

*Editor's Comment:
This article factually
details what God is
doing with His
creations.*

MAN'S INCREDIBLE POTENTIAL

The Creation of Man

by

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We find recorded in **Genesis 1:26-27** "And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after our likeness So God created man in his (God's) own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." From what material was man created -- **Genesis 2:7** And the LORD God **formed** man of the **dust** of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils **the breath of life**; and **man** became a living **soul**.

John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with **God**, and the **Word** was **God**. The same was in the beginning **with God**. All things were **made by him**; and **without him** was not any thing made that was made."

We see from this that the **Word** who became Christ was with the Father in the beginning and that explains the "**us**" and "**our**" mentioned in **Genesis 1:26**.

We see that God formed man from the "**dust**" of the ground and breathed the **breath of life** into his nostrils and **man** became a living **soul**. Man was made from matter -- not spirit -- he was made carnal and subject to limited existence as a fleshly human being. Man was made **incomplete** -- he was lacking something. The "**tree of life**" in the garden of Eden was available for Adam to eat the fruit and live forever. He followed the lead of his deceived wife, Eve, who listened to the serpent and partook of the "**forbidden fruit**" and was "cut off" from access to the "**tree of life**", lest he should eat of it and live forever. -- **Genesis 3:22**: "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become **as one of us**, to know **good and evil**: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:" This verse implies that the "**tree of life**" was available to Adam and Eve from the beginning. After their sin of eating the forbidden fruit, they were removed from the garden -- now "**cut off**" from access to that "tree of life."

Man Now "Cut Off" From Access To God

Adam and Eve -- and mankind in general -- did not have the "**heart**" to obey God as we see in **Deuteronomy 5:29**: "O that there were such an **heart** in them, that they would fear me, and keep **all my commandments** always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"

Jeremiah 17:9-10: "The **heart** is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the "**heart**", I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to **the fruit of his doings**."

Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is **not in man that walketh to direct his steps**." Man in his current state -- cut off from God -- lacks the ability to properly direct his steps.

Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." God uses repetition for emphasis.

Man, without the leadership of God through His **Holy Spirit**, often travels along "that way that seems right unto him" not realizing that it leads to death. And death does mean death!

Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But **your iniquities (disobedience or lawlessness)** have separated between you and your God, and **your sins have hid his face from you**, that he will not hear."

By having sinned, man separated himself from God and is limited to his normal human life span -- unless and until he "comes to himself" seeing himself as he really is and repents (see Job 42:3-6). In order to do that, man must be "**called**" by the Father before he can come to Christ for forgiveness of his sins. **John 6:44**

God's Love For The World

God having created man in His likeness and for a purpose, in His mercy, made provisions for the redemption of man. **John 3:16:** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should **not perish**, but have everlasting life."

The **Word** gave up His position with the **Father** in heaven and came to this earth and took upon Himself a human life existence – **Philippians 2:6-11:** "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus **every** knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that **every** tongue should **confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father."

1John 1:8-9: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1John 1:10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

After some 33 plus years as a human being, Christ shed His blood for our sins, after having taken upon Himself a tremendous beating that by His stripes we could be healed. He was buried and rose again after 3 days and 3 nights in the grave. He returned to His Father and was restored to the glory He had with the Father before the world was - **John 17:5**: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Christ's Promise To His Disciples -- A Comforter

Christ promised His disciples that He would send them a **Comforter** to be with them and guide and lead them. That **Comforter** was the **Holy Spirit** which was given on **Pentecost**. **Acts 2:1-4**: " And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.And they were all filled with the **Holy Spirit**, and began to speak with other tongues (languages), as the **Spirit** gave them utterance."

Romans 8:8-9: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now **if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**"

Romans 8:14: "For as many as are **led by the Spirit of God**, they are the sons of God."

Paul makes it very plain in these verses, unless a person has the **Spirit of God** dwelling in him, he is none of His. Then followed by the statement that those who are being led by the **Spirit** of God are the **sons** of God.

Do we fully grasp the far reaching implication of these verses? That God is reproducing Himself thru His creation of man in His own image. He is making it possible for man to be led by the **Holy Spirit** of God dwelling in man and leading and guiding him to become more like Christ.

