimate purpose in the Lord. But he must still periodically ask the question: “What is *my* cross in following the Lord?”

Specific, Shorter Term Purposes

God has established the local congregation because it provides a focus for the Christian’s activities as he grows in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, and the leadership can provide ways in which the Christian can function increasingly effectively. This extended family of God serves as a stabilizing force in his life as he learns to hammer out relationships with people and the discipline of godliness, as he experiences the need to be encouraged and to be encouraging, and as he learns a whole host of other great lessons in becoming a kingdom person instead of a common person. In addition, the loving Father also has provided specific, shorter-term purposes in the realms of the family, occupation or business, lifestyle changes, responsibilities in the economic and political arenas, and in many other areas of daily living.

The key point to remember in dealing with all purposes, short-term or ultimate, is that “why?” is more important than “what?”. God sent His only begotten Son into the world to rescue the perishing; this is the *what*. But the *why* is that He so loved the world. The *why* is what puts power into the *what*; the *why* is the driving motivation for initiating and sustaining activity. A doctor who is mildly concerned about a child’s deteriorating condition is not nearly as motivated as a mother who will search the earth to find a dialysis machine for her only child, a thirteen-year old son.

It is critically important that each Christian be absolutely honest with himself and with God as to *why* he wants to work on a specific project or shorter-term purpose. Why does he desire a larger house - because he wants to impress the neighbors, because he wants a more convenient location, or because he has three kids stuffed into one small bedroom in a four-room house? The Christian must not cover personal *why*’s with what others would consider to be acceptable *why*’s. If a man wants a new house to impress his neighbors, he must admit that to himself and to God; otherwise he starts down the road of self-justification and final destruction. Only by dealing honestly with his purpose can the saint properly set his priorities, and only by carefully setting out his personal *why*’s can he provide himself with the sustained motivation necessary to carry out even his short-term projects.

God is at work in each Christian’s life, working as a loving Father, disciplining each for his good, that each may share His holiness. And what God is particularly concerned about is *motive*, and He is working to help each saint develop the same altruism which pervades the Father’s

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character. The hypocrites of Jesus' day gave alms to be honored by men, they prayed and fasted to be seen by men, and thus they received their reward in full. It was in the context of choosing to be seen by men or desiring to be approved by the Father that Jesus spoke these words: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will be your heart also" (Matthew 6:19-21). While selfish motives, honestly admitted, do put power and drive into personal accomplishment, pure motives will accomplish much more long term.

How to Find Purpose

The scripture is clear: "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (I Corinthians 12:18). All members of the body are not feet, or eyes, or the particularly visible parts; but all are important! The challenge to the sincere brothers or sisters in Christ is for each to find his current part in the body, and his long-term purpose.

"What can I do now?" is a question that must be asked. Am I able to teach a group of young people? Can I go out and set up individual Bible studies with a non-Christian, or do I still need someone else with more experience to show the way? Can I set a financial goal in my job or in my business and contribute an extra \$1000 for some special need or special phase of God's work? Are there some family priorities I can or should shift to increase the spiritual emphasis at home? These and countless other questions should be asked now.

But beyond that, each Christian needs to consider carefully what his long-term function in the body could be. What is the Christian mom going to do when the last of her brood flutters out of the nest? What can the businessman do when he has finally reached the point where he has more flexibility in finances and time? Does the young man really aspire to do the work of a true elder twenty-five years down the road? Does the young woman eventually desire to teach in a Christian school in some far off foreign mission? These and similar questions need to be asked, pondered over, written about, talked over, and the answers discussed and honed so that each servant of Jesus can develop an increasingly clear picture of what his ultimate purpose in Christ can be.

As each of the children of God works to determine his ultimate purpose in Christ, there are some important considerations:

- A younger person will have more a difficult time generally in determining his ultimate purpose. There are many "trials and errors" in each individual's life, and those help the saint to assess his personal strengths, weaknesses, and interests, and where he fits in the body of Christ. A younger woman will, if she is married, generally need to make her family her highest priority, and that will serve as an important fairly long-term purpose while she over time can develop her understanding of her ultimate purpose in Christ.

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Likewise, a younger man often has to establish his occupation or his business, and this again serves as an important fairly long-term purpose in the Lord. Older brethren can generally come to a more clear focus as how to spend their remaining years on earth. But all need to work on establishing this ultimate purpose.

- All need to assess their current abilities and capabilities. “For through the grace given me,” wrote Paul, “I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3). Being able to look honestly at current personal strengths and weaknesses, and being able to make an assessment as to what has to be done to strengthen those weaknesses and enhance strong points, in reaching for the individual’s ultimate purpose, are critical judgments that must be made *now*.
- A regular time to contemplate ultimate purpose should be set aside. As the Christian matures, growing up in all aspects into Him who is the Head, he can see changes in his course, which he needs to make. Or perhaps circumstances such as changes in health dictate a redirection of purpose. Good times to make such an assessment are at the beginning of every new year, or on a person’s natural or spiritual birthday
- A faithful brother will always carefully keep in mind that the Lord may have different plans than he. “The mind of man plans his way,” noted Solomon, “but the Lord directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). Those who plan to go to a city and engage in business, or any other endeavor under the sun, need always to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that” (James 4:15).

Determining ultimate purpose in the sight of God can be a great challenge. But like all challenges from the Lord, the rewards of meeting it and overcoming glitches on the way greatly overshadow the difficulties.

Strengthening Purpose

When the apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth, he noted that his reason for writing was to secure “undistracted devotion to the Lord” (I Corinthians 7:35). “The time has been shortened,” he said, “so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away” (I Corinthians 7:29-31). The Christian must recognize that the problems associated with daily living and the press of accomplishing daily activities can easily blot out his perception of his purpose.

Purpose puts power in living and sets bearings so that the daily activities of the sojourner can

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be purpose-directed and effective rather than scattered and whimsical. When the onslaught of daily emergencies and the struggles for survival overwhelm the brother or sister in Christ, and he becomes unfocused, then he loses the power for living and begins to wander in a wilderness of his own making. This obscuring of purpose is one of the major reasons for discouragement in the saint's life, and is one of the major tools Satan uses to render Christians and the church as ineffective as possible. It is clear that each faithful brother, in order to carry out the will of God, must periodically take time to review his ultimate purpose and the lesser long-term objectives, which flow from the ultimate purpose.

The Lord Himself implemented periodic review and reminder of purpose for His people in every age. He has always had memorials, both reminding the sons of men of a past event and focusing their attention on a future fulfillment. As the memorial is exhibited, the struggling descendant of Abraham can be called to a higher purpose than merely hacking his existence out of the jungle of his circumstances and can be in remembrance that the suffering he undergoes is directed toward a long-term objective of God.

- Following the Flood, God placed the rainbow in the clouds. This memorial to all mankind serves as a reminder that God once judged the earth by water because of man's sin and rebellion. "And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth" (Genesis 9:11). Implicit in the reminder is that God judges men for their sins; and the progressive revelation from Genesis establishes that eventually the earth will be destroyed by fire. The memorial of the rainbow recalls the history of the Flood, and it has helped every spiritually-minded person on earth for thousands of years to recall that his purpose on earth is not to serve self but to serve God.
- Joseph in Egypt was embalmed, and placed in a coffin in the sight of his family. Before he passed on, Joseph said to his brothers, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." He further emphasized, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here" (Genesis 50:24,25). For nearly 400 years the memory of Joseph stood amongst the sons of Israel as a memorial, calling to mind how God brought them to Egypt to preserve them and form them into a nation, and to recall that God was taking care of them and that they were to serve His purpose in eventually returning with the bones of Joseph to the land of Canaan.
- The Lord, in giving the Passover to Israel, required a yearly observance of eating a Passover lamb as part of the meal at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. "Now this day will be a memorial to you," He said, "and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent feast" (Exodus 12:14). The Father explained, "And it will come about when your children will say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' that you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the

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Egyptians, but spared our homes' ” (Exodus 12:26,27). The memorial feast, later to be observed in Jerusalem at the temple or in the homes of scattered Israel with thoughts of Jerusalem and the temple, served as a reminder for 1500 years that God had once delivered them from Egypt, and that their purpose, individually and as a nation, was to remain faithful, watching until the coming of the true Deliverer, the Prophet raised up as was Moses, the Messiah foreshadowed by David, and the Redeemer of Israel.

- The Lord’s supper, celebrated every first day of the week in the assembly of faithful brethren, was instituted as a memorial by the Lord Jesus Himself for the church. Of both the loaf and the cup He said, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (I Corinthians 11:24,25). Not only has this served as a reminder for nearly 2000 years of the deliverance from sin which Jesus accomplished for the saints, but it continues to focus our attention on our great and ultimate purpose in proclaiming the gospel to every creature, faithful until Jesus comes again. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (I Corinthians 11:26).

In each age the memorial used a past event and a future focus to fix the attention of the faithful on God’s ultimate and general purpose for their lives. The memorial served as a constant and regular reminder, lest the spiritually-minded lose their focus and suffer loss of motivation in the face of daily struggle and chores. Paul succinctly stated the general principle in closing his discussion on the resurrection from the dead. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).

Each Christian, to make the most of his time, not being foolish but understanding what the will of the Lord is, must have a clearly stated purpose. Following the principle exhibited by the Lord in each age, the faithful son of God keeps that purpose before himself through the general memorials the Lord Himself ordained, as well as through personal reminders, so that he has a constant fixation on his clearly defined ultimate objective.

It is best if the Christian can make sure that his ultimate purpose is in writing. Until ultimate and long-term purposes can be crystallized through the process of setting them down on paper, they are vague, somewhat disconnected and indistinct visions in the head, and do not provide the clear direction and strong motivation that purpose is to provide. The saint should develop the discipline to always work from document, transferring from somewhat unmanageable thought patterns in the brain to workable, discussible, concrete thoughts on paper. Through this process real reminders of ultimate purpose can be developed, the memorials of the Lord come to life, and this purpose is greatly strengthened in the mind of the believer.

Personal Example

All of the above can be a little vague. Having worked through the process myself over a

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period of time, I can share with you some of my journey in an attempt to bring the scriptural concepts into something more tangible.

Before I was immersed into Christ at the age of twenty-three, I was working in a copper and zinc smelter as an engineer, solving technical problems and supervising various phases of the production process. My goal was to be the chief executive officer of some metallurgical or chemical company; and I was in training at the company, as well as participating in civic organizations in the community to develop the personal skills necessary to accomplish that goal. When the claims of Christ were pressed on my soul through the word of God, I began to recognize that there was a higher purpose dictated by King Jesus Himself, and that this purpose involved going, making disciples of Jesus, immersing those disciples, and teaching those disciples to observe all that Jesus commanded.

One thing led to another, and I resigned my position and devoted myself to preaching and teaching, starting a new congregation in Bozeman, Montana. As I continued to review my ultimate purpose, the scripture passage in Ephesians 4:11,12, explaining that evangelists are to train the saints to do the work of service, came into a more prominent view. Recognizing that there always have been those who sit in ivory towers and pontificate to others while not knowing how to do the work themselves, I wanted, in the sight of God, to develop through personal example a means by which amateur Christians could be effective in carrying “the whole message of this life” (Acts 5:20) to the lost in the 20th and 21st centuries. By reviewing this purpose periodically, I have, by the grace of the Almighty, been able to put together a very effective track for new Christians to run on, a means by which they can be trained to communicate the truth of the scriptures to a lost and dying world, and a means by which they can also train others to go and do likewise. By thus entrusting these things to faithful men, who in turn teach others, the great commission of Matthew 28:19,20 is being carried out. By keeping this purpose before me, I realized that a key ingredient in the future of this ongoing process would be to rescue children, of Christian parents in particular, from the spiritual fires of disaster burning all around them. A major segment of my life, therefore, has been involved in helping congregations set up Christian schools so that young people can be made true disciples of Jesus.

Through the mercies of God’s kindness I have also recognized that my purpose is an ultimate purpose; it will not be fulfilled during the years of my sojourn. Therefore I do not need to have instantaneous results to satisfy an earthly craving; with God’s assistance I can continue to sow the seeds of a spiritual revolution and leave the harvest to the Lord. But in the midst of daily hassles, I can sometimes become frustrated with temporary difficulty, or just so overcome by the press of daily urgencies that I lose sight of why I am doing what I am doing; and I need to stop and review my ultimate purpose. This helps me to maintain a high motivational level, and it also helps me to periodically adjust my priorities so that I am not carried down the road of others’ series of emergencies and finding myself in a wasteland of long-term low productivity.

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Common Purpose

Nothing major was ever accomplished by an individual on his own. Again our Lord provides the perfect example. With twelve original apostles, and others such as the 70, He had a core organization in place to carry out His purpose; a small part of the purpose was to be executed while He was still on earth, but the people involved really provided the framework for the church after His ascension to glory. The body of Christ, organized by the Lord Himself, is a great example of how even the Lord needed many others to carry out His purpose, and the importance of working together for a common purpose.

On a smaller scale, most brethren, while establishing their ultimate purposes, will have family responsibilities. One of the great challenges for the Christian is to balance shorter-term family needs against the larger scale long-term purposes and ultimate purposes. Husband and wife need to communicate with each other about their purposes, and to work through the difficulties of occasionally conflicting goals and priorities. Here husbands have to be conscious of the personal priorities and capabilities of their wives, and to be aware that those are often more personal and family-centered than his. “You husbands, likewise,” exhorted the apostle Peter, “live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (I Peter 3:7). Sometimes Christian men think their wives’ desires and priorities are “dumb;” they need to understand the importance of those to the wives, and grant them appropriate honor as fellow heirs. Wives also need to recognize the pressure that can come on men as they try to balance church, career, financial, and family needs, needs which often conflict directly in the use of time. “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22). The men often have to make the final decisions on their time, financial, and family matters, and it is critical that women making a claim to godliness strive to make those decisions work. Communication, love, Biblical principles, and great patience are required to hammer out these sorts of family purposes and priorities. “To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing” (I Peter 3:8,9). And families are always blessed when the major purpose of the family as a whole is to set the priorities of the church of the living God foremost on its list, to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

There are myriads of other group activities in which Christians and Christian families are often involved. Everything from intramural soccer teams, to organizing a family wedding, to a special task force on the job, or getting a group of men together for a round of golf are examples of some projects in which there is a group purpose. The common purpose needs to be clearly understood and defined. For many, the purpose is obvious; but for some of the more complex task forces, the purpose needs to be worked out with the same type of open communication and feedback as in a marriage. God wants Christians to be “harmonious” in their dealings with others.

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The central common purpose is the work of the local congregation. The Lord is the one who designed the church and who commanded that the brethren were to set the church and the righteousness of God as highest of priorities. The complex interrelationships and changing relationships in the congregation as people mature in the Lord or fall away from the living God, and as new people are added to the body, all need to be worked out in the sight of the Lord and His chosen angels. Jesus has given the structure, directions, and purpose of the body of Christ as a whole in the writings of the New Testament, and one of the main functions of local leadership is to keep this scriptural focus before the congregation. There are those who are selfish and intend to use the local church and her resources for personal purposes. There are those who feel pressure to conform to the world and desire that the brethren with whom they are involved alter the church so that it is not so offensive “to the community.” These and other problems are those which continually need to be thrashed out in light of the great topics contained in the epistles of the New Testament. Above all, all faithful brethren are to be mindful that the overriding purpose of the church is to spread the word to the non-Christians, to seek and to save the lost.

Through all these relationships and sorting through the determination of common purpose, brethren in Christ must maintain godliness, a Christ-like spirit as they forge their teams and focus on their purposes. If an individual has controversy within himself as he strives to determine his ultimate purpose in Christ, it is realistic to expect that there will occasionally be controversy in the family and other group-related activities in determining purpose. When there are purpose-related conflicts, scriptural precepts must be kept in the forefront. After the requirements of the word of God are met, then there can be some mutual compromise, so that the legitimate needs and concerns of each member of the group can be satisfied. If tempers have flared, or someone has been hurt in the process, then the Biblical principles of forgiveness and reconciliation are to be implemented also.

The scripture is clear; there is no such thing as loving God apart from loving man. “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (I John 4:20). God has so ordered things that the church is the place where the redeemed of the sons of man learn love in the process of developing the teamwork necessary to achieve common purpose.

Burning Desire For Great Achievement

Certain types of “fanatic” devotion are acceptable in a worldly society. The gladiator in the days of Rome, daily, diligently, disciplining himself and constantly practicing for a brief moment in the sun at the Coliseum, was regarded as a hero rather than a fanatic. A lad today who dribbles a basketball everywhere he goes would be complimented; one who carries a Bible with him everywhere would often be scorned. If some young person were to spend as much time in prayer as the average youth of America spends watching television, he would certainly be regarded as some sort of “nut case.” Certain types of “fanatic” devotion are acceptable in a worldly society.

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To be at the top of a profession, to be “the best” at anything, requires constant focus and long-term discipline and devotion. When a Christian comes to understand his ultimate purpose in the body of Christ, when his lofty calling in Christ pulls him upward, he will develop a desire that burns within and a concentration which impacts those around him. Generally a man or woman, who has been able, by the grace of God, to arrive at this level of intensity, is told by his peers to “lighten up,” even in the body of Christ. But when a Christian’s ultimate purpose is clear to him, and he has eternity in focus rather than earth, he is going to press on with every fiber of his being, in the same way as Moses endured, “as seeing Him who is unseen” (Hebrews 9:27).

Our Lord set the great example for us. From the time of His immersion in the Jordan, His life was marked by a singular focus and driving desire unequalled by any other who has trod earth’s surface. When He first drove the sheep, the doves, the oxen, and the moneychangers from the temple, “His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house will consume Me’” (John 2:17). This burning, white-hot intensity is what built the basis of the movement resulting in the church, but also what got Him crucified. He was regarded as a fanatic by His own family, who came with the equivalent of long, white coats to take Him away. “And when His own people heard [of Jesus’ working and teaching so much that He and those with Him did not have time to eat], they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, ‘He has lost His senses’” (Mark 3:21).

For the Christian to be productive at the high levels which God expects from those who are to make good use of time, he must develop a similar type of focus and white-hot intensity. But there seems to be something in the fleshly side of a man which despises excellence in others, particularly when the excellence challenges that man to perform at a higher level himself. So when Christians begin to exhibit single-minded purpose consistent with scripture, they can expect ridicule and scorn from many of their family members and former friends. Those who are earth-centered have a different set of values by which they analyze the use of time than those whose minds are “set on the things above” (Colossians 3:2). As one who carries the name of Christ, each believer must make use of all the people skills described in the New Testament; the child of God does not need to be deliberately “weird.” But to be a “wise man” in the use of God’s time, each of the brethren must determine his ultimate purpose and keep that ultimate purpose before himself continually, so that his zeal for the work of the Lord continues to intensify.

When the Lord rebuffed the church in Laodicea, the remonstrance was over this issue of zeal and intensity. “I know your deeds,” stated the Alpha and the Omega, “that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15,16). Following this stinging rebuke, the Lord provided the solution: “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:19). The Lord approves burning intensity in the Christian soldier, regardless of how much men may try to “throw cold water” on his great attitude, quench the fire of his desire, or impede his progress.

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Summary

Every Christian must work to develop and understand his ultimate purpose in the kingdom of God. There are lesser fairly long-term purposes, such as raising a family or establishing a business, which do provide sustaining motivation; but the teaching of the Lord Jesus is that His followers are to work on major projects which continue to move forward after each of the faithful has passed from earth. Related to this framework of individual purpose are common or shared purposes, such as family purpose, a group project, or goals of the local church.

To keep his bearings and to continually upgrade his intensity, the member of the body of Christ must regularly review his shorter-term and ultimate purposes. The grind of daily activities can obscure why he is doing what he is doing, cause him to lose focus, and thus produce discouragement and loss of motivation. By periodically reviewing the big picture, keeping track of important thoughts on paper, the saint can develop the burning intensity for the kingdom desired by God.

Purpose puts power into living. “Know-why” is stronger than “know-how.” Without the development of strong ultimate purpose, “making the most of your time” is meaningless; time, in order to be used properly, must be purpose-directed.

Goals and Activities

Groundwork and Definitions

The things which man comprehends, he comes to know by three processes: observation, reason, and revelation. As the world moves into what is being called “the post-modern era,” all three legs of the knowledge triangle are being attacked by post-modern philosophies. “No one can observe anything with 100% certainty,” cry the metaphysicians. “People reason differently, and no one conclusion is better than another,” shout the philosophers. “If there is a God, however you think he speaks to you is fine. Do your thing and let us do ours,” intone the rationalizers. Decrying the existence of absolutes, these three monkeys of modern ignorance claim to see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. But for those who refuse to be carried along by these winds of insanity, these three - observation, reason, and revelation - stand as the means by which anyone can establish the framework of reality. By objective observation and by clear reasoning, man can understand the physical realm which he occupies. But observation and reason alone cannot penetrate the spiritual realm; hence the need for revelation from God, that through the Bible man might become aware of spiritual truths.

Much about time management can be learned from observation and reason. Thus the children of the world, who intend to be productive and who have not been carried off into the

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realm of total relativism, can understand and develop much good material concerning the use of time. As long as the sun still shines on both the evil and the good, the same principles of getting the most out of every minute apply to the Christian and non-Christian alike. Thus the scripture concentrates on helping the imitator of Christ develop a strong spiritual underlying purpose; and since the details of time usage can be determined by reason and observation, the revelation from God simply says, "Make the most of your time." Much of what follows, therefore, has been gleaned from the reason and observation of men, with effort made to be sure that it is consistent with the tenor of the New Testament.