Paul admonished us to "**Let this mind be in you**" which was also in Christ Jesus (see **Philippians 2:5**)

John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the **Father** which hath sent me **draw him**: and **I will raise him up** at the last day."

We can see from Christ's own words that not everyone is being "**called**" at this present time. He is calling certain ones now to be trained to be used with Christ when He returns to set up His kingdom here on this earth.

Revelation 2:26-27: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."

Revelation 3:21: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

Those He is calling are to be **led by the Spirit** of God - **Romans 8:14** - they are in the process of having their minds and heart renewed (changed) daily by that **Spirit** dwelling in them.

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God?

In the Bible, the word **guidance** is used to express one of the ways in which the **Holy Spirit** influences human life. Man is meant to be led by the Spirit. The book of Acts is a record of early Christian experiences and a good source of information. Some consider that there is little theology about the book of Acts since it is merely a record of things that actually happened. They view it as a way in which men proved by experiment the reality of the presence of the **Holy Spirit**. Therefore, the book of Acts is rich with the idea of **guidance**. Consider the example of the **Evangelist Philip** who was carrying on his missionary work, and on the way to Gaza, which is desert, he sees a man in his chariot. The **Spirit** guides Phillip to go near and join himself to this chariot. In today's society, one might phrase it as Philip “felt a great impulse” to go to the chariot. Philip, joining the Ethiopian eunuch, explained to him from the writings of Isaiah, about Jesus. **Acts 8:26-35**.

In **Acts 16:6-7**, we find the story of **Paul** traveling through Asia Minor and being very anxious to preach the word in the Province of Asia. But they “were forbidden of the **Spirit** to preach the word in Asia.” Not being able to preach in Asia, Paul journeyed to Bithynia, but it is recorded that “the **Spirit** suffered (permitted) them not.” Having his plans hindered twice, as it may have seemed, by some strange intervention, he traveled down to the little town of Troas. It appears that **Paul** met **Luke** and was joined by him and some say Luke probably became a traveling physician. There he has the **dream** that brought him to Macedonia. It appears that **Paul's** delay brought him to Troas in order that doors might be opened for a **greater** possibility of mission work that brought him to **Rome**.

It does not appear that **Paul** was handed favorable circumstances that carried him forward almost involuntarily in his life of strenuous activity. It seems that throughout his career he was always in a state of constant struggle to transcend his limitations which circumstances seem to place upon him, yet he continued the struggle with unwavering purpose to the end of his life.

What was it that kept him determined and motivated? There appears to be one notably possible answer. He knew he was under the **guidance** of an authoritative power, the leading of the **Holy Spirit** of God. It seems that his most important question may have been, “what is the will of the Spirit concerning the practical problems of his life?” He did not seem to picture the Christian life either for himself or for others as something that was just handed down ready made for their use. Through daily care in ascertaining and following the dictates of the **Spirit, Paul** realized through these

struggles he would learn and could do the Divine will of God. **Paul** energetically applied himself in order that he might find approval before God.

True Christians of all ages have had that possibility and privilege of spiritual **guidance**. Today, as it was in the time of Paul, such a life is a gift to those who are called by the Father. To those who are willing to pay the price of attainment - - those who are willing to seek after and follow the leading of the **Holy Spirit**, that attainment is available.

This new principle of life reveals itself in our consciousness as a power claiming regulative influence over our actions; leading us, in a word, into true holiness.

When we go our own selfish way, we are not being led by the **Spirit**. It is only when an influence distinct from ourselves determines our movements that we can properly be said to be led. When one is led by the **Holy Spirit**, he is not led by himself or by any element of his own nature, native or acquired. He has ceased to be what the scriptures call a 'natural man', and has become what they call a 'spiritual man'. He has ceased to be a self-led man and has become a Spirit-led man -- as some translations may have it listed. The **Holy Spirit** leads but does not carry God's children to their destined goal of holiness; but the leading of the **Spirit** is no substitute for our own activities. While the Spirit determines both the end and the way toward it, His will, by guiding their action, yet it is by their own effort that they choose to make correct choices to advance.

God's calling is not a leading to prosperity, or enjoyment, or luxury, but to the righteousness of God. He, at times, has led countless of His servants into suffering, hardship, sorrow, unpopularity, persecution, and disaster (study **Hebrews 11**). He leads all of us through the accidents of life and from the certainty of death into the fullness of His Presence. But His leadership has never been wrong and the prayer of those whom He leads is so they may be brought into harmony with the loving and perfect will of God.

Psalm 34:19: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."

Romans 8:14-18: "For as many as are led by the **Spirit of God**, they are the **sons of God**. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the **Spirit** of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The **Spirit** itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory** which shall be revealed in us."

The writings of **Paul** detail many of the afflictions he faced, suffered and endured -- imprisonment, shipwrecked, beatings, thorn in the flesh, etc. Yet notice what he wrote to Timothy as he neared the end of his physical life.

2 Timothy 4:6-9: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

When we come to the end of our physical life, may we too be able to say as did Paul: We fought a good fight, kept the faith, endured to the end and look forward to that crown of righteousness.

Setting Priorities

Let me share the story of a young beginning trumpet player in high school, whose career aspirations were to become a professional tennis player or **trumpet player**. This was before reality set in. He played tennis for eight hours every summer day and three times a week during the school year. And he **practiced the trumpet every day**. He **studied** with the principal trumpet player in the Houston Symphony Orchestra and he had visions of grandeur.

His trumpet hero was **Doc Severinson**. If you remember **Doc**, you've been around for a while. **Doc** was the band leader on **Johnny Carson's** "The Tonight Show" and an amazing musician. **Doc** once was heard saying of his trumpet regime: "if he missed one day of practice, he knew it; if he missed two days, the band knew it; if he missed three days, the world knew it." This man's thought was: if **Doc** needs to practice every day, how much more did he need to practice. He realized that he was right.

Would it surprise you to learn that the **Lord Jesus Christ** had to spend time every day **alone with his Father**? The secret to his spiritual power over Satan and his demons came from **His extended times of solitude**? Think about it - the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the eternal Son of God Himself had to meet with his Father every day and for extended periods of time regularly. **Ephesians 6:12-18** shows who our primary enemy is and what we are to do to conquer the enemy.

Luke 6:12: "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and **spent the night praying to God.**" (Before choosing His disciples)

Matthew 14:22-23: "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside **by himself to pray**. When evening came, he was there alone." **For how long?** "During the **fourth watch** of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake" (**v. 25**). This was 3 a.m. This indicates that Jesus prayed **for nine hours**.

Can you or I remember when we last prayed for **one hour** – let alone nine hours?

This article is not about guilt. It is meant to encourage us to adopt the spiritual strategy guaranteed to give us victory over the enemy. It is a strategy available to every single Christian - no seminary degrees or ordination needed. It's a simple matter of **priorities**.

Martin Luther was quoted as once saying, "If he failed to spend **two hours** in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day." If the founder of the Protestant Reformation felt that he needed time with God to win spiritual victory, perhaps there is **a lesson** that could be learned. If God himself **would model this discipline** and **his Son would practice it daily** without fail, doesn't it seem logical that we need it also?

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

John 5:30: "**I can of mine own self do nothing:** as I hear. I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

Matthew 26:36-40: "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, **while I go and pray yonder.** And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, **and prayed**, saying, O my Father, **if it be possible**, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless **not as I will**, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me **one hour?**"

Can we begin to see and better understand the meaning of what Paul wrote when he said "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus?"

Examples Of Strong Faith and Trust In God

Daniel 3:16-18: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful (afraid) to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us** from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But **if not**, be it known unto thee, O king, that **we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.**"

These three Hebrew men did not know whether God would deliver them from the fiery furnace. But they knew one thing. They were going to **trust** Him for their deliverance

or protection and their ultimate destiny. "King Nebby" became so angry with their refusal to worship the golden image that he had set up so he had the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual before having them thrown into it. Arthur Smith is given credit for the lyrics of a popular song "The Fourth Man In The Fire".

THE FOURTH MAN IN THE FIRE

Lyrics by Arthur Smith

Here is a story from the Good Book we know
A story 'bout a miracle that happened long ago
We hope that you'll take courage when temptation you meet
There's somebody watchin' you who's strong when you're weak.