This section deals with goals first, then activities. Goals are defined as specific objectives or results, while activities are specific actions which need to be arranged in a step-by-step fashion so that time is managed effectively and goals are accomplished on time.

Importance of Goals

The importance of goals in the life of the brethren cannot be overstated. Someone has jokingly said, "I didn't set any goals last week, and I achieved it." Without goals, the individual spins like a weathervane; he can be busy, but he is going nowhere.

Goals provide direction and meaning for activity. Imagine a boys' soccer game. The red team and the blue team line up to play, but they have been told that "competition is bad," and that today there will be no goals and no score kept. In just a few minutes the boys will be aimlessly and listlessly kicking the ball around, and before long they will want to quit and go home. Without goals at each end of the field, there is no direction in which to kick the ball, and without scores the game is pointless. The same principle applies to all aspects of life; without goals there is no direction, and without some way of keeping score life is aimless and pointless. Using an illustration from the ancient Greek Olympics, the apostle Paul made a similar point: therefore I run in such a way," he told the Corinthian brethren, "as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air" (I Corinthians 9:26).

Goals therefore tend to intensify activity and increase efficiency. When a professional football team has less than two minutes left, when it has the ball, and the scoreboard shows it is four points behind, the players know precisely what their common objective is, and what the time constraints are. With the game "on the line," the level of activity for the whole team really intensifies; the linemen are crisp in their blocking, the receivers run their routes with precision, the backs charge into the gaps with power, and the quarterback moves the team down the field with great concentration. And, with less than two minutes of game time left, the team "manages the clock," making every second count. Again this example illustrates the great principle of life: *goals intensify activity and increase efficiency.*

The powerful motivating aspects of real goals in giving direction and meaning to activity, as well as intensifying action and increasing efficiency, ring from Paul's words to the Philippians:

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“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of [the resurrection from the dead] yet but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on *toward the goal* for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13,14). Without a fixed goal, no one presses on; with a clear goal and a powerful purpose, the Christian, like Paul, is an overwhelming conqueror. Goals are important!

Nature of Goals

To be effective, goals need to be specific. An indefinite, vague, nondescript goal is really not a goal at all. If someone were to say, “I hope to get started reading the Bible sometime soon,” what is voiced is a vague good intention, but not a goal. Goals generally require a specified achievement: “My goal is to read the entire New Testament.”

In addition most goals, to be really operative, must also contain a specific time frame: “My goal is to read the entire New Testament by the end of this month.” Without the specific time set as part of the goal, the statement is open-ended and therefore not really a goal. Even Paul’s statement that his goal was to attain to the resurrection of life was time specific in that his faithfulness was required to the end of his physical life; the end of his sojourn on earth was in this case his time component.

Some goals are easier to define in concrete terms than others. Goals that have a certain physical or measurable element can be defined clearly; “mental” or “attitude” goals, for example, are more difficult to crystallize. One of the appeals of sports is that its goals during game time are very specific. As previously mentioned, the scores are recorded and generally very visible, the amount of time left is apprehended by all, and both spectators and players have a clear picture of what needs to be accomplished. Even longer term goals such as placing in the upper half of the conference or winning the league championship are specifically defined. But a goal such as “change the attitude of the team from being a bunch of backbiting, excuse-making losers to having a positive, winning spirit” can be very difficult to define in concrete terms. This type of goal requires some real creativity to be broken down into clear and measurable components, but failure to do so leaves it as a misty good intention, ethereal and rarely if ever accomplished.

Bite-sized, Achievable Goals

A goal that is unachievable is in reality not a goal; it is a phantom that may serve as an attempt at self-justification, but it is not a goal. One of the dangers for the Christian is the potential for self-delusion. Among scriptural warnings about this self-deception is this from James: “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22). One of the means by which an individual may delude himself is by setting lofty “scriptural” goals which are currently well beyond his reach. Because he inwardly knows the result is for him currently unattainable, he really makes no effort to achieve the goal and is in effect a “hearer of the word” and not a “doer.”

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The key to setting achievable goals begins with making a realistic assessment of present performance. One of the functions of God's grace is to allay fears. Christians are reminded that we have a high priest who can "sympathize with our weaknesses," and that we are therefore to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15,16). Man tends to "tell fibs" because he wants to cover his lack of performance; his inclination is to be afraid to be accountable before an Almighty God; and, in a childish throwback to Adam and Eve's hiding from God in the Garden, he convinces himself that if he lies about his performance, God is therefore unaware also. Of course, the fact is that God knows the failures and successes of each person; the problem the Father has is getting man to admit his shortcomings and to be honest about his failures. It cannot be overemphasized, then, that one of the great purposes of grace is to destroy the fear barrier between a now-reconciled man and his God so that he may make this real and important assessment of his current performance. Again, as the inspired Paul pointed out in exhorting the brethren not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). An honest assessment - that is what God wants.

Honest assessment and honest accounting are synonyms. But the concept of accounting conjures up mental pictures of records, files, and charts. As we previously mentioned, unless the goal can somehow be quantified, it is really not a goal. But the areas which need to be quantified in the goal setting process are the same as what are going to be measured to assess current performance. So there is going to have to be some sort of bookkeeping where there is a record of the specific factors used in goal setting.

Say, for example, a young Christian couple operates a small business out of their home for extra income. They would like to plan for having a baby in a year or so, and be able to pay anticipated hospital and related medical expenses from their small business income. There are several immediate bookkeeping details which come to mind. Obviously they need to get some "having a new baby" cost information from currently available medical *records*. Then they need to look into the *records* of their own small business, and use those *records* to make projections as to increased sales in relation to increased profits, and what activities are actually more profitable than others. Suppose for a minute that they had not been keeping good business *records*, and while they thought they were making a small amount of money, they actually suffering a small loss through extra car expense. Suppose the husband, then, in his infinite wisdom, decides that the way they are going to have the cash up front for the new baby is by doing three times as much in this business as they had already been doing. Because they did not keep good *records*, their increased activity actually moves them away from their actual goal rather than toward it.

The above example illustrates what happens to many well-intentioned people when they attempt to set some personal goals. Without records of current performance in important areas related to the goal, the Christian, by simply making an uninformed or poorly thought out decision

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to increase his activity, can actually move away from his desired goal.

Let's consider a more complicated, more difficult-to-assess goal. Suppose the teachers in a Christian school want to do something to produce "better attitudes" among the junior high school-aged students at the school. The term "better attitudes" has to be more clearly defined and somehow quantified. After some discussion, the expression "better attitudes" was clarified and narrowed to a more specific topic of "showing respect as evidenced by the children's saying such things as "Thank you, sir" and 'Please, may I, ma'am,' to the school staff." The staff agreed that due to time and energy limitations on their part, they could not afford to do any precise study on exactly how many students ever said, "Please," "thank you," "Ma'am," and "Sir," but all agreed that the number was so small that they would be able to notice any significant improvement. They also agreed once a week in their staff meetings to honestly assess their personal discipline in treating the young people themselves with respect as an important and Biblical first step, to assess their discipline in requiring each student to respond with respect every time, and to assess whether these practices were beginning to improve the respectful attitudes of these students. The staff recognized that any changes would have to begin with them first, so they wanted some built-in accountability toward each other. They also recognized that they needed some sort of regular accounting of progress among the students, and whether progress in respect was reflecting back on overall improvement in attitudes and performances. They were also willing to recognize that there would most likely be a time delay between implementing their "respect requirements" and the resulting desired improvement in school attitudes and performances, and were willing to evaluate the whole experiment after six weeks of consistent effort by the staff.

The above example illustrates to some degree the type of creativity required in achieving a complicated goal wherein personalities and not-easily-quantified factors are involved. The change in attitudes would have been reflected in test score averages and days in which all homework was done, which are more clearly quantifiable. The key factors were still some built-in accountabilities on the part of the school staff. In order for real goals to be set, there have to be charts, graphs, bookkeeping, or some sort of definite quantity whereby the goal-setter can assess his current performance and by which he can measure his progress. Without factors which can be quantified, and without the willingness to be accountable, there can be no real goal setting.

Again, the scripture reminds each Christian "not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment" (Romans 12:3). One of the purposes of having some sort of accounting system is so that the goal setter can accurately analyze his current performance level, so that he does not think more highly of himself than he ought to think. From this basis he can now make a realistic projection of what his next goal should be; he can exercise "sound judgment" and be "sensible," as the Holy Spirit exhorts in His word. A good goal often has a certain amount of realistic stretch built into it, but an unrealistic goal (let me again emphasize) is really no goal at all.

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The most important aspect in bite-sized, achievable goals is that the child of God establish confidence by developing a pattern of success. There are those, even of the world, who have developed these patterns of success in their lives, who generally achieve their goals (whether or not “their” goals are godly and moral is another question). Those who have a track record of setting and achieving goals are prepared to reach for what others would consider impossible. But a struggling saint whose past consists of a string of failures needs to set goals he can achieve, and then he needs to reach them every time at first. Over a period of time his confidence in the Lord grows, and he can set bigger goals with larger challenges built in. As he grows “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18), his faith increases, and he really begins to believe that he can say with the apostle Paul, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). *The most critical point in whether the Christian is going to transform those good intentions into living habits is the developing of a pattern of success in setting and achieving bite-sized goals.* Do not overlook this point, and do not avoid it.

Activities

Activities are a series of actions carried out to achieve a goal. As previously mentioned, a simple goal and an activity can be synonymous. But a more complex goal requires a series of carefully planned activities. Most people are busy with activities, going here and there, doing this and that. But the secret of “making the most of your time” in accordance with the Biblical injunction is to make those activities line up and build upon one another, rather than being scattered and comparatively ineffective.

Planning Activities

There is a natural tendency to use the “bull in the china closet” approach to goals and activities, to have an idea of the goal you want to achieve in your head and then to rush headlong into what seems to be the first activity. But a man who is anxious to get out on that construction job and get things going may find himself 40 miles from nowhere and missing an absolutely essential tool. A little bit of planning and checking, lining up activities first before anyone plunges into the work toward the goal, can really save time and money, and greatly increase the effectiveness of those activities. It may save a lot of time to sharpen the ax before chopping at the tree.

When it comes time to start planning, the brother or sister in Christ needs to consider carefully certain things about these activities in order to fit them into their proper slots. How difficult is the activity? Do weather conditions or other factors play a part in whether it can be done at all, or later when more favorable circumstances arrive? How much time is it going to consume? How many people are going to be involved? Are there scheduling problems which must be worked out ahead of time? Who may be in possession of important information, and what more experienced or spiritual person may have valuable input or a critical perspective? Because the number of potential details to be considered can easily be myriads upon myriads,

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good planning, in the economy of the Lord, is essential to making the most of the short time allotted to each faithful follower of Christ on earth. It is a truism worth repeating: “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.”

Considering Some Difficulties

Personal growth is involved in becoming a partaker of the divine nature. Like overcoming sin, the laying aside of the encumbrances of poor time usage habits and the formation of good ones is often accompanied by frustrations. Learning to plan is like learning to walk; you just have to stay with it until you get it. “Be careful how you walk... making the most of your time.” Generally speaking, successful planners are developed through trial and error; those who have succeeded have simply been willing to maintain good attitudes through many failures.

Developing the habits of goal setting and accomplishing the planned activities are part of sowing to the Spirit rather than sowing to the flesh. A Christian can “lose heart” in doing good if he fails to keep in mind that he is making a spiritual investment. As with all sowing and reaping, there is a time delay between planting and harvesting. But because God wants His children to acquire His time management character, He guarantees the “harvest” for the Christian who sows to the Spirit in this manner. The saint of God must remember that the Lord of the harvest ensures that the rewards of becoming a good planner and executor are worth the mental anguish involved in reaching that level of performance.

Recapitulation

While God lays down the spiritual framework for the brethren, expecting them to become good managers of time, the specifics of time management can be determined by reason and observation. Thus the Christian is permitted to draw on the good experience of mankind, using the tools developed for time management, so long as those principles do not contradict the tenor of the New Testament.

Goals are results to be achieved within a certain time framework; activities are the specific actions to be lined up to achieve those goals. Simple goals are often accomplished with a simple list of activities; complex goals often require extensive analysis and creativity so that the planning of activities actually achieves the goal. To be effective, goals must have some sort of measurable quantity which can be charted, graphed, or kept track of, so that the activities can be monitored and progress toward the goal can be noted. Goals without these characteristics are not really goals; they are mystical good intentions. Good goals, on the other hand are critical to making the most of time; *goals intensify activity and increase efficiency.*

Because there is a possibility of the Christian deluding himself, being a hearer of the word rather than a doer, he has to pay close attention to advice about accountability, tracking progress,

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and setting bite-sized achievable goals in the first place. Realistic assessment of current performance, developing a pattern of success before attempting “lofty” goals, and determining reasonable built-in stretch in goals are all important factors to keep in mind while progress is being made toward the result. *The most critical point in whether a Christian is going to transform good intentions into living habits is the issue of developing a pattern of success in setting and achieving bite-sized goals.*

Life on earth is fraught with many frustrations; planning is difficult to do well, and many things simply do not turn out as planned. Each of the brethren needs to keep a good attitude through those difficulties, trusting God, and trying again. Learning to plan is like learning to walk; you just have to keep trying until you “get it.” But God guarantees the effort made in developing good time management habits will reap a reward far greater than the mental anguish the struggling saint experiences while he is in the process of partaking of this particular aspect of the divine nature.

To really make the most of the time, every saint must carefully define goals and delineate activities so that he is accomplishing what he needs to, and is not just “spinning his wheels.”

Daily Lists and Priorities

Setting the Stage

Unless a Christian is truly motivated to “make the most” of his time, he will not take the disciplined steps necessary to become a good planner and a good executor. We discussed, then, the development of an ultimate purpose in the life of the disciple of Jesus as a powerful and permanent foundation for motivation during his entire earthly sojourn. In the next section we examined the importance of goals as a desired result to be achieved by a certain time. In connection with goals we considered the necessity of breaking the goals down to specific activities, and arranging those activities so that they add up to achieving the goal rather being scattered and the effort vaporizing. Having thus begun with the general principle, we have now come to the specifics of making it all work: the use of daily lists for tasks and priorities.

There are essentially two groups of people within the body of Christ - the doers and the dreamers. Sometimes the point is illustrated in the humorous note that there are two types of people in the church, the pillars and the caterpillars; the pillars hold the church together, and the caterpillars crawl in and out every Lord’s Day. Another way of stating the point with a slightly different emphasis is that there are those who make things happen and those who make excuses. Those who make things happen don’t make excuses, and those who make excuses don’t make things happen. It all comes back to this poignant statement from James: “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22).

The doers work from lists; some work from mental lists, but most work from written lists.

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Dreamers, those who merely hear the word, just sort of do what comes to their minds, and what they feel like doing at the moment. Dreamers survive; doers redeem the time.

Advantages of Daily Lists

The more complex and technologically developed a society is, the more options of activity there are from which the Christian can choose. In times past a preacher could only travel by boat, horse, or by foot, and the distance between places where he could deliver the message of God was comparatively limited. But with automobiles and air travel, the options increase greatly, to say nothing of desk top publishing, video production, audio cassette tape production, e-mail, and the internet. It is a basic axiom: the more potential there is for good, the more potential likewise for evil. With all those options, the more potential there is for wasting time in being entertained, or for making a poor choice in regard to the best option; there is also tremendous potential for multiplying effort and being able to reach the whole world. The planning process requires thinking through the various possibilities, and the decision point comes when it is time to record specific activities on a daily list. Those who use daily lists, then, have some distinct advantages over those who operate “by the seat of their pants.”

- Daily lists preset the mind. Someone who does not use daily lists has a tendency to be lackadaisical about projects to be done; he tends to do them as he “gets around to them.” But when a disciple of Christ takes the time to work through the planning process, as he writes his daily goals on his list, a certain determination pervades his mind as he mentally works through his list of things to do. A person who shows up on the job mentally organized and ready to work at the opening bell is much more efficient than someone who mentally begins to wake up at starting time and then tries to figure out what to do. Similarly, the Christian who has written down and gone over his daily list before the day begins has his mind preset for performance.
- Daily lists are visible reminders. What often happens is that brethren become so focused on a project or the completion of a project that they lose their bearings and don’t know what comes next. Without a written list, saints lose valuable time in trying to remember what the next activity is; or, worse yet, they forget to carry out an important task; or they just do the first thing they think of. With daily lists they have visible reminders to keep them on track and moving forward on high priority items, and thus are much more productive.
- Finishing the list becomes a goal. When the follower of Christ has trained himself to set goals and meet deadlines, he often experiences an extra surge of productivity when he has the potential of marking everything off on his “do list.” Over a year’s time those little surges of extra productivity add up to a lot that wouldn’t have gotten done otherwise.

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- The visible list allows for more creativity and more flexibility in prioritizing daily activities. Creativity is very hard to pin down and identify because it primarily works with new and unexpected arrangements of ideas and practices; but creativity is a major factor in boosting performance (“work smarter, not harder”). Having details written down on a list frees the mind from the load of carrying those details and opens up “hard drive space” for creative thinking. Part of creativity is prioritizing activities so that first things are done first and second things are done second, and the visual list can be easily marked in priority order. The list also aids in making sure that certain normally low priority items are handled before they cause a major problem. Filling the gasoline tank in your automobile normally might not be a high priority item, but in looking over your list of things to be done, you might note a series of meetings where the schedule is going to be tight, and stopping at the gas station early in the day might prevent a time-eating crisis later. “A stitch in time saves nine,” and a little creativity and prioritization often forestall emergencies and make the day go more smoothly and efficiently.
- The use of daily lists helps free the user from being crisis-directed. Many Christians, particularly those in some sort of management position, note that during the day they simply move from crisis to crisis, and thus are governed by their circumstances rather than being in control of their time. This feeling of being “behind the eight-ball” is very frustrating, and brethren in Christ need to use many scriptural injunctions to keep their attitudes positive while they work through the difficulties. The diligent use of good planning procedures and daily lists will generally enable the saint to work his way out of the crisis-directed environment; emergencies tend to come in waves, and with some practice, the individual can, to an amazing degree, anticipate when those happen and plan accordingly. Example: The bulletins I distribute on Lord’s Days and save up for a bimonthly mailing are printed in two-color format. Because of the time it takes to run one color of ink on the printing press, clean the press, and run black ink on the printing job, it is very important that I print one month’s two-color format all on the same day. So at the end of every month I have to make sure that I have the material written for a “month of Sunday’s,” that material typeset and ready to print, and then printed. What I noticed was that a whole bunch of emergencies tended to pile up around the first day of every month also. So by shifting the cycle of printing the two-color format of those bulletins to be ready for the second Lord’s Day each month rather than the first, I was able to eliminate some of the crisis atmosphere, and my month’s work was more evenly distributed.
- Daily lists help to create time for planning and achieving long term goals. One of the major difficulties brethren encounter is being so overrun by daily emergencies that they do not have time for big picture planning. The result often is that fifteen or twenty years pass by, and the saint has not yet begun to work on his vague and distant long term goals. Daily lists help solve this problem in two ways. First, the use of daily planning increases efficiency and thus offers time for thinking out and working on long term goals. In addition, the brother or sister, by recording daily lists, has the opportunity to specifically

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block out time to plan major and complicated projects, thereby greatly increasing the likelihood that he will actually get something done in that direction.

In simple terms, the usage of daily lists is the difference between getting things done in an efficient manner and having most things that should be done vanish into the atmosphere of “might have beens.” The basic scriptural principal is to live one day at a time, and for each saint of God to make sure that he maximizes his efforts that day; if he works, let him work; and if he can have a day of rest, let him rest. By taking care of each day’s activities, tomorrow is prepared for in the best possible way. In the words of our Lord: “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34).

How to Make Daily Lists

Every personality is diverse from all others, and the exigencies of each person’s circumstances require different approaches. The time challenges I faced and the daily list I used while an engineer for a large metallurgical company are much at variance with the problems and techniques of time management I encounter as a preacher of the gospel of God. The time constraints were different, and the work setting was different. As an engineer, I had my own office and desk at my workplace, and it was comparatively easy to keep all work-related thoughts, projects and appointments organized. As a preacher I have a “community office” at a church building, an office set up at home I can use in rushed 15-minute increments before I charge off to the next appointment, and miscellaneous stuff thrown around in the back of my automobile. Pocket planners were too small for all I need to keep track of; and notebook planners were too cumbersome to carry with all the other things I drag along to Bible studies and meetings. So I designed a month-at-a-time planner modeled off Franklin® planners and Day Timers® which I use in conjunction with a computerized organizer system I keep on my lap-top computer. This works for me, if I keep working it. Each person has to experiment to find a system which functions for him. A daily list can be a simple pad of items to be checked off each day to one of the variegated planners and planning systems available on computers or on the commercial retail market. Some suggestions:

- Use the system every day. The most important aspect of daily lists is to form the habit of using them. Once the habit is ingrained, the system personally used can be improved.
- Find some way to keep all notes and items which need kept track of in one place in conjunction with the daily list. Scattered notes and lists are very difficult to keep organized, and not only is precious time lost in looking for missing notes, but there can also be a great deal of frustration (and consequently a compounded loss of efficiency due to the concomitant attitude struggle). Keeping track of telephone calls, notes, and reminders in the same place where the daily list is kept greatly reduces those types of problems. But don’t be frustrated while the mental habit of always recording those notes

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in one place is being formed; such habits take some work and persistence to develop.