Chorus:

They wouldn't bend
They held onto the will of God so we are told
They wouldn't bow
They would not bow their knees to the idol made of gold
They wouldn't burn
They were protected by the fourth man in the fire
They wouldn't bend, they wouldn't bow
They wouldn't burn.

Now the prophet Daniel tells about three men who walked with God
Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego before the wicked king they stood
And the King commanded them bound and thrown
In the firey furnace that day.

But the fire was so hot that the men were slain
That forced them on their way.

Now when the three were cast in and the King rose up to witness this awful fate
He began to tremble at what he saw, and in astonished tones he spake.

Did we not cast three men bound into the midst a' that fire?
For lo, I see four men unhurt, unbound and walkin' down there
There's Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego in the firey coals they trod
And the form of the fourth man that I see is **like the Son of God.**

Chorus:

They wouldn't bend
They held onto the will of God so we are told
They wouldn't bow
They would not bow their knees to the idol made of gold
They wouldn't burn
They were protected by the fourth man in the fire
They wouldn't bend, they wouldn't bow
They wouldn't burn.

Notice the response from "King Nebby" in Daniel 3:

Daniel 3:26-30: "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither'. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, **Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego**, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon."

Notice the setting: "King Nebby", princes, governors, captains and counselors all were there and saw this event. They heard "King Nebby's" decree acknowledging the most high God. God honored the faith and trust of those young Hebrew men and was honored by a well known king.

Another Example of Faith and Trust -- Daniel

Daniel 6:1-28

After Belshazzar was killed, Darius the Mede became king. Darius put three men in charge of his kingdom. One of them was Daniel. Daniel had become a very old man but he had served God with all his heart, mind and strength. He was a man of prayer who had seen God do mighty things and so The Lord had blessed him with wisdom.

Soon Darius noticed that Daniel was better than the other two advisers and wanted to put Daniel in charge of the entire kingdom. This did not make the other advisers very happy so they plotted against Daniel. They tried to find something that Daniel had done wrong to prove that he was either a liar or a cheat, but this was hard to do since Daniel was a good man. Finally, the king's men came up with a way they could trap Daniel and together they went to the king.

"Your Majesty, we think you should sign this order. It says you are a god. For the next thirty days, any man who prays to other gods must be thrown into the lions' den and die."

The king liked the idea and so he signed the order.

Even though Daniel knew about the king's order, he continued praying to the Lord. All his life he had prayed at least three times a day. Kneeling by a window which faced

Jerusalem, Daniel thanked God for all His blessings. He prayed for his people and hoped the time would soon come when the Jews could go back to Jerusalem. Daniel's enemies saw him praying from the street below and went to the king.

"Remember the order you gave about not worshipping any god but you? Well, Daniel has broken that law! He still prays to his God everyday."

When the king heard this, he knew he had been tricked. All day long he tried to come up with a way of saving Daniel but there was nothing he could do. The order was signed and sealed. When the guards brought Daniel to him, the king said, "There's nothing I can do, **I hope your God will save you.**"

Daniel was thrown into the great pit with the wild lions and the hole was covered with a huge stone. What would happen to him? Was this the end?

The next day when the sun rose, the king hurried to the lions' den. He stood over the stone which filled the hole. His voice shook. "**Daniel, servant of the living God,** has your God been able to rescue you from the lions?"

He held his breath, There was a voice answering!

"Your Majesty, yes He has!" Daniel was safe. "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths. **God protected me** and I'm not hurt. I haven't done anything wrong, Your Majesty!"

The king called at once for the guards to open the den. When they lifted Daniel out, there was not even a scratch on him. The king sent for the men who had tricked and trapped Daniel. He told his guards to throw them into the lions' den. The evil advisers did not even reach the bottom of the pit before the lions finished them off. Then, the king gave an order. "Everywhere in my kingdom people are to **respect the God of Daniel**. He is the **living God** and His kingdom will last forever. He does signs and wonders; **He saved Daniel from the power of the lions!**"

God shut the mouths of the lions, "took away their appetite" and protected Daniel. Just as with the Hebrew children, God protected them **through** the trial -- **not from the trial**.

We too should take courage from these stories -- Christ is the **same** yesterday, today and forever. He has promised to be with His disciples to the end of the age.