Prioritizing Daily Lists

Not only is it important to have a daily list, but it is also important to set priorities as to what needs to be done first and next. Some items need to be dropped from the list or shoved off until the next day; some items jump up to the immediate or emergency status. Every daily list needs to have some system of prioritizing connected with it, or the high priority elements will tend to be left undone. High priority projects often have difficult or unpleasant sub-points attached to them, and unless a Christian has trained himself to set a scale of urgencies and carry that list out in order, he tends to toss the projects with precedence into his procrastination bin. “Do lists” are particularly effective only when they are prioritized.

Brethren in Christ need to remember that the injunction of the Lord is to make the *most* of time and not just to do something somewhat productive with time. When the disciple of Christ sets priorities, and then does the highest priorities first, he greatly increases his effectiveness because he continually accomplishes important tasks and his time is not wasted in doing the little comparatively unimportant projects. Similarly, when the disciple has trained himself to consciously order his list and to work down his list in order; he is not directed by sudden whimsical notions which destroy long term productivity; he develops the consistency critical to the high-performance life-style which glorifies Christ.

In understanding what the will of the Lord is concerning time, every member of Christ’s church has to make wise decisions regarding with whom and with what projects he will spend that time. When the saint makes the effort to thoughtfully prioritize his daily list, he can effectively juggle and balance those difficult and often sensitive relationships between tasks and people. He must pray for wisdom and discipline!

Brethren often find themselves stuck in a rut of low productivity. This rut can be deep because of an accumulation of past habits and entrenched routines. It can be a major challenge to be freed to perform at a higher level of productivity because many other entanglements would have to be altered simultaneously for any significant improvement to occur. The process of planning, lining up goals and activities, and making a prioritized daily list is the only good mechanism for breaking loose from old routines. Every Christian should periodically review his weekly routine; generally there are some unproductive meetings, Bible studies, jobs, and time slots in that week where some shifts in priorities could be made. The Bible study, which once was productive, may now be a drag, but no one wants to take the energy to drop or alter it. Weekly grounds cleanup during a construction phase of a church building may once have been high priority, but now the routine needs changed. Only by consciously rearranging schedules and setting the new priorities on the daily list can the disciple of Christ break through his cut-and-dried, stale, low-productive weekly schedule and begin to do bigger and better things for the Lord.

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Prioritizing the daily list and carrying out those priorities is the means by which the saint takes control of his time and therefore of his life. Wise men take heed; the foolish continue to plunge along, drifting and thrown by circumstances which always seem out of control.

Dealing with Interruptions

There are such things as uninvited visitors, unplanned phone calls, and unexpected circumstances. Some of those need to be handled with grace, some need to be accepted with the humility worthy of one who trusts God, and some have to be dealt with summarily. “The mind of man plans his way,” noted Solomon, “but the Lord directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). Time and chance, he averred in another place, overtake both the strong and the wise (Ecclesiastes 9:11). There always has to be flexibility in each brother’s attitude and schedule for interruptions, major and small.

- The exhortation from James is: “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that” (James 4:15). The Lord is in control of life and death and all lesser things; the saint always leaves room in his planning and thinking for the sovereign will of God. Thus, there are circumstances which on occasion will explode carefully laid plans. Accept, rejoice, and be thankful.
- There are important interruptions from people which need to be handled with the grace characteristic of one who names the name of Christ. Grandmother needs to be seen right away; the son or daughter needs immediate attention, or a fellow saint needs some quick advice over the telephone. Sometimes other projects or appointments need to be rescheduled to accommodate the interruption; sometimes the situation can be handled courteously but quickly. There is much to learn from the scriptural example of Jesus as He dealt with all kinds of people, many of whom were interruptions. But, praise God, He met their needs and yet successfully carried out His appointment with the cross of Calvary on time! May the saint go and do likewise.
- Interruptions, however, will totally destroy a Christian’s productivity if he does not eliminate or delegate many of them. Some people are “killing time,” avoiding work, and looking for an opportunity to engage in unimportant conversation; the disciple with the open door or ready access by telephone is a good target. Some people are trying to get undue attention; the brother or sister who is working on a very long term project or plan can be an excellent mark for manipulation by those who skillfully play on the instrument of unneeded sympathy. The disciple needs a closet where he can pray without interruption, and he requires time and places to work without the distractions. Secretaries, answering services, and answering machines help solve the telephone problem. Finding a secluded and private workplace assists in working out projects which require protracted effort and concentration. But sometimes the saint simply has to

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have the resolve to just say, “No. Not right now.” Then he can schedule a time for a meeting, or direct the individual to someone with whom he can arrange an appointment.

- Days consist of a stream of minutes. A mighty river does not reject a trickling tributary; its swirling currents recall its small beginnings and recognize its surging flow resulted from and is sustained by its rivulets. He who would direct the day, then, manages the minute; the trickle of minutes constitute the stream of the day and the surge of another year passed by. The faithful brother can save minutes by pre-organization, by thinking ahead. He can save minutes by being concise and brief on the telephone. He can save minutes by meeting someone at the other party’s place or on neutral ground so that his leaving ends the appointment promptly and easily rather than in some uncomfortable hinting process that time is moving on. His saving of those otherwise wasted minutes gives him more time to handle those important family and church-related “interruptions.” In the saving of minutes is the creative capacity of the saint most exercised.

Overcoming Difficulties in Making Daily Lists

In the struggle to be organized and efficient, the sector of the mind which is part of the outer man tends to resist discipline and begins to generate objections. The mind is usually smart enough to find some legitimate grounds for its justification; there are real difficulties and challenges in forming the disciplined habits of using daily lists and setting priorities. But those objections and difficulties must be overcome.

- Someone may say, “I don’t have time to sit down and write a bunch of stuff on paper.” While there are times that emergencies require immediate action before there is an opportunity to get anything written down, the small amount of time it takes to make and keep a daily list is a minuscule investment in comparison to the time and hassle it saves. The Christian must stress to himself on a regular basis the benefits which come from a prioritized daily list in order to overcome his mental sluggishness.
- “It doesn’t do me any good to write down my list. I’m at the mercy of too many people and their emergencies.” Actually, in this type of situation, it is even more critical that the holy one of God keep a written list because the emergencies and interruptions here tend to knock a person off his organizational pins. A written “to do list” has the previously noted advantages of having the next item directly in front of the individual so that he does not have to try to dredge the particular from his memory; when he gets a few moments of respite, he can immediately do something on his pet project. Our quote in this paragraph really comes from a person who is frustrated at being placed in what he considers to be a pressure-cooker environment; he needs to make the best of his situation by adjusting his attitude or developing the mental toughness so that the load does not seem so heavy (or changing to another line of work), and by actually using better time management skills rather than giving up.

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- “I can write my list down, and then my boss [husband, parent, etc.] comes along and changes everything.” Again, this is not a reason not to keep a list; this is a greater reason for the saint’s keeping a list, and learning to be flexible while continuing to work to achieve those goals.

Most of the difficulties in keeping a daily “to do list” come from within rather than from without. The flesh has a tendency to rebel against being made to conform to any sort of regular discipline; it will work to produce legitimate-sounding excuses for not yielding to the habit or routine. “So then, brethren, we are under obligation,” Paul informed the brethren, “not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh - for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:12,13). Here, in forming the habit of using daily lists, is a practical and important example of subjugating the flesh to the will of the inner man. The saint must recognize the source of the struggle when it comes, and, through the strength of Christ within, handle it.

Some Suggestions

Since making daily lists is a habit, here are some suggestions for forming and maintaining the routine:

- Have the desk on a special place set aside for working over the daily list.
- Work on the daily list at the same time every day, if possible. Late at night organization tends to prepare the mind for tasks the next morning. Early morning checking the list gives opportunity for rearranging items based on late breaking information, and for preparing the mind to keep track of all those little details involved in a day’s work.
- Have some way of writing down notes and reminders so that they show up at the right time on the daily list.
- Planners of all kinds are readily available. Find one which works, and then use it!

Get Those Projects Done

No map was ever made which carried its owner over an inch of ground. No daily list was ever written which magically jumped up and accomplished the tasks denoted. The daily list is of zero value unless the faithful Christian trains himself to work down the list, and not skip over the difficult items. Brethren need to be doers, not drifters or dreamers.

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Conclusion

The whole process of establishing daily lists, coupled with purpose, goal, and activity planning, comes down to what is going to be done each day. Those who make the most of time make the most of each day; those who do not discipline themselves to carry out a daily list are comparatively unproductive and violating God's injunction not to be foolish. God wants His children to understand what His will is, and be very disciplined and productive in using the small vapor of time allotted to each life.

If you continue to think
Like you've always thought,
You'll continue to get
What you've always got.

Is that what God wants?

Setting the Tempo

Resources

The scriptural exhortation to make the most of time is at the center of all productivity, whether the projects be great or small. The major resources of productivity can be brought under the acronym TEMPO.

T Time
E Energy
M Money
P People
O Organization

Time, personal energy, and money are generally the limited resources; the principle of scarcity applies here. For those who desire to be productive in Christ, there is always a shortage of time; and, as we have noted, the seconds continue to tick regularly away, never to return. There is also a shortage of personal energy; no matter how robust the carcass, the body operates inside humbling limitations, needing sleep, rest, time off due to sickness, and occasional relaxation. Money is also a limited resource; there is never enough to pay for all that everyone would like to get done. The way to solve the personal time, energy; and money crunch is to make use of the comparatively unlimited resource - people. But unless the people are organized, they are of no benefit at all.

At the hub of all these resources is the systematic and disciplined use of time. Personal planning techniques underlay all other resources.

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Energy

Personal energy varies from individual to individual, and younger people tend to have more energy than older people. But energy comes at a premium, must be conserved, and natural daily ups and downs have to be considered. Here again, good time management is involved; because of the circadian or daily rhythm, it is generally better to schedule high priority paperwork and high intensity projects for the morning hours. Of course, if an individual has been working straight night shifts, then he is not likely to be capable of high intensity paperwork in the mornings. Because of the great variation in personal energy and because of the different types of schedule that is has been running, each Christian's daily plan will be carefully tailored to factor in these energy considerations.

Personal energy must also be carefully considered when weekly or monthly activities are being planned. I got trapped in a very difficult situation in coming back from Ghana, W. Africa, one summer. Since the only connections I could get out of the airport of the capital city, Accra, were on Wednesday night, I had no option but to take them. So it was an all night flight from Accra to London, then day flights from London to New York, New York to Salt Lake City, and Salt Lake City to Bozeman. After essentially zero sleep on the flights or in the airports, and undergoing a six hour time change, we arrived at the Bozeman airport at 11:00 p.m. Thursday evening. Our Family Camp, of which I was in charge, began on the next day and continued through Labor Day Monday; and with jet lag, somewhat difficult sleeping conditions, and people and details to keep track of, I had no recovery time. Furthermore, immediately after Family Camp our Christian school began, and again I had no opportunity to rejuvenate. It was a nightmare. Sometimes we just have no choice but to endure what the apostle Paul called "sleepless nights." But if the opportunity is there to plan around those energy difficulties, saints should carefully do so.

Money

The old proverb says, "Time is money." The thrust of the proverb is to communicate the value of time, and the underlying message is not to waste time. But money will purchase time in the sense that tasks which can be delegated can be hired out to someone else, freeing up the possessor of cash reserves to use his time more effectively rather than getting bogged down in more menial uses of time. And time should be spent in planning the most effective use of financial resources. But the topic of financial stewardship is so large that it requires a chapter all by itself. Money is scarce, and is a major factor in all planning and decisions.

People

There are roughly six billion people wandering around the earth's surface, and they

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constitute virtually an unlimited resource. Where some of those must be paid wages for their time, then their involvement is limited by financial considerations. But when they can be recruited as volunteers or as self-sustaining partners or associates in an organization, then those limitations are removed, and the people recruited for the project or crusade can become a very powerful force. Our Lord's plan for bringing people into the church is masterful, drawing, in the words of the apostle Paul, "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," and turning them into an ever expanding mighty army which no one can stop. But it takes time to recruit, time to train, time to motivate, and time to meet all those personal needs.

Organization

Once the people are recruited into an association, organization, or project group, then trained and motivated, they still have to be organized or nothing gets done. And it takes time to organize, and to keep everyone organized. But when people are organized and pointed toward the same goal, then projects get done. Anyone who thinks he has to do it all himself isn't going to get much done; organizing the unlimited resource of people is the key to overcoming all other obstacles.

Our Lord's Example

Our Lord Jesus, as might be expected, led the way in showing how to make the most of time. From the time of His immersion at the hand of John the forerunner, Jesus operated with the full knowledge that the cross awaited Him in Jerusalem at Passover, 30AD. He was responsible for building a movement inside Jewish society which had sufficient momentum to carry on following His death, making sure that all Old Testament scriptures were fulfilled, and yet carrying out His personal devotional life. Let us note, then, some of the aspects of the upbeat TEMPO from the days of Jesus' life on earth.

- **Time** - Jesus managed time perfectly. He fulfilled daily personal goals and He fulfilled His big picture goals. Early in His ministry Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, performing miracles and preaching and teaching in the synagogues. Step by step He gathered His followers, had word of His activity spread throughout Judea and Galilee, extended His mission to draw attention in Samaria, eliminated weak followers, and set the stage for the spectacle of His crucifixion at Jerusalem.

His daily goals dovetailed with His overall plan, so that their accomplishment moved His agenda forward rather than sideways or backward. While He was in semi-hiding at the place where John the Immerser first was lowering Jews into the Jordan, the sisters of Lazarus sent word to Him that Lazarus was seriously sick. Jesus deliberately let Lazarus die, then raised him from the dead in the presence of both favorable and hostile witnesses. The hostile witnesses informed the entrenched Jewish hierarchy of the Lord's

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activities, and then the final determination was made for His death. The favorable witnesses informed the multitudes coming into Jerusalem for the Passover, setting the stage for His triumphal entry into the city on the donkey's colt. He was very conscious - noticeably so - of exactly what He was doing every step of the way, and when the day arrived that He should go to Bethany to raise Lazarus, He expressed His consciousness of the time in the form of a question to the apostles: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (John 12:9).

In spite of the pressure to get those things done which would enable Him to achieve His big picture goals, the Christ never lost sight of the importance of daily personal spiritual goals. It is evident that He memorized the word of God, studied the word, and was personally prepared for His teaching and preaching opportunities. But especially in the matter of prayer our Lord showed how to maintain an important personal habit. It was He who taught all His followers through the ages to pray for their daily bread. It was He who taught His disciples by word and by action to go to their closets and pray. Of the beginning stages of His ministry it was written: "And early in the morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out to a lonely place, and was praying there" (Luke 1:35). And at the end, during His last moments of freedom, when the mob came from the temple to arrest Him in Gethsemane, He was praying.

Our Lord "managed the clock." He maintained His personal spiritual goals in order to keep His fellowship with the Father intact and deep, and met the deadline of His calling to Calvary. He could rightly exclaim with His last breath, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), and the Spirit would later record, "At the right *time* Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). What a legacy!

- **Energy** - Since our Lord "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7), He was subject to the same physical limitations as the rest of mankind. Certainly on occasion He walked on water or was instantly transported to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but these were to demonstrate His divinity rather than to give Him an opportunity to shortcut His humanity. He had to conserve His energy during "low" times so that He could perform at a high level during "crunch" times. Thus we find Him resting at Jacob's Well in Sychar while the apostles had gone into town for food, or sleeping in the back of the boat even during a monstrous storm. But when He needed the energy, He could act with a fiery zeal that struck awe into His adversaries and inspired devotion in His followers.
- **Money** - While Jesus was once upset that there were no figs on the tree, He was never upset that money did not grow on trees. Biblical money was metal, as in silver or gold; in later years it was coined, and it was a measure of labor. Money came as a result of selling furniture from the carpenter shop, or extra fish from the Sea. When Jesus set aside the life in Nazareth to become an itinerant Jewish rabbi, He and His men then had to be supported out of others' private means. The money was to be handled honestly,

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and it is significant that the one who betrayed Him was the one who did not handle the financial stewardship entrusted to him honorably.

- **People** - The Son of Man was particularly conscious that the job of saving the world could not be done by Him alone. During the time He spent on earth, He limited Himself to going “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24), and He even told the twelve as He sent them out that they would not finish going through “the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23). The concern of our Lord was to recruit, train, equip, and strengthen men and women to carry out His task. Overall His mission had begun long ago, noted in the days of Abraham, and yet will not be finalized until His second coming. During His earthly ministry He recruited twelve as specially chosen, sent out 70 others, and involved multitudes in His work. With limited time, energy, and financial resources, even Jesus solved the problem by recruiting others to accomplish His mission.
- **Organization** - The mere recruiting of people, even by Jesus, would not accomplish anything until those people were organized to work for specific purposes. While Jesus “dwelt among us,” one of His main goals was to lay the groundwork for His organization, the church. Jesus specifically trained the apostles, and promised them that the Holy Spirit would be sent to bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said to them (John 14:26). And He considered His organizational structure so important that He warned men, through His servant Paul, to take care how they built, and that if they destroyed His organization, Jesus would destroy them (I Corinthians 3:10-17).

Walking in His Steps

Those who seriously desire to walk in the steps of the Savior will be very conscious of maximum use of time. This use of time not only involves maintaining the habits of personal devotion and personal efficiency, but it also includes consideration on how to involve, train, and motivate others. Each saint must take steps, then, to become an up-TEMPO Christian, working through time management techniques to conserve and utilize personal *Energy*, being a wise steward of *Money*, working with and through *People*, building an effective *Organization*.

Partakers of the Divine Nature

Through Precious and Magnificent Promises

The apostle Peter noted that God’s divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness” (II Peter 1:3). The apostle further noted that the great and awesome God “called us” out of abject darkness into His marvelous light “by His own glory and excellence.” Having tethered brethren’s thoughts to the power connected with viewing Christ in glory, Peter,

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through the Holy Spirit, used these words to communicate the potential of each saint, “For by these [God’s glory and excellence] He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (II Peter 1:4). God has laid His precious and magnificent promises on the line so that Christians might imitate His character. What a tremendous amount of power!

Learning from God

God plans, God executes, and God rewards. The disciple of Christ needs to learn how God carries out His work in the realm of time and become a partaker of the divine nature by imitating His heavenly Father.

The Bible records what has been appropriately called “the unfolded plan of God.” God’s plan for Christ, the church, and the world was set down in prophetic form in the writings of the Old Testament so that all might know that the gospel was not a plot hatched in the Garden of Gethsemane by the apostles. Peter stated the point clearly in his message at the beginning of the church; in regard to Jesus, he said that He was “delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). God plans. And those who partake of His divine nature plan also.

Not only does God plan, but He also executes, and He executes on time. In the word of the Lord it is recorded that “when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son” (Galatians 4:4), and “at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). God is the ultimate master of the old saw: *Plan your work, then work your plan*. God executes, and on time. And those who partake of the divine nature learn to execute their plans, and to execute on time also.

Finally, God rewards. He rewards Himself in what He gets to show and to share with His inheritance, the triumphant saints. The Father raised His children from the waters of immersion in the likeness of Christ’s resurrection from the dead and seated them with Christ in the heavenly places, so that in the ages to come He might demonstrate the surpassing riches of His grace; that is *His* reward. Jesus stated the same point in different words in His prayer for glory recorded in John 17: “Father,” He prayed, “I desire that they also, who You have given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory” (John 17:24). This desire of Jesus was the joy, the reward, which He set before Himself in order to be able to endure the suffering of the cross. The point is clear: God rewards. And those who partake of His divine nature learn to reward themselves with a fitting and spiritually-based recompense for a goal achieved and a job well-done.

One important side note: The Christian must have the discipline to withhold the reward for himself until he achieves his goal. One of the major problems of socialism is that it rewards individuals when they do not produce, and more than one babe in Christ is adversely affected by

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that destructive world view. The eventual result of the ideology of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need,” carried out through force and conscription, is the eventual implosion of the whole society. The brethren need to extricate themselves from the chains of this destructive philosophy, and reward themselves only when they accomplish those goals. No goal accomplished, no reward!

Imitators of God need to implement all three aspects of the character of God in order, in this segment of Christian living, to become partakers of the divine nature. Plan the work, work the plan, reward the achievement.

Exhortation

God doesn't want to raise any foolish children. And one of the areas He specifically singles out is the use of time. The exhortation is to be wise, to make the most of time, because the days are evil. “Do not be foolish,” says His Holy Spirit, in regard to time, “but understand what the will of the Lord is.” The true son of God really cannot ignore this spiritual injunction.

Good time management begins with developing ultimate purpose in life. The purposeless individual has no particular interest in using time wisely; he is more interested in “killing time.” While many brethren develop long-term purposes in their lives, and those long-term purposes often provide much motivation and desire to use time wisely, they fall short of an ultimate purpose, a purpose connected with the kingdom of God which carries on after the saint has been gathered to his fathers. One of the deepest drives implanted in those who were once born of flesh is to make their lives count, to have a legacy which lives on. The most important general action a disciple of Christ can make is to determine his ultimate purpose in the body of Christ.