The Homeless Man

The parking lot filled rapidly on Sunday morning as members of the large church congregation filed into church. As usually happens in a church that size, each member had developed a certain comfort zone - a block of space within those four church walls that became theirs after the second or third sitting.

It was as much a part of their church experience as their recliner was to the television at home. Some of the older members had been sitting in the same row on the same

side for several decades. A team of oxen could not have moved them to the opposite side of the church.

One morning a **stranger** stood at the edge of the parking lot near a dumpster. As families parked cars and piled out, they noticed him rummaging through the trash. "Oh no! I don't believe it," whispered a lady to her husband. "That's all we need -- a bunch of homeless people milling around here."

One worried little girl tugged on her dad's sleeve. Daddy was busy sizing up the bearded **stranger**, whose baggy, outdated trousers and faded flannel shirt had dusted too many park benches.

"Don't stare at him, honey," he whispered, and hurried her inside. Soft music filled the high-ceiling sanctuary as church-goers settled into their usual spots. The choir sang an opening chorus, '**In His presence there is comfort ...in His presence there is peace...**'.

Sunlight suddenly flooded the center aisle. The double doors swung open and the **homeless man**, sloppy and stooped, headed toward the front. "Oh no, it's him" somebody muttered.

"What does he think he's doing, anyway?" Snapped an incredulous usher. The **stranger** set his bagful of dumpster treasures on the very first pew, which had been upholstered in an expensive soft teal fabric just three months ago. The music stopped and before anyone had a chance to react, he ambled up the stairs and stood behind the fine, handcrafted oak podium, where he faced a wide-eyed congregation.

The disheveled **stranger** spoke haltingly at first, in a low, clear voice. Unbuttoning and removing his top layer of clothing, he described Jesus, and the love He has for all people.

"Jesus possesses a sensitivity and love that far surpasses what any of us deserves." Stepping out of the baggy old trousers, the **stranger** went on to describe a forgiveness that is available to each and every one of us... without strings attached.

"Unconditionally He loves us. Unconditionally He gave His very life for us. Unconditionally and forever, we can have the peace and assurance that no matter who we are, where we've come from, or how badly we may have mistreated others or ourselves, there is hope. In Jesus, **there is always hope.**"

"You see, my friends, it is never too late to change," the man continued. "He is the Author of change, and the Provider of forgiveness. He came to bring new meaning to life'."

Men and women squirmed as reality hit them like an electrical current. The **stranger** tugged at his knotted gray beard, and removed it. **"I'm here to tell you that we are loved with a love far beyond human understanding, a love that enables us to accept and love others in return."** Then tenderly he added, **"Let's pray together."**

That **wise pastor** - under the guise of a **homeless 'nobody'** did not preach a sermon that day, but every person left with plenty to think about - - to evaluate within themselves!

Have we ever passed bad judgment upon others by the way they **appeared** -- not knowing their individual circumstances? Perhaps they had lost their job due to **no fault of their own**. Maybe he have been unemployed for some time, unable to find a job -- yet trying to find a way to earn a means of acquiring food and clothing for himself and/or his family? (God looks on the inward part of man -- the heart, the inner most being -- man looks on the outward appearance.)

Christ taught in Matthew 25:

Matthew 25:34-40: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and **ye gave me meat:** I was thirsty, and **ye gave me drink:** I was a stranger, and **ye took me in:** Naked, and **ye clothed me:** I was sick, and **ye visited me:** I was in prison, and **ye came unto me.** Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, **when saw we thee an hungred,** and fed thee? **or thirsty,** and gave thee drink? When saw we thee **a stranger,** and took thee in? **or naked,** and clothed thee? Or when saw we **thee sick,** or **in prison,** and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, **ye have done it unto me.**"

Christ taught that helping those who are really in need is as if helping Him.

We are admonished to become **wise as serpents** yet **harmless as doves.**

Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore **wise as serpents,** and **harmless as doves.**"

There are those out there in the world who are victims of their **own poor choices** they have made and may be looking for a "handout" and would not work if they had the opportunity. One should use wisdom and not be "taken in" by some of those. We should not facilitate those who are lazy, indifferent and unwilling to do what they can for themselves.