The individual without goals is generally unmotivated and definitely directionless. Goals need to be set inside the framework of purpose, and need to be result specific and accomplished by a set time. The words of Jesus in response to Herod's desire to see Him reverberate hauntingly through the souls of the redeemed, “Go and tell that fox,” said He, “Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal” (Luke 13:32). Those who make a claim to walk in His footsteps are moved by His great example to set meaningful goals.

Goals are just a note on a piece of paper or thoughts on a scrap of brain tissue until they are translated into a series of activities leading to the accomplishment of the goal. Purpose provides power and motivation, goals provide measurement and direction, but activities accomplished - items checked off on a daily “to do” list - are what translate good intentions into “done” deeds. Brethren must become “doers” of the word, and exhorted to act rather than be self-deceived.

Systematic planning is essential to making sure that overall purpose is not lost in the rushing tide of daily affairs, to ensure that goals are being set and met, that daily activities actually move

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toward the accomplishing of goals, and to make certain that important items are not neglected or forgotten. The serious saint will institute an effective planning system in his life in order that he might make the most of time.

Ultimately, the child of God becomes an imitator of his Father; he becomes a partaker of the divine nature in the use of now-shortened time. The disciple notes that the Father plans, executes on time, and rewards; and the disciple therefore goes and does likewise.

The exhortation from heaven's court is for each of the brethren to maximize the use of his time on earth. Failure to heed this injunction marks the so-called disciple as a fool, and convicts him of a grave sin. But the follower of Christ who heeds the imprecation from heaven will develop the habits connected with effective use of time, will therefore do his part to forward the spiritual revolution, and will be greatly rewarded in heaven. The words from the scripture are worth quoting again:

*“Therefore be careful how you walk,
not as unwise men but as wise,
making the most of your time,
because the days are evil.
So then do not be foolish,
but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*

Summary

- Time cannot be saved or hoarded; it must be spent in regular increments.
- God desires that His children use time wisely.
- No one is going to undergo the rigors of the discipline it takes to be a good manager of time unless he has a strong purpose in his life, a driving desire which produces an urgency, a sense that many important things must be done and that there is very little time to do them.
- Each Christian, in the likeness of Christ, is to develop an ultimate purpose, a reason for working for the kingdom of God so large that the fruit of the labor will continue on after his death. If the purpose can be completed during the individual's earthly sojourn, it is not ultimate, and therefore will not provide the motivation for a strong finish to earth's activities.
- The Christian needs to find where he fits in the body of Christ, and recognize his importance in furthering the plan of God.

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- Periodic review of ultimate purpose is necessary; otherwise daily hassles and challenges of living obscure the long term view and destroy motivation.
- God has arranged for Christians, for their own personal development, to have common purposes in working together in the church.
- The Father in heaven desires that saints, in the footsteps of Jesus, develop a white-hot intensity similar to His zeal as they zero in on their ultimate purposes in Christ.
- Purpose puts power in living.
- Inside the framework of purpose, goals must be set. Without goals, the saint spins like a weathervane; he can be busy, but he is going nowhere.
- Goals intensify activity and increase efficiency.
- Goals need to include a specific result, to be accomplished at a specified time.
- Goals must be based on a realistic assessment of current performance, including factors which can be identified and monitored along the way. These goals must be bite-sized, achievable but with some realistic stretch built in.
- The most critical point in whether the Christian is going to transform his good intentions into living habits is the developing of a pattern of success in setting and achieving bite-sized goals.
- Activities are a series of actions carried out to achieve a goal.
- Activities need to be planned so that they line up and build upon one another rather than being scattered and comparatively ineffective.
- Activities must be translated into a series of items on a daily “to do” list.
- Daily lists offer many advantages, including the following: they help the saint of God preset his mind and increase his determination and efficiency, the lists are visible reminders, finishing the list itself often becomes a goal and thus performance is improved, use of the list offers more opportunity for creativity and flexibility, they help the user to become free of being crisis-directed, and lists help the brethren to create time for planning and achieving long term goals.
- Once the habit of using daily lists is ingrained, then the system personally used can be improved.

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- Daily lists of activities need to have the items prioritized in order for the list to assist the saint in making the most of time.
- He who would direct the day must manage the minute. He must learn how to deal with interruptions, setting aside the unimportant, shifting his schedule to accommodate the important, and trusting God to direct his steps.
- The fleshly side of man tends to resist the forming of the habit of making daily lists and generates plausible-sounding excuses for not doing so. The follower of Christ must overcome his personal internal resistance by focusing on the benefits of keeping a daily “to do” list.
- On a larger scale, the resources of productivity can be brought under the acronym TEMPO: Time, Energy; Money, People, and Organization.
- The limitations of personal time, energy, and money can be overcome by effective planning in recruiting people and organizing them.
- God plans, God executes on time, and God rewards. The Christian, as a partaker of the divine nature, learns from God and thus learns to plan, to execute on time, and to have an appropriate spiritual reward for himself when he has completed his goal or major project.

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Chapter 7 — Faithful in Little Things

“If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust true riches to you?” (Luke 16:11).

Money and Spirituality

The use of money by a Christian is a barometer of his spiritual atmosphere. Certain characteristics point to fair weather ahead, and others signal that a financial and spiritual storm is approaching his horizon. While there are some major economic factors which lie outside the control of the saint, God holds him responsible for fiscal matters which fall in the pale of his authority; and the disciple of Christ, within those major parameters, can determine much of his financial destiny.

In what is called the parable of the unjust steward, Jesus described a man who had been placed in charge of another’s pecuniary affairs. The problem with this financial consultant was that he was either a crook or a poor manager, and he squandered his master’s possessions. So his master told him, “What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward” (Luke 16:2). The steward knew that his time was up and set in motion a plan so that after he was fired by his master, he would have places to stay until he died. And the master praised the manager for his shrewdness in setting things up for his retirement years (it is important to note that the whole situation was precipitated in the first place by the steward’s dishonesty or incompetence).

Jesus went on to discuss several items of significance from the parable. One of the points He made was the importance of little things as indicators of the character of the individual. “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much” (Luke 16:10). The story is told of a man who was being interviewed for a high level executive position at a new location within his company. Because the interview was in the afternoon, he was able to fly into the city in the morning and eat lunch at the company cafeteria before the formal assessment of his capabilities began. Unknown to both him and his interviewer, because they had never met, they were standing together in the cafeteria line, the interviewee being in front of the interviewer. The interviewee put several items from the rack onto his tray, and in the process slipped his dessert item somewhat under his coffee cup and saucer so that it was hidden from the girl who was ringing up the prices; he therefore did not have to pay for the dessert. The man trailing him noticed it, and when the interview time arrived and they were introduced to one another, what a surprise! After the meeting was finished, the interviewer explained to the interviewee: “Your qualifications and past record are outstanding; except for one little detail, you would be the man for this high level position within the company. You see, I was the person standing in line behind you at the cafeteria today, and I watched you hide your dessert so you would not have to pay for it. The position you have applied for is one of great responsibility, and we need a very trustworthy individual to fill that slot. In the small matter in the cafeteria, you demonstrated your lack of character, and I regret to inform you that you have been turned down in your application for this upgrade in your position in our company.” He who

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is dependable in a very little thing is dependable in much; he who is untrustworthy in little things is untrustworthy in big things.

Jesus used this point to make His next: “If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust true riches to you?” (Luke 16:11). Several things from this statement of the Lord stand out for the disciple of Christ. The first is that Jesus regards the stewardship of financial matters (mammon) as something spiritual. Secondly, it is clear that He regards the stewardship of these finances as the lowest of spiritual responsibilities. Thirdly, the Lord indicates that if a man does not have the discipline and wisdom to handle his fiduciary affairs, he cannot be trusted to handle the more important and challenging spiritual issues which arise. And this is a point for all brethren to mark down in their memories.

All the money belongs to God, and anyone who has financial resources needs to be in constant awareness that those resources are God’s and come from God. As Paul remonstrated the Corinthians, “And what do you have that you did not receive?” (I Corinthians 4:7). Because those resources really belong to God, and come from God, each who possesses has a stewardship entrusted to him by the Father, and the Father holds him accountable for the use of that mammon. Hence it is, that as the Christian moves forward on his spiritual journey, he soon encounters the challenges of discipline in finances, and these disciplines must be mastered before the follower of Christ can be entrusted with other spiritual responsibilities.

Income and Outgo

Beginning Resources

The resources of financial stewardship begin with the Christian’s income. If he has no income, he has no resources. The only basic source of income is labor, and the place where labor is first productive is in that which comes directly from the ground. Because the body of man is a machine that must eat, at the primitive level all labor is first concerned with getting food; hunting, fishing, and farming occupy most of a family’s time. Of course tools are needed to hunt, fish, and farm, and a family needs shelter, so a simple “wood products industry” is necessary, as well as simple mining for metals.

In a more complex economy there is a greater degree of specialization — specialization due to the development of more complex machinery and the expertise required to operate it, and specialization just because specialists are more efficient. Thus a Christian in a more complex or developed economy can think past mere subsistence and contemplate some sort of specialty as his source of income. In 1900 AD, for example, the American farmer fed himself, his family, and three other people; the bulk of the population was therefore rural and functioned at little more than subsistence level. One hundred years later, the American farmer feeds himself and 139 other people; the bulk of the population is urban and most income is derived from specialized skills, sales, or service. The Christian has many more options for income, but faces many more subtle

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pitfalls as a consequence.

All this is hard physical or mental labor, and is attended by all kinds of problems due to the curse that was placed by God on Adam. “Cursed is the ground because of you,” said God. “In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:17-19). Whether the problems are the thistles and thorns, mildew and blight that the farmer directly faces, or whether they are machinery breakdowns and delivery “snafus,” fighting through the curse is a part of daily living. Man, ancient and modern, has a natural tendency to try to duck the curse. Some try to avoid working and are easily converted to welfare drones. Some turn to outright thievery; others set up schemes to bilk the unsuspecting of their hard-earned finances. The scripture exhorts believers not to participate in any attempt to make an end run around the curse. “For even when we were with you,” Paul recalled for the Thessalonian brethren, “we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread” (II Thessalonians 3:10-12). And the disciples in Ephesus were exhorted, “Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28). The Christian man in particular, as the one who is to provide for his own household, needs to move past slothfulness and illegal or immoral activity, and honestly and fairly produce an income in the economy in which he functions.

Some Basic Economics

When a Christian, praying for wisdom, contemplates his options for income generation, he needs to be intelligent and aware of the economic forces at work around him. Today’s child of God lives in a world in such a state of change as has never existed before, as near as we moderns can tell. In a very short time, complex economies have gone from horse and buggy to jet transportation, from Pony Express letters to telephone to e-mail, from barter system to shopping malls to electronic commerce. A person who is not wise can find himself still trying to make a profit by producing low-cost wagon wheels for a society that drives automobiles. So a basic understanding of economics is necessary for the follower of Christ to make his way through the haze and hub-bub of the modern market place.

The Bible, along with all its other great characteristics, is the best and only totally truthful economic text, containing “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (II Peter 1:3). Since economics is one of the major factors of life, the word of God has plenty to say on the topic, on both a personal and national level. While many get caught up in micro-economics, macro-economics, Keynesian economics, and other fancy jargon echoing in ivory towers, what each child of God needs to remember is that any object only has value when some descendant of

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Adam puts value on it. Snow has great worth on the ski slope, but residents of Minneapolis won't buy snow in January no matter how low the price; they put no value on it. A similar scenario occurred with silver in the days of Solomon: "And all the king's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; silver was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon ... And the king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem" (II Chronicles 8:20,27). Because silver was so common, men of Israel put no value on it.

All economics begins with people putting value on items they want. The next step, then, is to negotiate the worth of the object with the possessor or provider, if he is willing to trade or sell. At the most basic level, the purchaser must be willing to trade a certain amount of his labor for the object of his desire; he will work for his food, clothing, or shelter.

The next step upward is a barter economy. Here object is traded for object; chickens are traded for yams, for example. The barterers are conscious of the work which went into the production of the chickens and the harvesting of the yams, and are essentially haggling over how much labor each is willing to trade for the other's product. A barter economy, because the trade is goods for goods, is of necessity a primitive economy because it is essentially an exchange of bulk for bulk. But it is also a comparatively honest economy; each of those engaged in the trade has been able to see and to handle what he is trading for. " 'Bad, bad,' says the buyer; but when he goes his way, then he boasts" (Proverbs 20:14).

The barter system is unwieldy; it is difficult to trade 27,000 chickens for a piece of property. So a suitable means of the measure of labor had to be found wherein the measure of labor could be used to purchase goods or property. Most economies settled on precious metals as measures of labor; gold, silver, or copper would be weighed out in the commercial exchange. Because the economy is no longer a barter economy, the possibility for dishonesty in trade increases; one individual is trading actual goods and services for a measure of labor (the gold or silver), and if there is something wrong with the measure of labor, the seller of goods or services is cheated. Metals such as gold, silver, and copper were chosen because they were comparatively rare, their purity could be reasonably easily ascertained, and they were dense and therefore had great value in a relatively small space. When Abraham, for example, purchased a burial ground for his deceased wife, Sarah, "Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard" (Genesis 23:16). In weighing the silver, the "commercial standard" was used, but if the weights in the bag had been crooked or the balance beam off, then Ephron the Hittite (who put up tangible property in the exchange) would have been "ripped off." God had numerous warnings about such thievery: "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight" (Proverbs 11:1). Another proverb adds, "Differing weights are an abomination to the Lord, and a false scale is not good" (Proverbs 20:23).

Over time the weighing out of precious metals was replaced by coins of standard weight minted by city-states or national governments. "Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax," said

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Jesus. “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” (Matthew 22:19,20). The denarius was a copper coin of standard weight, which was the equivalent of a day’s labor in the life of a field hand. Now the possibility of deception shifts from the individuals who are buying and selling to the government which mints the coins. The coin could be impure or of slightly less weight than claimed; Caesar would be skimming off the difference, and thus stepping into the realm of that which was called an abomination by the Lord. The coins were much more handy for commerce than when a balance and weights had to be set up for every transaction, and they worked well as long as the government was reasonably honest and the coins trusted.

With the invention of the printing press came the development of the paper note (sometimes euphemistically called “money”) as a money substitute. Paper is much easier to carry than silver or gold coin, and a person could carry a considerable amount of paper without being conspicuous, whereas someone loaded with gold coin would be more easily marked by thieves. Men began storing their gold and silver in banks, and the banks issued certificates or notes saying that the paper note could be exchanged for “specie” or real coined money at any time.

The development of paper notes made for the next further expansion of economies, but it also set the stage for the next form of thievery. The bankers soon figured out that the number of notes turned in for redemption in gold or silver was only a fraction of the amount of gold or silver they were storing. Consequently they began issuing much more paper than they could cover. If a banker, for example, was holding \$3 million in gold and silver assets, he might issue as much as \$9 million in notes. In the process the banker himself pocketed or spent \$6 million which he didn’t have (that is, that which he stole from the value of currency already in circulation by issuing the bogus notes), resided in a big house in the snootiest neighborhood, and lived high on the hog. Thus the crooked banker cleverly positioned himself as a respectable and upper class citizen of the community while he was in fact its biggest thief. And as long as the bank building was of granite and looked solid, the people had confidence in the paper in circulation. But the banker’s secret fear was that an instability would develop, the people would begin a run on his bank, he would not be able to cover the accounts, and he would be exposed for the thief he was.

The bankers, then, began to ban together. In the United States, in 1913, they were able to persuade Congress to pass the law establishing the Federal Reserve System. Among the things the Act accomplished was that it gave the established bankers a long-term stranglehold on the economy, it made the taxpayers liable for any bank failures, it legitimized the thievery by legally setting the percentage of reserves banks were to retain as assets, and it gave the thieves the most honored cloaks of respectability. Month after month the whole world waits in breathless expectation while these suited brigands decide the interest rates and other parameters determining how much legalized looting of the public they will accomplish this month. The deception and dishonesty is so subtle that the majority of Americans are not aware of its existence, but it is nonetheless massive in scope.

The final stage for these bankers is to set up a global banking system. In so doing they will have accomplished on a world scale what they have essentially completed within the United

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States. Under this global banking system, all inhabitants of the earth will be brought into an economy called debt capitalism and will be slaves to the bankers and their political henchmen. “The rich rules over the poor,” said the sage of Proverbs, “and the borrower becomes the lender’s slave” (Proverbs 22:7). “Is it not the rich,” added James, “who oppress you and personally drag you into court?” (James 2:6).

The debauchery of the U.S. currency began in a major way in 1933. In that year Congress, under persuasion from banking interests, made it illegal for American citizens to own gold for circulation as money. Step by step, both gold and silver were eliminated as backing for the currency, and all currency — paper and electronic — is fiat money, money because the government says it is. Thus currency, which is to be a measure of labor, is totally cut loose from reality and is subject to plastic manipulation by the bankers to serve their own interests.

Inflation occurs when currency is created out of thin air (like inflating a balloon). In the U.S. the inflationary cycle begins when the Federal government needs to borrow money from the Federal Reserve System (generally about 80% of the indebtedness is covered in this manner). If the U.S. Treasury required \$200 billion from the Fed, the Fed would simply create the money out of nothing and essentially use the word of the U.S. Treasury as an asset. The fresh \$200 billion would draw its value from the rest of the currency in circulation; the value of that which was already in circulation would decrease, and the decrease in the value of the currency would be noted as a rise in prices. Inflation is the increase in the currency supply; price increases are a result of the inflation of currency. Inflation is created by the Federal Reserve System, and is the modern form of having two sets of weights in the bag. It is a wicked form of stealing, hurting the poor and those on fixed incomes the most.

In Minsk, Belorussia, under Communist domination, a grandmother wanted to have some extra money set aside for her grandson, who was born with what seemed to be a weak heart. Having one of the few small plots of private ground left from before the Communist revolution of 1917, she raised fruits and vegetables and sold them on the streets and in the subway entrances. Over a period of fifteen years, laboring hard, standing in the heat and cold, drizzle and snow, she was able to save about 1,000 rubles. Since the ruble was officially worth \$1.25 U.S. in 1980, she had set aside a sizable sum by Russian standards. But with the yoke of Communism ostensibly removed, the ruble was then inflated. Before long it took one thousand rubles to equal one dollar, and after several more years it was 250,000 rubles to the dollar. The thousand rubles which the grandmother had saved were essentially worthless; her hard labor was stolen by those who inflated the currency.

Today’s Christian, far removed from a barter economy or the weighing out of silver, must be very aware of the subtleties and deceptions of the modern marketplace so that he can be a good steward of God’s resources. Otherwise, he, like the unjust steward of Jesus’ parable, will be accused of “squandering” his Master’s assets. “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil,” warned the wise and experienced apostle Paul, “and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang” (I Timothy 6:10). The Christian

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first of all needs to be forewarned about wanting “more and more” because of the danger that he will wander away from the faith; but he also has to be conscious that the love of money is the root of many evils under the sun. Satan uses the fleshly desire of men for unrighteous mammon to promote all kinds of evil schemes — everything from drug running to prostitution rings to stock market scams. As the saying is: If you want to find out what is really going on, follow the money trail. The Christian is to be cognizant that not only is he being targeted on a personal basis, but global forces — “world forces of this darkness” — work on every segment of every society in the world through advertising, news media, and entertainment, herding the sheep into the collectivist corral and fleecing them on the way.

The forces of evil and the devil are battling the forces of good and God, and nowhere is the combat more ferocious than in the area of finances. Satan’s henchmen engage in massive thievery and deception and work to subdue the world so that it is their ultimate monopoly. These words of the Lord Jesus are to be taken seriously: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will be your heart also” (Matthew 6:19-21). The labor of a lifetime can be stolen in a few moments by modern electronic robbers and global connivers; the labor of love for the souls of men will never be lost. The child of God may be tempted to change his religious convictions in the face of pressures from the world to conform or starve, but the Lord again anticipated such developments: “But seek first [the Father’s] kingdom and His righteous, and [food, clothing, and shelter] will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Knowing the basics of economics helps the servant of God to avoid the traps of Satan, engage in commerce intelligently, and have the proper convictions about Biblical directives for finances.

Income

To have finances for stewardship, the faithful follower of Christ must have some sort of income, and the Biblical view, therefore, is that man is to have dominion over the earth. “Be fruitful [productive] and multiply,” said the Almighty, “and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). From the time he first tended the Garden of Eden through the modern era, man was to till the ground and husband its livestock, providing for himself and his family, and offering stewardship and thanksgiving to God. Thus it is that all wealth, as mentioned earlier, comes from the ground, and all commerce, sales, and service is built upon mining, timber, fishing, and basic agricultural industries. The forces of evil are attacking this Biblical base, asserting that harvesting of trees, digging for minerals, fishing the seas, and plowing the ground are upsetting the balance of “nature,” and disturbing the “harmony” of the spirits. This well-funded eco-spiritual agenda is a deliberate attempt to bring western civilization, based on “Moses, Jesus, and Paul,” to its knees, and to use New Age paganism as a revolutionary tool to destroy freedom and Christianity. The effect of the United Nations’ attempts to impose offshoot Hinduism on the world is that it destroys sources of productivity and income at the root, and

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obliterates many of the options Christians have for resources to promulgate the gospel. As the tiller of the ground must invest time and energy to beat back the briars, brambles, thistles, and thorns in his harvest field, so the Christian must invest time and money to educate the public about these spiritual thistles and thorns; he must set aside a portion of his income to eradicate, through education, these noxious eco-spiritual weeds, or he will not have any fields in which to labor for the Lord.

The Christian comes into the modern world, not the ancient one, and to earn an income he has to do battle in the contemporary economic arena. In the modern marketplace, as the servant of Christ enters into the modern equivalent of “labor, performing with his own hands what is good,” there are some general points he should keep in mind as he develops an income.

- The believer in Christ should always exhibit a great attitude in his work. Slaves in the first century were told that whatever they did, they were to do their work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men (Colossians 3:23). If slaves were to have great attitudes in their work, how much more should modern brethren display cheerful and willing dispositions as they approach the tasks set before them. Employers appreciate willing and upbeat employees; the follower of Christ who does his work heartily will find that he can compete effectively for jobs in the marketplace, and thus begin to provide an income.
- Not only does the Christian need to demonstrate a positive and willing spirit, but he also needs to produce quality work in a reasonable time. “Do your work,” says the scripture. The work is not going to get done all by itself; the saint has to discipline himself to jump right into the project without wasting precious minutes, and to keep hustling to save time and steps without decreasing the quality of production. He must do his work “as for the Lord rather than for men.” The Lord knows whether every screw has been properly driven or whether any “dust bunnies” were left under the bed. The Christian who works with verve, produces the quality of workmanship that his boss desires, and is a good team player will find that he can more than compete in the workplace and will be able to generate an income while others stand in the unemployment line.
- Any saint who engages in business for all or part of his income is going to be occupied in some combination of sales and service. Sometimes products are to be sold, sometimes service is to be supplied, and sometimes products are to be serviced after they are sold. The underlying Biblical principles of honesty and integrity are to guide the Christian businessman. Fraudulent claims, poor service, or shoddy workmanship are not befitting those making a claim to godliness.
- Buying, selling, and servicing are legitimate endeavors for the disciple of the Lord. Implicit in the parables of Jesus is the divine approval for planting, harvesting, building, buying and selling. “Do business,” says the nobleman in one of the parables, “until I come” (Luke 19:13). Because of the rampant socialism of our day, many have been programmed to think that if a businessman makes a profit, it is because he is a “greedy capitalist.” In Russia, for

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example, we were often asked, “How is it that a Christian can engage in buying and selling?” We would have to explain that profit was the wages of the Christian businessman, and that he deserved to be compensated for the risk he took in making an up-front investment, for the time he committed in getting the products from the producer to the consumer, and for the hassles he went through in providing service for the buyer. The same people who would haggle over the price of a chicken in the open bazaar had difficulty in understanding that it was legitimate for a businessman to buy products for the lowest possible price and sell them for the highest possible price on the open market. A “fair” price is the price the purchaser is willing to pay in a free market. All transactions are to be conducted between buyer and seller; if they are satisfied with the deal, then it is nobody else’s business whether “the cost is too high” or “the price is too low.” The government has no legitimate interest in regulating wages and prices; what Abraham paid for the cave of Machpelah was strictly between him and Ephron the Hittite.

- Everyone who generates an income does so on the basis of sales of products or service. The rancher or farmer, who claims he does not like salesmen, becomes a salesman himself; the only way he generates his income is through the sale of his livestock or crops. If product is not moving from the producer to the consumer through sales, no one makes any money. “Do business until I come,” is really an exhortation from Jesus Himself.

The preceding points give general principles from the scripture for generating an income. Both the Christian who is a poor employee and the brother who uses poor judgment in business decisions are going to struggle when it comes to providing for themselves and their households. There are occasional circumstances or “acts of God” which result in uncontrollable loss of a job or result in a business going under. Generally, however, the Christian is going to be successful when he implements the Biblical principles of a good attitude, a good work ethic, and good common sense; those qualities would usually make any individual effective or profitable in the marketplace, but God also honors those under His grace by adding His blessings. The Father also allows economics to discipline His children. The first place where a struggling brother should look is at himself, checking his attitudes and work habits, checking his discipline and judgment. Brethren must be honest with God and with themselves; anyone who starts down the road of rationalization and self-justification has the worst of all spiritual problems, and will surely perish in the fires of hell. Once the believer has honestly analyzed himself and knows where his problem is, then he can devise a positive solution in accordance with the principles of good habit formation.

When the saint has implemented good work habits and attitudes as an employee, or effected the sound fundamentals of a good business operation, he needs to recognize three other major considerations in generating, maintaining, or increasing his income:

- His most important possession, in a business sense, is a list of contacts. All business is ultimately people business, and all income is ultimately derived from sales and service to people. God uses the material realm and the marketplace to teach lessons which apply to the

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spiritual realm, and one of the lessons to be learned is that people are more important than things. “Beware,” said the Teacher, “and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). It is fellowship with the Lord that has first priority, followed by relationships with man. So it should not surprise the disciple of Christ that the marketplace is so designed that honest success in business is through interpersonal relationships. Since people are of highest priority on earth, then the list of personal contacts is the Christian’s most valuable business possession.

- The most valuable economic commodity - that which has most value in the marketplace - is the ability to motivate people in honest and godly ways. All wealth resides in the productivity of people; the man who can motivate others can be paid well for his capacity to increase the amount and quality of others’ work. Again, it should not be surprising that the ability to inspire others to higher levels of accomplishment, which is so necessary for the functioning of the brethren (especially among the leadership of the local church), should be developed in the marketplace where something tangible (money) can be used as a measure of the Christian’s ability to motivate others.
- Momentum is the most important intangible in generating an income. The individual who starts, stops, starts, stops, and starts all over again has to keep building from ground zero. After twenty years he finds himself at the same income plateau, working at entry level jobs. On the other hand, the man who recognizes the principle of momentum will use each position to set the stage for the next. Life is much like billiards; not only is the cue ball to drive another ball into the pocket and score, but the cue ball itself needs to end up positioned for the next shot. And lest anyone consider momentum to be inconsequential or unscriptural, he should study the life of Jesus on earth and note that the momentum of His spiritual movement was what He was most zealous to protect and promote.

The Gentiles of the world are always anxious about the development of income for themselves, constantly worrying about what they will eat, what they will drink, and with what they will clothe themselves. The advice of Jesus is sure and secure: Seek first the Father’s kingdom and His righteousness, and the other things will sort themselves out. Not only does the kingdom come first in priorities as far as time management for the Christian is concerned, but the righteousness of God also has to be applied to his life in order for the disciple of Christ to receive the promise that God will supply the income. But if the saint of the Most High will diligently apply the scriptural principles discussed in this section, he can sleep well at night, knowing that the Almighty gives to him even in his sleep.

Outgo

Outgo is much easier to accomplish than bringing in an income. The marketplace has always

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been noisy; the hucksters clamor for the buyer's attention, and the drummers announce their presence in town. Whether the wares are being sold in a busy Hong Kong street, or the product is being moved through television advertising, the hawkers are competing, honestly or dishonestly, for the money clutched tightly in the purchaser's hand, and the pressure is constantly on to "buy NOW!" With finely crafted appeals to the flesh, coupled with "easy credit" and low down payments, the movers of the world's goods often find their mark in the child of God, and his outgo very quickly exceeds his income. And, as one of the sages of our time has noted, when a person's outgo exceeds his income, then his upkeep becomes his downfall.

This is not to say that there are not legitimate expenses connected with living. So long as this earthly existence persists, the Christian must eat, must have clothing, must have shelter, and must make provision to invest in tools for increased efficiency. "For we have brought nothing into the world," stated the apostle Paul, "so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content" (I Timothy 6:7,8). It is apparent that we must have food and covering, and these do cost money. So there is legitimate outgo for the Christian.

Stewardship from God

The Bible has much to say about stewardship. Essentially a steward is one who has another's resources entrusted to his care; and there are examples of stewardship in the word of God, parables about stewardship in the word of God, and instructions about stewardship toward men and God in the word of God. The purpose of the whole principle of stewardship is so that Christians ultimately, in the words of Paul the apostle, become "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Corinthians 4:1). Again, to emphasize what our Lord Jesus pointed out, "If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you?" (Luke 16:11). A child of the King who cannot be a good steward in financial matters really cannot be trusted with anything else.

And it is in the matter of outgo that stewardship is really put to the test. When the saint has generated an income, then does he have the discipline to make sure that the resources end up being distributed to the appropriate spots? Or is he, like the "unjust steward" of the parable, squandering the possessions? The disciple of the Lord must remember that the money in his hand or registered in his account is not his; it belongs to the Lord, and he is to account for every penny.

Food, Clothing, Shelter, and Transportation Expenses

In a relatively primitive economy, the staples of daily existence are simple and there is not a lot of choice. But in a more complex economy, the choices are greatly increased, and there is a greater possibility of wasting money on food and clothing. The proverb from Poor Richard's Almanac is a good one: "A penny saved is a penny earned." As the Christian considers that he

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has a stewardship of God's resources entrusted to him, he will look to the possibility of buying his food in bulk, and freezing portions or using other creative means of preserving the amount of food which is beyond the quantity normally used in a regular meal. The saint has to remember that he pays a high price for food that is packaged for "convenience use," and foodstuffs which are prepared for the microwave are also going to cost more. The savings involved here are not inconsequential; depending upon a family's size and budget, up to several hundred U.S. dollars per month can be saved by judicious purchasing of food. Similarly, a lot of money can be shaved off clothing expenses by smart buying at second-hand clothing stores, use of "hand-me-downs," and not necessarily having to have the latest trendy and designer fashions.

The disciple of Christ also needs to remember that cheap products are not always cheaper in the long run. A quality paint, for example, is going to cost more as an up-front expense, but if the house only has to be painted half as often, then the brand of paint that was one-third more expensive was actually the bargain. We remind the shopper that he (or she) is a steward of God's resources, and needs to discipline himself to remember that this is one of the areas wherein he will answer to the Almighty. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).

Housing is another area where a lot of money can be lost or saved. God's children need to pray for wisdom when it comes to living quarters. Is it better to rent or to buy? Is it better to rent for awhile, then buy? If it is better to buy, then buy what? Credit or cash? Location? Investment possibilities? Downturn in the housing market possibilities? As a general rule, housing costs should not exceed 40% of a person's take-home income. Otherwise, the individual or family runs a great risk of not being able to make their payments when any little unexpected problem or emergency arises; they are living too close to the edge of the financial cliff.

In most places where the Christian functions in a modern economy, another major expense is transportation. To be competitive in a spread out work place, as currently exists in much of the United States, the saint often needs a personal automobile for getting to and from work, getting to the assembly of the saints, and generally carrying on personal business. And, as in the case of housing, thousands of American dollars can be lost or saved, depending on the good or poor judgment of the buyer. A very important principle for the brother to remember in the heat of buying and selling is that an automobile's purpose is to get him from point A to point B safely. He needs to make his decisions based on bottom line practicality, rather than emotional or esthetic appeals. Generally it is better to buy low mileage used cars, and to avoid buying new vehicles. The Christian has to pay close attention to the budgetary constraints under which he operates, the type of terrain he travels through, the amount of maintenance and insurance costs he anticipates, and many other practical factors in deciding what his final choice shall be. Prayer for wisdom is in order.

In the financing the basic expenses of daily living, the follower of the Lord will use the principles of good stewardship. His outgo will pay for his "needs," and he will, in the sight of

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God, have the discipline to forego his “greeds.” Hundreds of dollars every month for the individual are at stake, as to whether he can finance the spread of the kingdom of God and have something to share with the needy, or whether the credit card is going to truly be his master. “It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy” (I Corinthians 4:2).

70-10-10-10

Another good rule of thumb is for the Christian pilgrim to learn to live on 70% of his income, and to mark off 10% as a tithe, 10% for savings, and 10% as investment capital. While different circumstances may dictate different percentages for savings and investment, or how the savings and investment is accomplished, it is simply good stewardship to operate with these percentages as ballpark standards.

There are those who argue that the tithe is not New Testament. While tithing is not specifically mentioned in the new covenant writings as a practice of Christians, there is certainly a Biblical principle which was operative long before the Law of Moses came to fruition, and foreshadows which carry over into Christianity. Abraham, in the record of Genesis chapter 14, paid a tithe to Melchizedek, priest of God Most High as a foreshadow of Christians, as the spiritual offspring of Abraham, paying a tithe to their High Priest of the order of Melchizedek, Christ Jesus Himself. And teaching in the book of Malachi really points to the church in the statement, “And all the nations shall call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land” (Malachi 3:12). So what is going to make the “land” blessed and delightful? Here is the picture, using the Old Testament temple storehouse as a figure: “ ‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and test Me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:10,11). Tithing is not so much a test of the Lord, although He invites the test, as it is a test of the faith of the son of God. The tither trusts that God is going to provide the resources, and contributes it through the High Priest of the new covenant to the work of the church. Because it is a matter of faith, he takes it off the top, rather than waiting to see if any is left at the bottom. If the men of the old covenant were to bring the first fruits to the Lord and to honor the Almighty with the best of the produce, then how much more are those who are called “of the faith” to do the same? When the cash comes in or the payment arrives, set aside at least the first ten per cent for the Lord. And, as a person’s income increases or his family expenses decline, he can set aside more than 10% directly for the Lord’s work.

It is also important for the saint to set aside some sort of cash reserve for savings. It is not a lack of faith that would impel someone to lay up some reserves for emergencies, unexpected opportunities, or unanticipated cash outlays. There is a very good Biblical word which shows up in Paul’s instructions to Titus: sensible (Titus 2:1-8). While there are circumstances and

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economic conditions which prevent saints from saving and they have no alternative but for the Lord to provide through the ravens, the brethren are generally expected to exercise initiative and use their heads. It is smart to have some savings set aside for the unplanned difficulty, the ability to make a special missions contribution, assist a brother in need, or to be in position to take advantage of a great opportunity which would otherwise simply pass on by. When the cash comes in or the check arrives, set aside ten per cent for savings.

In two separate parables, the Lord told of a master's entrusting his slaves with sums of money to be invested. Investment capital is also called risk capital because, when it is risked in an investment, it could be lost. The master was willing to have his slaves risk the capital rather than do nothing; the one who had the five talents, for example, "went and traded with them, and gained five more talents" (Matthew 25:16). The one who received one talent stated that he was afraid to lose the investment, and simply buried his talent (of what was most likely silver) in the ground. And the master chewed on him for not investing: "You wicked, lazy slave," was what he said. But risk capital also has the possibility of the highest return because of the risk involved. "Master," said the slave in the other parable, "your mina has made ten minas more" (Luke 19:16). Those who are smart and blessed with their investments have the greatest opportunities to provide significant cash for the distribution of the gospel. So when the cash comes in or the wages arrive, set aside ten per cent for investment.

Complications Due To Modern Debt-Capitalism

In a high-tech, e-commerce economy, the possibility for massive fraud is greater than at the barter market level. On an individual basis, it is comparatively easy for a smart "hacker" to break into a debit account and extract many dollars from the ledger before anyone knows that the account has been tampered with. If there were real money such as gold or silver in credited to the account, someone would have to break in and carry off the gold or silver coins or bars; the hacker can be in Chicago and swipe the money listing from a ledger in Paducah or Santa Barbara. There is no real money; there is simply a computer entry in this economic house of cards, and individual fraud can take place in this way. Another type of fraud is for someone to get a Christian's Social Security Number, get a fake identification card, somehow track down a credit card number, spend thousands off the real person's accounts, or even commit serious crimes in the other person's name.

On a larger scale, because all the "money" has essentially been created out of thin air, the massive fraud is going on continually through inflation, seignorage, and other deceptions foisted upon an ignorant and unsuspecting public. At some point the economy has to collapse since it is not built upon anything solid, and the child of God must prepare himself mentally, physically, and spiritually for that eventuality; his trust must be truly in the Almighty, since everything on earth can be stripped from him in a comparatively short time. So while savings and investing are generally intelligent activities, the saint must recognize that savings and investments can be

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destroyed or stolen in an instant; he must not put his trust or hope in fleeting earthly riches. “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches,” Paul exhorted Timothy, “but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy” (I Timothy 6:17).

Budget and Credit

Why Use A Budget?

Many of the same principles which underlie time management also underlie financial management. As a person who does not use time management techniques will find himself twenty years down the road without having accomplished anything other than survival, so the individual who does not use financial planning and budgeting will find himself twenty years down the road without having accomplished anything positive other than his fiscal survival. But there is a difference between time and money that is worth considering. No one can get into debt on time; time must be spent, second by second. A person may not use his time wisely, but after twenty years of wasting time, at least he is not into a time crisis. By contrast, in fiscal matters indebtedness is possible. After twenty years of poor financial stewardship, the Christian may not only find that he has not accomplished anything positive, but that he has put himself into a deep hole. It is therefore critical that those numbered among the redeemed use honorable, wise, and scriptural financial planning techniques to demonstrate their worthiness as faithful stewards of God’s financial resources. And the key to making financial plans work is a monthly budget. The Christian who tries to operate without one may be compared to a driver who tries to maneuver his way forward on the road by looking in his rearview mirror.

Working With A Budget

Budgets can actually be fairly simple; not every household has to have something as complex as the federal budget. In a simple budget, the family (sometimes just one person) knows from month to month approximately what its income is going to be. The expenditures side has an obvious point; expenditures cannot exceed income. This is the point to implement the “70-10-10-10” system; when the first item on the budget is 10% for the Lord, when the second is 10% for savings, and the third is 10% for investment, then the other 70% can be used to pay bills and be budgeted for anticipated living expenses. A sample budget might look like this for a family whose take-home income is \$1500 per month.

Swenson Family Budget

Income: \$1500

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Category	Budgeted Expenditures	Actual Expenditures
Tithe	\$150	
Savings	150	
Investment	150	
House payment (rent)	550	
Car Payment	125	
Food	200	
Utilities	150	
Other expenses	25	
Total expenses	\$1500	

This is a tight budget, but not atypical of a single mom, a young couple just getting started, or many Christian families with a comparatively low income. There is no room in this budget for luxuries. There will be no eating out or any entertainment. In fact, it will be a scramble for this family to stay inside this budget; it will be difficult to provide food and clothing, and most of the money in savings and investment will be stripped by the unplanned emergencies or costs such as fixing up the old automobile when it breaks down. This family cannot afford a cable TV hookup or cigarettes. This family needs to live a simple life and learn “to be content” in its circumstances (Philippians 4:11).

In the United States of America, the actual income for a single-income family has consistently declined since 1973 (the effect of which has been to drive mothers from the home and into the work place as families try to maintain a standard of living commensurate with their parents). What this generally means is that, as Christian families follow the general Biblical directive for mothers to be at home nurturing the kids, they must be willing to accept a lower standard of living than they enjoyed while growing up. This is more painful than it sounds, and the temptation for young Christian families to follow their worldly contemporaries into debt to buy consumer luxuries is strong; these households have a tendency to think they deserve or need them. What families in this situation need is not only a budget, but the discipline to stick to that budget.

Once the budget is in place, the record of what was actually spent needs to be recorded so that the money can be shifted or the budget for the following month adjusted if necessary.

Swenson Family Budget

Income: \$1500

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Category	Budgeted Expenditures	Actual Expenditures
Tithe	\$150	\$150 *
Savings	150	150 *
Investment	150	150 *
House payment (rent)	550	550 *
Car Payment	125	125 *
Food	200	205 *
Utilities	150	142 *
Other expenses	25	28 *
Total expenses	\$1500	\$1500 *

Budgets can be more complex than this simple budget, but the basic core is the same. Budgets project an average monthly income, and then provide a written plan as to how that income is to be disbursed. Brethren who operate with small amounts of capital in their budgets sometimes imagine that those who manage more money have an easier time with their budgets. Actually there is a principle in place which is called the economics of scarcity. This axiom simply states that no matter how much money is being managed, there is never quite enough; resources are more limited than the projects clamoring for expenditure. Thus every household or business budget provides constraints on spending, and the very word constraint implies a certain amount of pain connected with staying inside the boundaries of the budget. The natural, or fleshly, tendency of man is to avoid pain, so brethren need to recognize up-front that their natural bent is to avoid the budget process in the first place, or to have a token budget which has no provisions for enforcing the discipline of spending within the prescribed limits. The exhortation of Paul applies right here and right now: “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (I Timothy 4:7). Financial responsibility is a spiritual or godly matter.

One of the painful aspects of fiscal constraints occurs when those directives require cutbacks in certain areas. In the Swenson Family Budget the housing costs are too high for the size of the family income; there is no flexibility to handle car repairs, additional medical expenses, or other non-planned circumstances. So the Swenson family either has to increase its income, or it has to cut its housing costs by moving to a cheaper place without increasing automobile or transportation costs. It can be painful to leave a family home for more cramped quarters, but that is the sort of discipline necessary to enforce the budgetary plan; without that enforcement, the budget is only a token budget and not really the means to good financial stewardship.