Acts 20:35: " I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, **It is more blessed to give than to receive.**"

When it is possible to help a deserving person who is in need, remember the admonition that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Yet again, be wise and don't be taken advantage of by **scam artists** -- there are many of them out there.

At this point I wish to relate a couple of stories that illustrate the point.

The Shopping Trip -- Thanks Dad

BY: Jane Choate

Every action in our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity.

~Edwin Hubbel Chapin

"Jane, hurry and get your coat. We're going to the store."

I ran to do as my father instructed. A shopping trip with Dad was **a rare treat**. He traveled a great deal of the time, and I cherished the unexpected opportunity to be alone with him.

Once in the car, I asked, "Where are we going?"

Dad only smiled. **"You'll see."**

To my surprise, we didn't take the usual turn to the area's one department store. (This was in the pre-mall era.) Instead, we turned down an alley where small row houses lined the road. Dad parked the car, got out, and walked to the front door of the first house on the street.

Within a few minutes, he returned with **Connor**, a boy from our church.

I tried to hide my disappointment. I had wanted my father to myself. Now it looked as though I would have to share him with someone else.

"Hi, Connor," I mumbled, barely able to keep the resentment from my voice.

"Hi," he mumbled back. He looked as uncomfortable as I felt.

Dad drove to the store. Once inside, he steered us to the boys' clothing section. My indignation bubbled over. Not only did I have to share my dad, I had to endure looking at boring clothes for boys.

"Connor is going to receive his confirmation tomorrow," Dad said. "He'll need a suit to wear for the occasion."

Connor looked with wonder at the row of clothes.

Dad must have noticed my stiff posture for he drew me aside.

"We have an opportunity to help someone in need," he said in a quiet voice. Finally, I understood and was ashamed at my lack of compassion. Connor came from a family of modest means where his single mother worked to provide for her four children. I guessed that Sunday clothes had no place in the budget.

With Dad's help, Connor chose a dark suit. I watched as Dad gently encouraged Connor to add a white shirt, tie, dress shoes, and socks. Connor's eyes grew wide as the purchases mounted.

"Th... thank you," he stuttered when we returned him home.

Dad smiled broadly. "You're welcome and remember, this is our secret. Only your mother knows."

"Yes, sir."

"Thanks for coming with me," Dad said once Connor had gathered up his bags and run to the front door. "What if we stop and get a chocolate milkshake?"

I nodded, but without my customary eagerness for my favorite treat. I had a lot to think about. Other things began to make sense. I recalled holiday dinners where the table was filled with widows and others who were likely to be alone.

"Why," I had asked Dad at one time, "do we always have to invite those ladies to dinner? They never invite us to their houses."

Dad's answer has remained with me. "It's easy to invite those who can return the favor. **Taking care of those who can't do something for us in return is the hallmark of love.**"

I didn't realize it at the time, but **in those few words** my father had given me the **greatest definition of charity I would ever hear.**

A RED MARBLE

During the waning years of the depression in a small southeastern Idaho community, I used to stop by Mr. Miller's roadside stand for farm-fresh produce as the season made it available.

Food and money were still extremely scarce and bartering was used, extensively.

One particular day Mr. Miller was bagging some early potatoes for me. I noticed a small boy, delicate of bone and feature, ragged but clean, hungrily apprising a basket of freshly picked green peas. I paid for my potatoes but was also drawn to the display of fresh green peas. I am a pushover for creamed peas and new potatoes.

Pondering the peas, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation between Mr. Miller and the ragged boy next to me. "Hello Barry, how are you today?"

"H'lo, Mr. Miller, fine, thank ya. Jus' admirin' them peas...sure look good."

"They are good, Barry, how's your Ma?"

"Fine, gittin' stronger alla' time."

"Good, anything I can help you with?"

"No, Sir, jus' admirin' them peas."

"Would you like to take some home?"

"No, Sir, got nuthin' to pay for'em with."

"Well, what have you to trade me for some of those peas?"

"All I got's my prize marble here."

"Is that right? Let me see it."

"Here 'tis, she's a dandy."

"I can see that. Hmmmm, only thing is this one is blue and I sort of go for red. Do you have a red one like this at home?"

"Not 'zackley.....but, almost."

"Tell you what. Take this sack of peas home with you and next trip this way let me look at that red marble."

"Sure will, thanks, Mr. Miller."