God has a principle in motion, exemplified in the life of the Lord Jesus, that sacrifice is going to take place before the blessing or reward is granted. First comes the cross, then the crown. Before God blesses a family financially, He generally requires that it learns the discipline of sacrifice by sticking to a budget. But the blessings of this sacrifice greatly outweigh the pain involved in the execution of good fiscal discipline. When a family is free from the crush of

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overdue bills, when it has developed the flexibility of being able to pay cash for automobiles or to plan a vacation, and when it not only can tithe to the Lord but also have extra money for special offerings, then the peace of God has the opportunity to reign in this family. Make no mistake about it: fiscal irresponsibility results in tension; fiscal responsibility results in peace.

Credit

Credit is costly. Interest is a fee paid for the use of someone else's assets, and those engaged in business often make more from the charges on money loaned than they do in the mark-up of products sold. That is why so many of the major retail establishments have their own "charge cards," with other options such as "no money down, and no payments until ..." The Christian as a consumer has to remember this basic principle: There is no such thing as a free lunch. Any seller who is offering something that appears to be free or unusually cheap on the front end is planning on making up for it on the back end.

Those who sell try to conserve their own energy by setting up repeat business for themselves. It takes less effort to maintain a customer than it does to develop a new one. So those who sell the use of money (those who collect interest on debt) are intensely involved in "selling" the public on that idea that credit is a good thing, and that through credit the consumer can have what he wants now rather than having to wait, or that the investor can use someone else's money to leverage himself into a better position. The business world is a dog-eat-dog world, and those who make major plans to be creditors do not intend for the debtor to benefit. An automobile purchased at 12% interest for five years is going to cost much more than if it was paid for in cash; if the original price was \$14,000, then the car bought on credit would have monthly payments of \$311/mo. and a final cost of \$18,660. The extra paid in interest amounts to almost \$1,000 per year for this family that is already struggling to make ends meet. The General Motors lending institution would probably make more money on the interest collected than they would on the car itself. And the lending institution did such a good job of "selling" that the consumer only thought of himself as purchasing a vehicle, and the car salesman (who actually also sold the loan) received no commission other than for the sale of the vehicle itself. The customer did not realize that he also was sold a loan of someone else's reserves for which that someone else was going to collect nearly \$1,000 a year for five years in repeat business, and the sales atmosphere in the realm of credit was so subtle that even the salesman did not realize that he should be collecting a commission for selling the loan. Furthermore, the consumer thought that the associated lending institution did him a big favor by helping him purchase a vehicle he could not otherwise afford. (Note: sometimes it is more economical to purchase on credit a vehicle which has low maintenance costs and pay the interest on a loan as compared to trying to keep an old jalopy running. A family has to base its decision on cold, hard, economic facts, and not run with its emotions.) The basic point here is that the family, had it been able to pay cash for the vehicle, would have saved itself \$4,660 over five years, whereas those who sold the public on the "goodness of credit" instead were able to extract this \$4,660 of this family's lifeblood. It is easy to calculate that if a family had made two or three such decisions to buy on credit, it would have

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become essentially locked in as a debtor family, and would never have the resources to get itself out of the hole. This sort of slavery is very clever salesmanship on the part of those who make those major plans to sell credit and continue to collect from repeat customers.

Not all credit is bad in and of itself. Start-up capital, for example, is necessary to get a business off the ground, and borrowing or selling of bonds or stocks is often a basic requirement. In this case there is a possibility of getting a return on the money borrowed, often well in excess of the interest paid.

But the idea of a family generating mere consumer debt is a bad, bad plan. Here money is borrowed on interest to pay for items that not only do not generate income, but actually continue to depreciate in value. For this reason, the only people who should use credit cards are those who use them as a means of keeping track of expenses and pay them off every month. If a family cannot pay cash for what it wants to buy, it should not buy it! The advice of scripture still stands: "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another" (Romans 13:8).

The family who operates on credit shows very poor stewardship of the Lord's resources. Over a lifetime, the average husband and wife who discipline themselves financially could possibly save \$100,000 by paying cash rather than operating on credit. This \$100,000 could be used for many things directly for the Lord's work, as well as positioning the Christians involved for much more flexibility in time to do missionary work or special projects themselves rather than their being forced to stick on a job with no options on their use of time.

Long Range Planning

The budget is the instrument of control for short range, month-to-month financial planning. But as in time management, a long range financial picture is a major ingredient for fiscal planning for the faithful follower of Christ. Here the family contemplates long term projections of income and how to increase income as well as how to divert more resources directly into the work of the Lord and the distribution of the gospel. The pull of mammon is strong, so the word of God has a major warning for Christians who want to increase their income. "Come now," says the Lord's bond-servant James, "you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.'" (James 4:13-15). It is not that the Lord does not want His children to plan, nor is it that He does not want them to engage in business and make a profit. The desire of the Almighty - and rightly so - is that He be the center of the Christian's focus and thought. Therefore there is a chain that is jerked before any saint charges off on his far-flung enterprises, and that chain says, "If the Lord wills ..." When the redeemed is conscious that his success or failure, his life or death, is dependent upon the will of the Lord, then he can proceed with his long range financial plans.

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Every plan and every action must be prefaced with the words, “If the Lord wills ...”

Long range financial planning and long range time management overlap. Before a Christian can make solid projections about his earnings and what he would like to do with his resources, he has to know what his purpose in life is. Once the saint has come to the conclusion on that matter, then he can begin to put his long term financial portfolio together. The mix of possibilities for long range investment is very complex, and the disciple of Christ who begins to plan his monetary future must pray for wisdom from the great God who sees the future and who can give guidance in these matters. Each individual will have to decide whether to invest in stocks, bonds, T-bills, his own business enterprises, or whether to bury gold in the ground.

The discussion on long term financial planning would not be complete without a reminder from the Lord Jesus Himself about the uncertainty of riches. He noted that moth and rust destroy on earth, and that thieves break in and steal. His exhortation therefore was for brethren to lay up treasures in heaven, where there is no corrosion of assets, and where there is no inflationary pressure from very intelligent thieves. It is also important to remember that if a man ends up financially destitute on earth but has great riches stored in heaven, then he is the greatest of successes in the realm of investment. “Sell your possessions and give to charity,” was the advice of Jesus. “Make for yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven” (Luke 12:33). Concerned about their financial future upon hearing that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, Peter asked, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” Jesus’ response was that in “the regeneration” the apostles would sit on thrones judging Israel. “And everyone,” He added, “who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:27-29). When the Christian has his focus on heaven, then he can live with financial reverses or downturns, and he can handle his resources when God supplies them. “I have learned the secret,” noted Paul, “of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.” And it was in that direct context that the apostle made the statement, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:12,13).

The long range financial planner should also be cognizant of the warning from the Holy Spirit: “But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness” (I Timothy 6:9-11). The man who tries to lay down a foundation for his financial future must seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness; if his goal is to get rich, then he will fall into the mess just described. The Lord, the righteous judge and reader of men’s hearts, knows the motives of each, and will not let His word fail.

It is worth repeating: “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or

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to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed” (I Timothy 6:17-19).

Working Together For Christ

There are those in the body of Christ whose ministry includes the development of their own financial resources, “who give,” as the apostle Paul stated, “with liberality” (Romans 12:8). There are those who choose not to develop their own financial resources but who devote themselves to the teaching and preaching of the word. And there are those who have used poor judgment and are financially strapped. It is critical that each recognizes the importance of his participation in the body of Christ, and that every member look for the ways in which he can serve Christ, “from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16). Those who are blessed financially should not look down their noses at those who have exercised poor judgment or have not been so blessed in their resources, and those who have very limited finances should not be envious in any way of those who have more. And all should work very hard to assist those who have a proven track record of being able to proclaim and explain God’s word. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren, the teamwork and the financial sharing for the greater cause of Christ was at the forefront of his mind, and we are thus exhorted to conduct ourselves similarly: “Now I urge you brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), that you be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. And I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men” (I Corinthians 16:15-18). The teamwork was there, the financial sharing was there, and the focus was on the spread of the word of God. May it be so today!

Exhortation

The character of the Christian is indicated in his financial stewardship. The Lord Jesus Himself was emphatic in pointing out that if a man is not dependable in the use of unrighteous mammon, he cannot be trusted in those matters which seem to be of directly spiritual nature. A basic thrust of the scripture is that the disciple of Christ must put a high priority on handling his fiduciary affairs, and that he has a stewardship from God in this arena. Knowing that he is accountable to God, the Christian likewise is to be willing to be accountable to trusted church leadership for his financial activity.

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The child of God must, if he is at all capable, produce an income. If any man is unwilling to work, then he should starve to death, along with his family. A man who is unwilling to provide for his family is worse than an unbeliever; therefore, the Christian man has a awesome responsibility to take care of his own, and his wife likewise has a great responsibility to be his helper and homemaker. It is vital that the faithful followers of God throughout the world understand the nature of economics and the importance of the free enterprise system in earning an income. The Biblical injunction for man to be a husbandman for the earth, to be fruitful as well as to multiply, stands at the foundation of all economics, and the Christian, particularly the Christian businessman, has a tremendous obligation to set aside a portion of his earnings to educate the nation in which he resides as to the Biblical teachings on basic economics. In a complex economy, the Christian has many more options for earning an income than in a more primitive economy, where subsistence level earnings limit the brethren in their ability to have resources to spread the gospel. But in the more complex economy, the possibility for massive fraud exists through the banking system and other complicated scams, and the saint needs to pray for wisdom to work in a smart way to produce an honorable income in his stewardship to God. Recognizing that Satan is using the eco-spiritual agenda of the New Age movement and rampant socialism to destroy the seed corn of future economic development, the member of Christ's body must be willing to sacrifice some of his time, energy, and money in fighting off the jungle of confusion as it works to destroy the village of production in a free society.

The Christian must also recognize the general truth of the maxim, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Therefore, in his stewardship to God, he must be wise and careful in watching his spending; he is to be thrifty and frugal. He is often willing to set aside personal wants so that he has more financial resources to use to help those in need and to spread the word of God.

To control spending, and to set in motion a plan for his financial future, the wise follower of Christ works from a budget. In this way he can to some degree anticipate financial problems before they arise, and have money set aside to handle them. The discipline in submitting to budgetary constraints can be painful, but the disciple recognizes that the blessings of following a budget greatly outweigh the occasional throes of agony that accompany sticking with the plan.

The dangers of credit are also well known to the saint. Resisting the allure of the "buy now, pay later" propaganda, he does not purchase his consumer items on credit but disciplines himself to pay cash. In this way he saves himself and the Lord thousands of dollars every year, and gives himself the opportunity for more flexibility for direct service to Christ for missionary work or time spent on special projects.

The Christian also puts together a long range set of financial goals in conjunction with the development of his ultimate purpose in Christ. This may range from putting together a financial portfolio with stocks and bonds to eliminating all personal property so that the saint can devote the last years of his life entirely to mission work overseas. In all such planning, the child of God remembers to be always conscious that all happens under the heading, "If the Lord wills ...". And, particularly in regard to his finances, the Christian is mindful that thieves break through and

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steal on earth, but that if he lays up treasures in heaven, they are beyond the reach of any of Satan's destructive plans.

Summary

- The use of money by a Christian is an indicator of his spiritual condition. Jesus was emphatic in stating that if a Christian could not be a good steward of God's financial resources, other spiritual matters could not be entrusted to him either.
- All money comes from God, and the Christian is therefore accountable to God for the use of 100% of the unrighteous mammon, which passes through his hands.
- The first challenge for God's financial steward is to generate an income.
- In a simple economy, the saint and his family basically are going to generate an income by working in one of the four ways in which the earth provides: agriculture, timber, fisheries, and mining.
- All mankind has been under a curse from the time of Adam, and will have to continue to earn a living by hacking its way through the jungle of problems. Many will try to avoid the curse, but the dictum stands: "If anyone will not work, neither let him eat."
- The Christian not only works to provide for himself, but he is so productive that he has extra to share with the poor and needy.
- An understanding of economics is necessary for the Christian to comprehend how to be effective and productive in a modern, complex economy.
- Metals such as gold or silver, with intrinsic value, when weighed or coined, become real money, or specie. Paper and computer entries are money substitutes, and, through the fractional reserve system, provide the means by which the most respectable bankers become the biggest thieves.
- Inflation, rather than being a rise in wages and prices, is actually the injection of new currency into the system by the Federal Reserve Bank or other central bank; and wages and prices rise because the currency in circulation loses value due to the fresh influx. The central bank is in fact the engine of inflation rather than the protector of the economy.
- Inflation is a particularly wicked form of stealing, hurting the poor and those on fixed incomes most.

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- The Christian must be aware of the subtleties and deceptions of the modern marketplace so that he can be a good steward of God's resources.
- The child of the King fixes his hope on things above so that he is not discomfited at the economic gyrations caused by manipulators of modern economies.
- All income is derived from sales and service; the production, distribution, redistribution, and servicing of that which originally came from the earth is the source of all income.
- Christian employees who dive into their work with great attitudes, who are excellent workmen, and who are good team players will be able to generate an income while others stand in the unemployment line.
- Disciples of the Lord who engage in business are selling goods and services, and are to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles of the word of God. Fraudulent claims, poor service, or shoddy workmanship are not befitting those making a claim to godliness.
- The Christian who is a poor employee and the brother who uses bad judgment are going to struggle when it comes to providing for themselves and their households.
- All business is "people business." God designed the marketplace to discipline the brethren, and thus help them to develop the people skills necessary for them to be effective in making disciples and edifying the local congregation.
- Because the marketplace is clamoring for the brethren to "Buy NOW!" the saint's stewardship of God's resources is severely tested in managing his outgo. He has to avoid finely crafted appeals to his flesh and keep his focus on objectively analyzing his needs.
- The Christian family can save thousands of dollars by judiciously gauging food, clothing, shelter, and transportation expenses. The faithful follower of Christ will have to discipline himself to use his outgo to pay for his "needs" and often forego his "greeds." Stewards are required to be found trustworthy.
- A good rule of thumb for the Christian is to learn to live on 70% of his income, and to mark off 10% for tithing, 10% for savings, and 10% for investment capital.
- When a Christian uses a budget, it is easier for him to execute a plan to accomplish both short and long term financial goals. While it takes discipline for the family to make a budget and stay within its confines, the blessings of doing so greatly outweigh the pain of operating with budgetary restraints.
- Those who offer credit have done a masterful job of selling the public on the "necessity of

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credit” for purchasing consumer goods.

- While the raising of capital is often necessary to begin or expand business operations, the idea of a family generating more consumer debt is a bad, bad plan. Christians should generally avoid consumer credit like the plague it is.
- The saint should put together a long range financial portfolio in accordance with his long range time management goals. But his goal cannot be to be rich; if that is his goal, he will fall into sundry Satanic traps. Rather, he should desire to be a good steward of the gifts and resources which the Lord has given him for the distribution of the gospel of the glory of Christ.
- The body of Christ is designed by the Lord Himself to carry out His mission on earth. Some in the body of Christ have more capacity for developing and managing financial matters. There is no reason for haughtiness on the part of those who have been blessed in that way, and there is no room for jealousy, envy, or coveting on the part of those who have a continuing challenge to stay afloat financially. God wants cooperation rather than competition, and mutual appreciation for what each of the brethren brings to the church of the Lord. Every Christian should sacrifice for the great blessings of teamwork and the growth of the body.

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Chapter 8 — Overcoming Failure and Fear

*“He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.” –
Revelation 21:7*

The Human Condition

“Man in his pomp,” said the sons of Korah, “is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49:20). The highest and most exalted of men still has a life of vapor, and his moment of earthly glory is but a flash in a moment of time. But most of the sons of men do not even have more than a tiny flicker of recognition — a wedding day, perhaps, or honor for faithful years of service. The majority of Adam’s descendants are pulverized under the slowly creeping crunch of the fight for survival and the aging of their bodies; for most, earth is a life of captivity or grudging acceptance of their lots. The result: man in his pomp or his poverty becomes petty. “Their throat is an open grave, and with their tongues they keep deceiving,” is the divine analysis. “The poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” Not only is the race afflicted with the wrecking bar of the tongue, but “their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known” (Romans 3:13-17).

Conditioned by repeated failures and paralyzed by sundry fears, each generation plunges downward on the same destructive path, always repeating the same spiritual mistakes as their forebears. Into this sucking maw of humanity comes the gospel — a message of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus. Its message must offer courage and a means of success to the one who is shedding the likeness of Adam and taking on the image of Christ.

Overcoming Failure

The condition of accountable man is one of failure. The declaration that all have sinned is a declaration that all have “missed the mark”; that each one failed and fell short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). That which was designed to be in the image of God is bent and twisted by the deleterious effects of a perverted generation and the wrong choices of the sinner. Just as there were consequences for Adam and Eve when they sinned — although they could have been forgiven — even so there are consequences for the individual who has stepped into sin, although as a repentant Christian he is forgiven through the blood of Christ.

Those consequences provide some of the major challenges a child of God must overcome.

Laws of the Harvest

The laws of the harvest are referenced by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatian brethren. Written in the immediate context of exhorting the saints to share their material things

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with those who taught them the word, and in a larger context of how living under the Law produces deeds of the flesh rather than fruit of the Spirit, the sacred script records: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7,8).

The first law of the harvest is a simple but important truth recognized by every farmer or gardener who ever tilled the land: *What you sow is what you reap*. The apostle’s point is that God will not suspend this law for the one claiming to follow Christ; the corollary is that the law applies to all men in general. All men have sown to the flesh, and in consequence their lives show the effects of corruption. The individual reaps the consequences of his own sin; children reap the consequences of the parents’ sins, and nations reap the consequences of their collective sins. Over all there is a slow grinding of all mankind in the mill of collective sin.

The second law of the harvest is one that is true because the application takes place in the spiritual realm: *The sower is guaranteed a harvest*. In the material realm, the farmer may sow and for a variety of reasons — drought, insects, fungi, disease, poor weather — may not reap. But God has guaranteed that the one who does wrong shall reap the consequences of doing wrong, and the one who does right will reap the rewards of doing right.

The third law of the harvest is evident in the statement of the apostle as he continues: “And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary” (Galatians 6:9). The third law is that *there is a time delay between sowing and reaping*. The apostle writes in Galatians to encourage the brethren through their disappointments in doing good and seeing no immediate return; we shall reap *in due time* is his exhortation. The converse is that the sowing to the flesh likewise has a time delay and the consequences of sin continue to rain down for some time after a sinful lifestyle has been abandoned.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,” stated the Christ Himself, “it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). The fourth law of the harvest is that *you reap more than you sow*. This has to be true in the physical realm or mankind does not eat, but by the implication of Jesus it is true in the spiritual realm as well. The Christian who does not grow weary in well-doing will see, if he lives long enough on earth, the multiplied results of his work; his good harvest will fill barns with lives which have been changed for the better and souls who have been saved for all eternity. But this law of the harvest also applies to the reaping of bitter consequences of wrongs done in the past; those results come back multiplied also. And because those consequences come back multiplied, the new saint can stagger a bit under their weight and wonder if he will ever be free.

The point in emphasizing the laws of the harvest here is to establish the magnitude of the real problems that both the new and maturing Christian deal with in their striving against sin. Past failure and entrenched thought patterns associated with such failure leave real marks on the saint, and it takes understanding and implementation of God’s scriptural principles to eradicate

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such marks.

It is exciting, however, on the positive side, to realize that the saint, by starting NOW, can change for the better his harvest in the future. By implementing the principles of renewing the mind, as the scripture directs, all the good Biblical principles driven into the mind and carried out in action will bear a multiplied yield of great blessings flowing from the open windows of heaven. Such a harvest is worth all the labor of sowing and nurturing.

Burial of Past Guilt

Discouragement may easily be the greatest of problems encountered by anyone who desires to change. And one of the greatest causes of discouragement is guilt over past events. In Shakespeare's *MacBeth*, for example, Lady MacBeth was unable to function due to her guilt over her involvement in the death of the previous king in order to ensure the enthronement of her husband. God, however, does not want His children to lose heart, but "through perseverance and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Scripturally, then, the All Wise has made great provision for the elimination of guilt.

Initially, the effect of a guilty or evil conscience is to condemn an individual and drive him to seek God, earnestly to desire release from his captivity to guilt. But, having accomplished its purpose, guilt is to be laid aside. This process begins in immersion, wherein the old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be done away with (Romans 6:6). But the Father knows a lot of convincing is necessary in order for guilt truly to be done away with, and He has greatly exerted Himself to establish in the mind of the child of God that he in fact has a clean conscience.

The Old Testament tabernacle, temple, and sacrifices impressed upon Israel a sense of accountability toward God. "In these sacrifices," says Hebrews' author, "there is a reminder of sins year by year" (Hebrews 10:3). But these, for the Christian, being a "shadow of the good things to come," bring an awareness of sins' truly being forgiven.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, as recorded in Leviticus 16, the high priest of Israel would offer a bull calf for the atonement of his sins and the sins of his household. Then, following the procedure he had used with the bull, the high priest would do the same for a male goat — he would kill the goat at the altar that stood in front of the holy place, and, catching the blood which poured from the slain goat, he would carry it all the way through the outer room of the tabernacle (or later, the temple) into the back room. Entering through the veil which separated the inner room from the outer, he would sprinkle the goat's blood through the smoke of the incense on the top of the ark of the covenant, designated the "mercy seat." Then, having completed his ministrations, he would re-appear to the people and lay his hands on a second goat, called the "scapegoat," and confess the sins of Israel. This goat would then be led into the wilderness and released, signifying that Israel's sins were completely rolled back another year.

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The above ritual, carried out once a year for nearly 1500 years, was accomplished in the material realm so that the modern saint in heavenly Jerusalem might have a physical touchstone for his spiritual understanding. “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come,” is the inspired spiritual observation, “He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:11,12). Those physical things are to be indelibly impressed in the fabrics of our minds so that we might see Jesus, a spiritual High Priest, in spiritual garb, sprinkling His spiritual blood to forgive our sins.

“Accordingly,” says the writer of those offerings of physical Jerusalem, “both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience” (Hebrews 9:9). No clean conscience was available in Israel according to the flesh! David, for example, the man after God’s own heart, could cry out for a clean heart, but he in his era could not receive one. So, after stating, “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,” the writer then emphasizes, “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, *cleanse your conscience* from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13,14). This blessing is available only under the terms of the new covenant.

There are several items of major significance here:

- No one can serve God unless he has a good or clean conscience; as the scripture clearly notes, the conscience is cleansed before the serving of God begins. A person may be going through all the right outward motions, at least for a time, but an impure conscience defiles him and all that he touches, and drives him to do and say things destructive to the kingdom of God. “To the pure, all things are pure,” was the apostle Paul’s teaching to Titus, “but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed” (Titus 1:15,16). Do not regard this as a minor point! One of the major causes of destruction in the lives of people who have, on the surface only, been immersed into Christ is a defiled conscience, and all of the destruction inside the church of God is from unclean consciences. Of the first, Jude warns: “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). Thus saints, as was Timothy, are exhorted to keep “faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith” (I Timothy 1:19). No one with a guilty conscience can serve God.
- One of the major purposes of the Old Testament and its attendant rituals was to give those who obey God under the terms of the new covenant with a good and honest heart the assurance that their consciences are indeed cleansed. Satan has long been trying to

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convince those who have an unclean conscience that theirs has been cleansed, even though they have believed in a false plan of salvation; likewise, he has long been trying to convince those who do have a clean conscience that theirs are unclean. “In obedience to the *truth*,” was the expression the apostle Peter used in describing the initial action of those who purified their souls (I Peter 1:22). No one can obey falsehood and have his soul purified; but the devil really wants people to stay confused about this point. In contrast, those who have truly obeyed the truth in immersion have their souls purified, but the dark angel tries to put doubts in their minds. Thus, in comparing the blood of Christ to the blood of bulls and goats, the Holy Spirit therefore uses the expression “much more” to reassure the true believer that he in fact has been granted a good conscience by the power of God.

- The cleansing agent is the blood of Christ. “Having now been justified by His blood” is not an expression wherein a person stands mentally at the base of Jesus’ cross and has the blood spilling on Him from Christ’s pierced side (Romans 5:9). “Faith” in the blood is a clearly defined picture of Christ as High Priest offering His blood in a spiritual tabernacle, as the apostle subtly noted in his description to the Roman brethren, “... whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith” (Romans 3:25), the place of propitiation being the spiritual mercy seat in heaven, the true holy place. “We have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,” encouraged Hebrews’ writer. “Let us draw near,” then, he said, “with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19,22).

Those who have failed in the past are thus buried with Christ in immersion. Again the writer of Hebrews emphasized that God has made a covenant with the obedient, even restating the point, saying, “And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17). The apostle Paul concurs: “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). If something is hidden, it cannot be found; if something is found, it cannot be hidden. The past life of the failure and its attendant guilty conscience are indeed *gone*, buried with Christ in immersion.

Forgetting What Lies Behind

The past can be a form of bondage, chaining a Christian to his bench, preventing forward progress. In the process of being saved in the first place, it is clear that the past is wiped out. But what about sins a saint commits and mistakes he makes following his immersion? The removal of these as roadblocks of guilt is also provided for in great intensity and true concern by the heavenly Father.

“My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin,” is the initial exhortation of the aged apostle. But here comes the encouragement: “And if anyone sins, we

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have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (I John 2:1,2). Jesus’ mediation as High Priest and His being the propitiation — the means by which mercy is received — is not merely a onetime mediation at immersion. The exciting provision is that the wisdom of God offers continuing intercession on behalf of the son of God who is straining forward through his stumbling and weaknesses. “If we confess our sins,” is the condition, requiring absolute honesty of heart with God the Father, “He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). The stress is laid by the Holy Spirit; the Father *is faithful*, and He can be absolutely depended upon to cleanse the saint from *all* unrighteousness! This is exciting, for the beloved of God can rise from his prayer — now spotless, with a perfectly clean conscience — and take the next step forward in freedom.

When the writer of Hebrews commented that the word of God was sharper than a two-edged sword and that all things are open and laid bare “to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do,” his intention was to be encouraging to those who might be tempted in their own discouragement to fall back into the patterns of failure. “God knows,” is His message, “and He understands.” “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,” is the way the writer states the proposition, “but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” God always did understand the condition of those who live in earthly bodies, but until He took one, the people of God did not in general know that He understood. “Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:12-16). Again, the scripture is designed to encourage all the brethren to move forward in teaching the whole counsel of God and to live the abundant life in Christ with *no* guilty twinges of conscience or holdovers from yesterday’s mistakes. “Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in all things,” the writer notes, of the Christ, “that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:17,18). He not only understands the struggles of the saint and mediates the continual remission of sins before the heavenly throne, but He also “gives help to the descendant of Abraham” (Hebrews 2:16).

The apostle Paul, then, really exemplifies the forward thrust of the redeemed who have once fallen short of the glory of God. A persecutor of the church and a violent blasphemer, he could have allowed his past to overwhelm his present and slip into a discouraged lethargy. Given a messenger from Satan — a thorn in the flesh (II Corinthians 12:7) — to buffet him, and constantly criticized by his enemies, any real or perceived mistakes of his would have been greatly magnified and used to discredit his doctrine and ministry. But notice the winning attitude of the great apostle and this great example: “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet [the resurrection of the dead]; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13,14). The apostle was not about to let anything from yesterday affect his attitude and performance today! Every muscle, every nerve, every thought was trained to strain forward with maximum effort.

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Satan loves to kick the sand of the past in the faces of the brethren to discourage them. But even though the disciple of Christ is reaping some painful harvests from his past action, the guilt and condemnation are gone. The saint is FREE to progress.

Making the Harvest Productive

In an earlier listing of the laws of harvest, the viewing was primarily from the negative side. But the way to change a future harvest for the better is to change present sowing. If a Christian will develop the habits of prayer, of Bible memorization, of doing the right things, then harvest of his changed life will begin to come in. The first law stands: you reap what you sow. If you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life. The second law stands: the harvest is guaranteed. “We shall reap,” were the words of Paul. The third law stands: there is a time delay between sowing and reaping. The Christian might have a tendency to get discouraged, saying, “I have been sowing to the Spirit and I don’t see any results.” “Do not lose heart,” encourages the Spirit. “We shall reap in *due time*.” And the fourth law stands: the harvest comes back multiplied. The saint who gives encouragement will receive it back multiplied, especially at a time when he needs it most. A man who begins to direct his household into spiritual concerns, emphasizing the importance of the Bible and the assemblies of the saints, will reap multiplied blessings for having done so. “Give, and it will be given to you,” said the Savior. “Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (Luke 6:38).

The hope for the good harvest is one of the most powerful motivators in the scripture. As the believer in Christ fights his good fight of faith, he will keep his motivation level high and be able to beat off the moths of discouragement by reminding himself about the laws of the harvest.

Happy in the Work

Sin has its consequences. Sins committed before a person becomes a Christian have their lingering effects. And the transgressions of a person who is now redeemed leave their marks also. But, since the guilt associated with those consequences is gone, the emotions, through the process of renewing the mind, can be stabilized. Now the issues are to be viewed objectively, and the work to be done in those troublesome areas can be considered as “just another project.” Like all other work, the scripture applies: “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (Colossians 3:23). As the old verse says, “With a shovel and a grin, he dug right in.” The saints of God, with smiles on their faces and songs of praise in their hearts, work through their problems with clean consciences. They know, in the words of the apostle Paul, “that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

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Victory over Failure

The key to victory is the inner picture or image. God buries the failure in the waters of immersion and raises an entirely new creature — created in the image of Christ! — from those waters. But in order for that to become practical in the mind of the follower of Jesus, the renewing of the mind must take place. Satan therefore tries to take advantage of the time delay involved in that reprogramming by implanting doubt and discouragement in the heart of the one coming out of darkness. These are fomented by the devil's reminding the Christian of his past, emphasizing his mistakes — whether those lapses were prior to his turning to the Lord or as one of the body of Christ. In this way Satan tries to continue to trifle with the image, “assisting” the saint in drawing conclusions, such as “I really am a liar,” or “I really am a sinner.” Liars lie and sinners sin; but holy ones *are holy in all their behavior* just as the Father is holy! This is why the word of God emphasizes that the old self was crucified with Christ, and that a new creature has arisen from the waters of immersion or from the confession of a Christian's prayer; the scripture ties performance to inner picture. “Do not lie to one another,” is a sample exhortation, “since you have laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Colossians 3:9,10). While the old self was a failure, the new self is a success in the image of Christ. “I can,” is his confident approach, “do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). This picture, held and fostered, with all tenacity and renewing of the mind, produces new creatures in actual performance so that failures dim and disappear in the past and the pattern of success is evident in the present. Victory over failure has been accomplished!

Overcoming Fear

The Paralyzing Effect of Fear

“The fear of the Lord,” penned Solomon, “is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). This is a healthy fear, a reverence and respect for the great King, His righteousness, and His judgments. “One who fears God,” is a Biblical recommendation; but when Paul wrote, “There is no fear of God before their eyes,” he and the Holy Spirit were expressing utter condemnation (Romans 3:18). True fear of God is healthy because it motivates a person to do what is right.

But other fears are unhealthy. These fears paralyze people and render them immobile spiritually in much the same way as some great terror often freezes members of the human race “in their tracks.” Satan himself is the master of this paralyzing spiritual fear. The writer of Hebrews notes that “fear of death” makes people “subject to slavery all their lives” (Hebrews 2:15). Such fear takes place in the minds of men, and as such it is a destructive mind-set. Jesus came to change the mind-set of His children from being immobilized by fear to being

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courageously victorious. The technical name for this change of mind-set is *repentance*. Only through this understanding of repentance is the saint of God set free to perform service for God in the face of opposition, suffering, and persecution.

Freedom from Fear of Employer

The little book of I Peter in the New Testament is an inspired jewel, designed by God to assist the saint in overcoming his fears. The book might even carry the subtitle, “How to Be Happy though Suffering.” One of the fears dealt with is “fear of employer.” “Servants,” Peter wrote. Servants, or slaves, were essentially locked into a working and living environment over which they had little or no control. The most extreme, then, of employment situations is that of slavery; everyone else working on the job has better working conditions than slaves, and can receive instruction and encouragement from that which flowed from Peter’s pen.

“Servants,” he said, “be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable” (I Peter 2:18). God knows that some masters or some employers are unreasonable and hard to work for. Note that He has not necessarily guaranteed that every Christian will be a free man or that every working Christian will have a good boss. What He offers is instruction for the mind of the representative of Christ, as to how he is supposed to handle himself in these less than ideal situations.

Sometimes a Christian employee is treated poorly by his superior; sometimes a Christian slave is beaten and mistreated just because of the mood swings of his master. “For this finds favor,” Peter notes in regard to these unreasonable masters, “if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly” (I Peter 2:19). The apostle appeals first to the conscience. If a Christian does not react positively in his unjust treatment, his conscience is going to bother him. So the conscience is strengthened, the will power is increased, and the man or woman knows that God has just said, “You can handle this.” No excuses, and no whining! “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience?” the apostle adds. If a Christian gets punished harshly for sin, the Almighty implies that he is just getting what he deserves. “But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God” (I Peter 2:20). The second positive point from the apostle is that there is heavenly credit for suffering unjustly. This stretches the faith of the brother or sister under the challenging circumstances; there is going to be no earthly reward, but there is a heavenly reward. Does the follower of Christ have enough faith to look beyond this life, and thrill to the special rewards in heaven? Again, this may require an adjustment of mind-set or focus, but the disciple of Christ is exhorted to move upward in his thinking. These words of Jesus really ring in helping the suffering saint: “He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:25,26).

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The great God has His own purposes for which He created the earth, and He has his own purposes for which He created each person and determined the time and location of each one's birth. One thing clearly stands out in an honest examination of scripture: God expects each Christian to continue to exhibit the vibrancy of Christ regardless of his external circumstances. "For you have been called for this purpose," explained Peter, in regard to unfair treatment of slaves at the hands of their masters. He added, "since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (I Peter 2:21). There it is again — both the Lord and Peter spoke of following Jesus' example. And what was that example? "Who committed no sin." Christians of the first century were to commit no sin, even while brutally mistreated. What about the continuing example of Christ? "Nor was any deceit found in His mouth," stated the fisherman-turned-apostle, "and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats" (I Peter 2:22,23). The brethren of the early church were told that they could endure similar mistreatment as Christ suffered, yet have no deceit in their mouths, nor utter curses and threats toward those who mishandled them.

Freedom from Fear of Husbands

In a tough or violence-prone marriage, many women are afraid of their husbands. In an age where "adultery, addiction, or abuse" did not necessarily give the wife grounds for dissolution of the marriage, a Christian woman would need some strengthening and advice from the Holy Spirit. Drawing a parallel between the fact that a slave might serve an unreasonable master and that a woman might be married to an unreasonable husband, the word of God opens the discussion with these words: "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior" (I Peter 3:1,2).

At some point freedom from fear begins to come in a recognition of the sovereign will of God. Why would some people fit the role of slaves in the first century, AD? Why would half the people of the world be born women, and why would some women even be betrothed in pre-arranged marriages? God expects the Christian wife to realize that she has been strategically placed in the Father's warfare against Satan, and her role is to play her role. "And let not your adornment be merely external," is the exhortation, referring to things like "braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses." Rather, the emphasis was to be in the development of spiritual character: "But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (I Peter 3:3,4). This development of inner beauty is noted by the apostle. "For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands" (I Peter 3:5). The key words are these: *who hoped in God!* They did not hope for change in their marriage; they did not hope for change in their husbands; nor did they even necessarily hope for change in their circumstances; they hoped in the sovereign God!

"Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham," it is positively noted, "calling him lord, and you have

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become her children if you do what is right *without being frightened by any fear*” (I Peter 3:6). If the woman will do what is right, then all the protections of the Almighty and all the ministrations of His holy angels are set in motion. Are these enough to allay fear?

Doing what is right is a critical component. Now, any woman can whine about her cruel, abusive, uncaring, uncommunicative, etc., husband. She shouldn't control him, and she can't change him (repeat: she can't change him). But there is one person over whom she has control, and one person she can change, and that is herself. Where necessary, the word of God expects that she will change the things that are wrong in her life, and *do what is right*. That means she will be submissive to her husband, so long as it does not contradict the will of God as expressed in scripture. But if he forbids her to attend assembly, or wants her to lie or cheat or steal for him, then she is to ignore his demands and do what is right. She may suffer some consequences for doing right; if so, she is blessed of God! But fear of her husband is not to be the governing factor in her life.

Freedom from Fear of Peer Pressure

“They wish to shut you out,” noted Paul of the pressures upon Gentile Christians in Galatia, “in order that you may seek them” (Galatians 4:17). One of the strongest driving forces in the realm of the flesh is a desire to please or be accepted by a real or imaginary peer group. The Judaizers at work in the churches of Galatia are a good example of the nature and power of such pressure. They themselves, having been immersed into Christ — at least nominally — were still being influenced by their connections with their Jewish family members and former business associates. The Jews, being very volatile, tended to persecute Jews who converted to Christianity unless they maintained the outward forms of the customs of the Law. “Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh,” commented Paul, “try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12). Truth was not a factor. These Judaizers were simply pressuring their Gentile brethren in the church to be circumcised so that they could pretend that the church was really just another type of Jewish synagogue, and therefore they would not have to suffer persecution. It was similar to the days of Jesus. “Many even of the rulers [of the synagogues] believed in Him,” was John’s analysis, “but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; *for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God*” (John 12:42,43). Peer pressure, or the desire to please men, is a powerfully strong force, and the scriptural warnings need to be carefully considered and respected. “Do not love the world,” the apostle warned, “nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). James is also emphatic. “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). Not only is peer pressure or its related issue of “job security” a powerful force in man, it is also eternally fatal!

But what is the solution? As in all other areas, Jesus is the answer. Properly understood, the

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initial problem an accountable individual has is that his sin has separated him from God; he has lost his fellowship with the Father. Proper presentation of the gospel focuses, then, on the idea that forgiveness of sin is a necessary step to restore that lost fellowship, not that forgiveness of sin is the primary or total thrust of the gospel. “What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also,” affirmed the apostle John, “that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I John 1:3). The purpose of the gospel, then, is to portray Jesus in His awesome glory, as was prophesied, “Your eyes will see the King in His beauty” (Isaiah 33:17). The saint that will be saved is the one who continues earnestly to seek His face; for all others, the “god of this world” will blind their minds that they might not see His light. Love of Jesus — crucified for each’s sins, risen from the dead, ascended into glory, sending forth His Spirit into the heart of each believer — is the liberating force for the Christian. The grateful saint thus fixes his eyes “on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2). The chorus of the old song has it right: *Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full into His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.*

Another assist to the follower of Christ is the assembly of the saints, when that assembly is functioning properly. The aforementioned churches of Galatia, with their internal problems from the Judaizers, would not have been of much benefit in freeing the individual from peer pressure. But when brethren have the type of fellowship such that they exhibit the instruction from James — “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” — then they are going to be strengthened to preach and teach the word without fear and to seek first the kingdom of God rather than the approval of men.

A final strengthening influence is the desire for eternal glory. “How can you believe,” Jesus excoriated the Jews who were criticizing Him, “when you receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?” (John 5:44). Implicit in Jesus’ statement is that it is a good thing to seek glory from God; this will motivate the disciple to “learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:10). The brethren thus become free from peer pressure as they “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14), desiring to hear the voice of the Master say, “Well done, good and faithful slave” (Matthew 25:23). “Those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness” will receive “wrath and indignation.” But those “who by perseverance in doing good *seek for glory* and honor and immortality” will receive “eternal life” (Romans 2:7,8). Those who thus mount up on their wings like eagles will not be pressured to be grounded with the turkeys!

Freedom from Anxiety

Anxiety and depression are real problems which the word of God addresses with real solutions. “God,” said the apostle Paul, “comforts the depressed” (II Corinthians 7:6). But this comfort or encouragement does not come without input by the disciple of Christ. “Do not be

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anxious then,” commanded the Lord Jesus, “saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ ” (Matthew 6:31). The fact that banishing anxiety can be commanded indicates that it is a decision function of the mind. The mind, then, needs reasons to make the decision to cease to be anxious. In discussing the possibility of anxiety about food and clothing, for example, the Lord commented, “For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek, for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (Matthew 6:32). It is comforting for the Christian to know that the Creator of all things is aware of his need of sustenance and is personally involved. However, the claimant to God’s assistance must be active rather than passive. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,” the Christ requires, “and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). The saint must really set his mind to have the things of the kingdom as the highest priority, as well as pursue the status of the righteousness standard of God. Failure on his part to follow this injunction of Jesus indicates that he is not really serious about overcoming anxiety.

There is a prescription in the scripture for overcoming anxiety. “Be anxious for nothing,” exhorted the apostle Paul, “but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). The example in the word of God is that God answers the prayers of men and women who are disciplined in their prayer lives. One of these is Daniel, highly recommended in the holy writings, of whom it is written: “He continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously” (Daniel 6:10). James stated, “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit” (James 5:17,18). And of the Lord Jesus Himself, it was said, “But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Luke 5:16). These men prayed in times of anxiety, and in the pressure moments the heavenly Father did not forsake them. Men of habitual prayer know that God answers and that He is in control of all situations; there is no need to panic because everything is proceeding according to the plan of the Almighty.

One exciting regimen of daily prayer follows this format:

Use a section from the Psalms for:

- *Praising God for who He is*
- *Praising God for what He means to the individual praying*
- *Confessing personal sins*

Praise God in a song

Use a section from the New Testament for:

- *Meditation on God’s word*
- *Time of praise from God’s word*
- *Time of thanksgiving from God’s word*

Petitions and supplications

Intercession on behalf of the peoples of different countries, that they might receive the gospel.

Praise God in song

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The saint of God who prays in this format on a nearly daily basis will not be anxious, for he will have developed an attitude of praise and thanksgiving in the midst of all situations, and he will have learned to trust God. This is not an instantaneous solution to anxiety or depression, but it is the only true cure. In an age where the tendency is to “pop pills” for everything from instant diets to slight headaches, there is also the tendency to find instant and easy “cures” for anxiety and depression from the prescription medicine counter. But the Holy Spirit has said, for the Christian who practices prayer, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). If the heart and mind of the professed follower of Christ is not guarded, it is because he has not disciplined himself to follow God’s instruction in overcoming anxiety and depression.

The solution for the disciple who truly wants to overcome anxiety in his life is to have the faith to do what God wants him to do. “Humble yourselves, therefore,” affirms Peter, “under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you” (I Peter 5:6,7). Confident that the Father loves him personally, the saint willingly submits to the will of God in prayer, and the God with the mighty hand removes his burden and guides his life into paths of righteousness. The proverb is still true for those who want freedom from anxiety: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

Freedom from Fear of Suffering

The natural tendency of a fleshly mind-set is to avoid suffering at all costs. A mind focused on earth has no real hope of a resurrection; in consequence, there is nothing worth suffering or dying for. “If the dead are not raised,” posits Paul, “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (I Corinthians 15:32). That mind-set will avoid suffering and will pursue earthly pleasures; it will compromise away truth and will go for the short-term gain, ignoring long-term consequences. Such, then, is the nature of earth and its residents.

But the true child of God recognizes that the upward call of God is a call to suffering. “For you have been called for this purpose,” affirmed the apostle Peter (I Peter 2:21). “Therefore,” said he also, referencing Christ’s triumphant ascension to the throne after going through the throes of death, “since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (I Peter 4:1,2). Once again, such a view of suffering requires a change of mindset; rather than being avoided, such suffering is to be faced joyfully, because the saint knows that it is necessary for his purification and for illustrating his true motives in seeking and saving the lost.

- Getting the proper mind-set begins with a proper look at Jesus. “In the days of His flesh,” expostulated Hebrews’ author, “He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud

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crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death” (Hebrews 5:7). The writer brings Jesus’ anguish to the foreground, clearly illustrating His human side. Certainly Jesus’ pain was real, and Jesus’ physical response to the pain was real. This is encouraging to the saint as he contemplates his own following in the Lord’s footsteps; if Jesus was willing to experience all that pain in His submission to God, then the disciple of Christ can be willing also. And a willing mind-set before the suffering begins is the key to victory for the saint.

- The proper mind-set also puts the time of suffering in its proper perspective. If the Christian views his upcoming suffering as something that is going to last for an excruciatingly long time, he has already set in motion a mind-set for compromise or defeat. That is why the great apostle Paul, who spoke with some authority on the proper mind-set in approaching suffering, used the expression “momentary” in describing his affliction (II Corinthians 4:17). The saint knows that he can endure any ignominy for a short time, so the trials experienced by the saints are always described as fleeting. Peter chimed in, commenting in these terms: “After you have suffered for a little while ...” (I Peter 5:10). Compared to eternity, any experience on earth is less than a flick of an eyelash, and the saint surely can endure pain for that period of time victoriously.
- A scriptural mind-set also establishes the proper outlook on the severity of the suffering. If the saint lets the upcoming pain grow and grow and grow in his mind, he in this fashion sets the stage for compromising his faith and begging for his release. We turn again to the words of the apostle Paul: “For momentary, *light affliction* is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,” was his perspective, “while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:17,18). “Momentary, light affliction” was the viewpoint of this man who had endured “imprisonments, beaten times without number, from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned ...” (II Corinthians 11:23-25). In another place he stated, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). Without this mind-set, the great apostle would not have been able to endure the tremendous physical pain and prison terms that he underwent as a representative of Jesus Christ. “Be imitators of me,” was his instruction for the rest of us, “just as I also am of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1).
- Facing the pain of sickness and old age is another fear of suffering that has to be overcome with the proper mind-set. If a person has his hopes fixed upon this earth, he tends to hang on to these earthly hopes with all the expensive help and hype available. He will try to prolong his life just another few months with radiation, with chemotherapy, or with an expensive heart or kidney transplant, etc. And with the increasing emphasis on the importance of “quality of life,” if the pain associated with sickness becomes “too” great, then euthanasia is increasingly being considered as an option. With the pressure of

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the world pulling in the wrong direction, and with the media always playing on people's fears, the saint of God really has to develop the proper focus in regard to aging or poor health. Being a Christian is no guarantee that he will be free of sickness or outside the pale of its pain. Epaphroditus, messenger of the church at Philippi and minister to Paul, for example, was "sick to the point of death" (Philippians 2:27). But was the apostle, who had performed "extraordinary miracles" in Ephesus as a demonstration of his truthfulness in preaching the resurrection of the Christ and that the Gentiles were acceptable to God, able to heal this man? There is no indication that he tried, for there was no purpose to the sign. Instead it is recorded that "God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow" (Philippians 2:27). Could he have been expendable, so that he could be so sick without disrupting the team? "Receive him in the Lord with all joy," were the apostle's instructions to Philippi on Epaphroditus' return home, "and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me" (Philippians 2:29,30). No, he was a valuable and dedicated servant of the Lord, worthy of "high regard." He was allowed to be sick so that we who read letters centuries later might understand that Christians are not delivered from the vagaries and vicissitudes of disease and dying, that the body came from the dust and to the dust it shall return. If trustworthy disciples can be detected as protected from the debilitations which plague the sons of men, then many would claim the name of Christ for earthly reasons rather than for heavenly, and this would short-circuit the plan of God. Knowing this, the Christian joyfully accepts his pains and sicknesses when they come. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). None of this is to indicate that a Christian should not in wisdom seek out medical/herbal, etc., treatments, but rather that there should be no sense of desperation in regard to the outcome. The record of the millennia is that those who did not die "unnaturally" — that is, those who were killed somehow — died "naturally," of some disease or of "old age," and that is not preventable so long as earth exists. Again, knowing this, the Christian joyfully accepts his pains and sicknesses when they come.

- The key to victory in facing all trials is the development of a rejoicing attitude regardless of circumstances. One of the points which is clearly established by scripture is that attitude is not to be dictated by external circumstances, otherwise the word of God could not command that saints of the Most High have joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always," was Paul's imperative, "again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). The Lord Jesus Himself led by example in this. As He approached His death on the cross, He was still able to exhort the apostles, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11). Thus, "for the joy set before Him," He was able to endure the cross and ascend triumphantly to heaven (Hebrews 12:2). Peter, working on his "how to be happy though suffering" theme, adds: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the

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sufferings of Christ, *keep on rejoicing*; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation” (I Peter 4:12,13). Implicit in the passage is that Christians are already rejoicing in their suffering, and the exhortation is to keep up the good work and great attitude! The only way such joy can be expressed in the “dry tree” is if the disciples are rejoicing in the “green tree.” The habit of being able to be happy in all circumstances must be consciously developed by each saint as he works through his every day trials and difficulties. The entrenched habit will then carry over into the greater challenge of bodily suffering for the cause of Christ. Thus, stated Paul, “we exult in our tribulations” (Romans 5:3). And James iterates, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (James 1:2,3).

- This joy, however, does not come from mere “hype” as the saint programs his mind for victorious living and dying in Christ. Ultimately being able to have such joy is derived from the calm assurance that, based on the Bible, God is present and He cares intensely for His child. “Therefore,” affirmed Peter, “let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (I Peter 4:19). As Luke recorded in the book of Acts, time after time the apostle Paul was in a situation that might easily have resulted in his death. But it was not yet time for his head to be chopped off, and the Lord delivered him from each trial. In his comments to King Agrippa, while standing before him in chains, Paul explained, “Some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. And so, having obtained *help from God*, I stand to this day, testifying both to small and great” (Acts 26:21,22). To help the son of the faith to understand that his suffering is not a result of wrongdoing on his part, the apostle adds, “The same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” (I Peter 5:9). Then the commitment of God to the suffering saint is made known: “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you” (I Peter 5:10). God will give the saint the grace to endure suffering with joy!

Freedom from Fear of Death

The ultimate fear, and the one which hangs over the head of every mortal, is fear of death. It is seen in the faces of those making their exit after a funeral. It stalks those approaching battle. It hangs in the wings of hospitals and waits in the rafters of hospice houses. It shows up daily in the obituary columns, and it is generally featured on the front page. Consciousness of mortality occupies a large sector of the human brain, and regardless of people’s attempts to block thoughts of their personal deaths, fear of death keeps oozing to the forefronts of their minds. Being in good enough condition to run a marathon at age sixty-five will not stop the inexorable advance of death, nor will having “celebrations of life” at the passing of the individual’s friends. A false bravery will not halt the onslaught of “the grim reaper,” and his scythe sooner or later leaves every human being on the face of the earth with a rotting corpse. “For man,” said Solomon, “goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street” (Ecclesiastes 12:5).

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- The goal of God is to set His children of faith free from fear of death that they might serve Him in a hostile world. Because fear is a real factor, one of the things that Jesus gave instructions about was an alignment of fears. “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul,” He directed, “but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell” (Matthew 10:28). A proper perspective on the power and awesomeness of God will banish every other fear; the challenge is to “see” Him who is unseen.
- Jesus Himself won victory over death by His eternal resurrection from the dead. Seven other resurrections are recorded in the holy writ, but each of those thus raised from the dead died again at a later date. And there were those raised from the dead in conjunction with Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection as a sign confirming those events. But Jesus’ resurrection was a permanent one and established His ability to give the resurrection to eternal life to all others who would walk in His steps. “I am the first and the last,” He informed the apostle John in the vision of the Apocalypse, “and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades” (Revelation 1:17,18). He snapped the chains of Hades and broke the bonds of death; with the keys in His hand He arranged for the greatest “jail break” of all history. He is the one “who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens” (Revelation 3:7).
- It is helpful to have someone out in front to “break the trail,” a point man who has proven that something can be done. “Since then the children share in flesh and blood,” wrote the author to the Jewish people about to be caught in the tribulation of Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem, “He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Hebrews 2:14,15). Every member of the human race can identify with the Lord Jesus as he reads of His approach to His death on the cross. Understanding that He left the glories of heaven to take on the cloak of flesh, each hearer of His story can feel His anguish as He voluntarily pressed forward to His death on the cross, identifying with His pleadings in the Garden of Gethsemane. Recognizing the universality of His experience, He had stated, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32). To which the apostle John added this explanatory note: “But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die” (John 12:33). Jesus, in taking the form of a bond-servant, did the most human thing of all: He died!
- The scripture uses the expression “through death.” Death was not for Him the final state; death for Him was a transition through which He could accomplish victory. “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels,” wrote Hebrews’ author in reference to His dropping to the level of man, “namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9). By tasting death for everyone, He offered through His resurrection

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victory over death for everyone! In this process He rendered the devil “powerless,” because “fear of death” would no longer be a tool Satan could use to paralyze those who would follow Christ.

- The example of Jesus becomes the encouraging standard for the Christian. “In the days of His flesh,” it is recorded, “He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety” (Hebrews 5:7). God knows the challenge the saint faces in looking at the “sting of death” and the bridge to his resurrection on the last day. Hence the record is that Jesus Himself engaged in “loud crying and tears” in His appeal to the One who could safely bring Him forth out of death; the faithful follower of Christ can make that same appeal with the confident assurance that the Almighty is also capable and willing to give him the same resurrection!
- The victory trail has thus been opened. “For it was fitting for Him,” affirmed the writer, “for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, *in bringing many sons to glory*, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10). Jesus has great power, and one of the focuses of scripture is to produce faith in His power. “For this reason the Father loves Me,” He had stated, “because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:17,18). Thus He would say to the apostles a little later, “Because I live, you shall live also” (John 14:19). The confidence of the Christian, therefore, in facing his own passage from earth is directly related to the degree of His faith in Christ.
- Fear of death is the ultimate fear. Of Jesus Christ, it is said, He “abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Timothy 1:10). By abolishing death for the saint, all other fears — which are all rooted in fear of death — are abolished as well! “Truly, truly, I say to you,” emphasized the Lord Himself, “he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24). The old self is indeed crucified in the waters of immersion, and a new self is raised to walk in newness of *life*. In faith, the death of the individual has already occurred in his participation in the death of Christ, and he now walks in the faith that he already has eternal life. To this Jesus referred when He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead: “I am the resurrection and the life,” said He. “He who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:25,26). What awesome words: *Everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die!* At which point Jesus brought the real issue to the fore: “Do you believe this?”
- This confident and developed assurance thus becomes a major motivating force in the drive of the Christian. So confident was the apostle Paul that he stated to the Philippians, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Rather than fearing death, he had moved over to where physical death was a plus for him, and he had to weigh between two positive alternatives. “But if I am to live on in the flesh,” he adverted, “this will mean fruitful

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labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed in both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake” (Philippians 1:22-24). Hence the drive for the better resurrection became a powerful motivation for the apostle, as he pressed on through the trials and difficulties resulting from his preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. His desire, he said, was to “know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10,11). He pressed on, he stated, that he might lay hold of his goal of being raised up on the last day. “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14). Of all life’s choices and purposes, Paul had it narrowed down to one: to press on to receive the proper resurrection from the dead!

This resurrection becomes such a certainty that it now is the hope of the Christian. Every earthly hope or fixation can be stripped from a person; his health can disintegrate, his financial world can collapse, his family can be ripped away, his freedom can be dissipated. But if he continues to “press on,” his resurrection is the one thing that cannot be stolen from him. “God,” noted Peter, “according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to *a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (I Peter 1:3,4). “This hope,” affirmed Hebrews’ writer, “we have as an anchor for the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast” (Hebrews 6:19). This, then, is the “salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (Hebrews 9:28), “the hope of salvation” (I Thessalonians 5:8), and “the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). Finally, it is one of the seven major items all Christians have in common as part of the unity of the Spirit: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in *one hope* of your calling ...” (Ephesians 4:4). God, in His spiritual educational process, moves His children from fear of death to longing for their release from the body. “For indeed,” reaffirmed the apostle Paul, “in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven” (II Corinthians 5:2). “For indeed,” he restated, “while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (II Corinthians 5:4). And the great God, who loves each of His children of faith greatly, has put the indwelling Spirit in the heart of each obedient believer as the guarantee that He will give each the resurrection to life. “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God,” annotated the apostle, “who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge” (II Corinthians 5:5). The Christian, then, is the truly liberated individual. He has been freed from fear of death and in consequence all other fears, and he now moves forward triumphantly and victoriously in faith! Praise, great praise, “to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever ... Amen” (Revelation 5:13,14).

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Exhortation

“And God saw all that He had made,” is the inspired record, “and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Man, created male and female, in the image of God, was thus “very good.” But something drastic happened; man, the most noble of all earthly creations suddenly dropped to the most evil and most destructive; by the time of Noah “the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and ... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). That which was originally in the image of God had been hijacked and was now in the image of Satan. That which was once successful and alive was now plunged into failure and death.

God, however, was not willing to let man stay in this unregenerate condition. Working through Abraham and the nation of Israel, He eventually brought His Son into the world, “who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Timothy 1:10). “Therefore if any man is in Christ,” affirmed the apostle Paul, “he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (II Corinthians 5:17). That which was the failure is buried in the waters of immersion; that which was dead has arisen to walk in newness of life!

The challenge is to bring that which is true by faith into the realm of practice. While Noah had the picture of the ark in his mind by faith, he still had to do the labor necessary to bring the big boat into existence. Hence it is that the saint of God has to do the work necessary to bring the picture of his success and his new life in Christ into practice through the process of “renewing” his mind. The mind is where the war is waged, and the mind is where the battles must be won.

Having sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the new creature has a past programming of failure, and the effects of past failures continue to be factors with which he has to deal. As a foreshadow, the Israelites had been given an abundant new life in the land of milk and honey, but they still had to drive the Canaanites out little by little. In the same way, then, the Christian has to conquer the thought processes of his mind, handle the situations that arise because mistakes in the past, and press on victoriously through the challenges, making the laws of the harvest work for him rather than against him.

The Father in heaven labored earnestly in producing a system which eliminates guilt from the past for this new creature. But it had to be so arranged that failed efforts in the past would not be a detriment to present production but such that the lessons learned through those failures would be valuable. He prepared, as a shadow, the Old Testament tabernacle in the physical realm so that the saint of God might understand how Christ offered His spiritual blood in the heavenly tabernacle and purchased for him a clean conscience. With his new life and clear conscience, the saint can “forget what lies behind” and press forward to what lies ahead with joy and confident expectation of victory.

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Be the new self, in the image of Christ, who is a success. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Failures of the past for you dim, and your pattern of success is evident in your present. *Victory over failure has been accomplished!*

Not only is the scripture designed to help the faithful follower past failure, but it is also engineered to enable him to have victory over fear. While fear or respect of God is healthy, other fears are destructive. Fear itself is a great paralyzer and tends to prevent people from doing the right thing. FEAR of death, for example, is the tool the devil uses to keep people in slavery “all their lives,” thus persuading them not to obey the gospel. But Jesus Christ, the great Deliverer from heaven, has set in motion those principles and powers which set His people free from all fears.

Fear, like all other types of temptation, is common to man. The word of God, therefore, has many verses showing the way to victory over these fears. The Biblical foundation, illustrated in these verses, is the disciplining of thought processes so that the track record of triumph can be produced in the disciple of Christ. Whether it is fear of an employer or fear of death, whether it is fear of a husband or fear of suffering, the saint has the assurance that God stands with him through his trials, and that Jesus Himself “learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

The key to victory over all forms of fear is having the faith viewpoint. Faith sees that life on this earth is but a vapor, and that all suffering can be endured for such a short time. Faith sees the King in His beauty, so is not affected by earthly peer pressure. Faith knows that God answers prayer, that God really cares for each of His spiritual children, and therefore that all anxieties can be cast upon Him. Faith sees the resurrection of the dead, and, in that confidence, banishes all fears, including the biggest one of all, fear of death. This living hope has become such a reality in the mind of the saint that he presses forward to his resurrection from the dead, eagerly straining forward to reach that goal. He makes his decisions, therefore, based on the realm that cannot be seen by the physical eye; he truly walks by faith rather than by sight.

When fear knocks at your door, let faith answer; fear will flee. “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith!” (I John 5:4). “He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son” (Revelation 21:7).

Summary

- Conditioned by repeated failures and paralyzed by sundry fears, each generation of mankind plunges on the same destructive downward path.

Cleansing the Inside of the Cup

- Into this sucking maw of humanity comes the gospel, offering courage and a means of success.
- That which was originally in the image of God was bent and twisted through sin, so the child of God has some major challenges to overcome on his way to winning over failure.
- The laws of the harvest — 1) What you sow is what you reap; 2) The sower is guaranteed a harvest; 3) There is a time delay between sowing and reaping; and 4) You reap more than you sow — have consequences that carry over into the life of a new Christian, and these consequences have to be overcome.
- One of the keys of success is to make the laws of the harvest now work for the saint rather than against him.
- Guilt over past failures is one of the major causes of discouragement.
- The sacrifices on the Old Testament Day of Atonement were designed to communicate in a physical way the action of Jesus as the true High Priest in glory in offering the blood of His sacrifice in the true holy place, heaven itself.
- This blood of Christ really cleanses the consciences of those who are obedient to the gospel.
- In this way God assures the follower of Jesus that his conscience is clean and that he is free to move forward in his life, without failures of the past hindering him.
- The Christian uses the positive aspects of the laws of the harvest to motivate him to keep sowing to the Spirit.
- Regardless of what obstacles there are to overcome, or what consequences of the past have to be worked through, the new creation in Christ joyfully digs in and works through the issues one at a time, knowing that all things work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.
- The Christian has a new image by the power of God in accordance with the written word. He is holy; therefore he is holy in all his behavior. The new self is a success in Christ, and he knows he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Victory over failure has been accomplished!
- Fear tends to paralyze people and to render them immobile spiritually. Satan, through fear of death, enslaves mankind all their lives.

Cleansing the Inside of the Cup

- Fear of employer or slave master can be overcome by recognizing that God is in control, and that the servant who serves an unreasonable master has been called for the purpose of suffering, just as Christ was called.
- Just as a servant might fear a master, so might a wife fear her husband. Her hope and trust is to be placed in God, doing what is right without being frightened by any fear.
- A healthy fear of the King in His beauty will render fear of men impotent. Thus the believer will love the approval of God rather than the approval of men.
- Anxiety and depression are overcome through a dedicated prayer life; the praising and thanking God on a consistent basis result in a life that is free from anxiety because the peace of God will guard its heart and mind.
- Suffering is a means of purification for the saint and he therefore welcomes it.
- Jesus, the great example, suffered, and it is to be expected that His disciples will likewise suffer also.
- The proper mind-set puts suffering in the proper perspective; it is but for a fleeting moment.
- Suffering is light affliction for those who look at the things which are unseen.
- Facing the pain of sickness and old age is also overcome with the proper mind-set. God allows Christians to be sick and to die so that they are the continuing bridge between God and the rest of salvageable mankind. Again, the saint has to be conscious that God is causing all things to work together for good.
- The key to victory in facing all trials is the development of a rejoicing attitude regardless of circumstances. Saints exult in their tribulations.
- The Christian knows that he receives help from God, and God will perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish him.
- The ultimate fear is fear of death.
- Jesus accomplished victory over death through His resurrection.
- Jesus Himself appealed to God through loud crying and tears; the saint in the midst of his suffering and facing his own death can make a similar appeal to Him who is able to bring him safely out of death.

Cleansing the Inside of the Cup

- In abolishing fear of death, the Lord effectively also abolished all other fears as well.
- The confidence thus engendered becomes a major positive motivating force in the life of the Christian. He now knows that for him, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
- Paul, by example, had life's choices and purposes narrowed down to one: to press on to receive the proper resurrection from the dead.
- This resurrection becomes such a certainty that it is now the hope of the Christian. "There is one hope of your calling."
- The Christian is the truly liberated individual — having been freed from fear of death and, in consequence, all other fears — and he now moves forward triumphantly and victoriously in faith!