Mrs. Miller, who had been standing nearby, came over to help me. With a smile she said: "There are two other boys like him in our community. All three are in very poor circumstances. Jim just loves to bargain with them for peas, apples, tomatoes or whatever. When they come back with their red marbles, and they always do, he decides he doesn't like red after all and he sends them home with a bag of produce for a green marble or an orange one, perhaps."

I left the stand, smiling to myself, impressed with this man. A short time later I moved to Colorado but I never forgot the story of this man, the boys and their bartering.

Several years went by each more rapid than the previous one. Just recently I had occasion to visit some old friends in that Idaho community and while I was there learned that Mr. Miller had died. They were having his viewing that evening and knowing my friends wanted to go, I agreed to accompany them. Upon our arrival at the mortuary, we fell into line to meet the relatives of the deceased and to offer whatever words of comfort we could. Ahead of us in line were three young men. One was in an army uniform and the other two wore nice haircuts, dark suits and white shirts... very professional looking. They approached Mrs. Miller, standing smiling and composed, by her husband's casket. Each of the young men hugged her, kissed her on the cheek, spoke briefly with her and moved on to the casket. Her misty light blue eyes followed them as, one by one, each young man stopped briefly and placed his own warm hand over the cold pale hand in the casket. Each left the mortuary, awkwardly, wiping his eyes.

Our turn came to meet Mrs. Miller. I told her who I was and mentioned the story she had told me about the marbles.

Eyes glistening she took my hand and led me to the casket. "Those three young men, who just left, were the boys I told you about. They just told me how they appreciated the things Jim "traded" them. Now, at last when Jim could not change his mind about color or size ... they came to pay their debt.

"We've never had a great deal of the wealth of this world," she confided, "but, right now, Jim would consider himself the richest man in Idaho." With loving gentleness she lifted the lifeless fingers of her deceased husband. Resting underneath were three, exquisitely shined, red marbles.

Moral:

We will not be remembered by our words,

but by our kind deeds.

Life is not measured by the breaths we take

but by the moments that take our breath.

These stories listed here are touching examples of how one could be the shining light of how Christ living His life over within a Christian can be a true witness to those who come in contact with them.

Nine Virtues of CHRIST

Fruit of the Holy Spirit

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9** "...if a man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Then in **Verse 14**, we read "... As many as are **led by the Spirit** of God, they are **the sons of God.**"

Is there a way that one can tell if a person **is being led by God's Spirit**? Is there any **visible sign** that might reveal that?

Paul wrote in **Galatians 5:22-23** a very interesting statement about **nine virtues** -- they are listed as **"the fruit of the Spirit"**.

FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: NINE GREAT VIRTUES OF CHRIST

But the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. "**Galatians 5:22-23**

When a person is filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit, all the virtues in **Galatians 5:22-23** should be clearly manifested in that person's life. The **nine** virtues in this passage are actually **the nine great virtues of Christ**. As we are controlled and led by the **Holy Spirit**, God imparts these virtues to us.

LOVE

The **Holy Spirit** imparts to us the **virtue of LOVE**. **I Corinthians 13** describes true Christ like **love**. **Love** radiates from a person led by God's Spirit. A distinguishing mark of a true disciple of Christ is **love**. As it is written in **John 13:35** :"**All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love for one another.**" A true example of **love** for the brethren in the New Testament church, who may have been in physical need, is shown in **Acts 4:32-34**. **Love** flows out spontaneously from a spirit-filled person,

both **love for God** and **love for men**. Christ's **love** for both God and men that led him to Calvary, **love** for God's glory and perfect will and **love** for man's eternal life is what is available to those led by His Spirit. God's **love** is the ultimate reason for the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God.

JOY

A person led by God's Spirit has **joy** in his heart. **Joy** and **pleasure** are two different things. A person may be suffering from a **chain** of misfortune but still have **joy** in his

heart. Like the Apostle Paul, though suffered greatly, endured so much tribulation for the sake of the Gospel, never lost his **joy** as a Christian. In contrary, a person may be full of earthly pleasures, but still does not have real **joy** in his heart. Like the rich people who are living apart from the ways of God, they may have lots of pleasures in this world because of their material possessions, but you will still hear some of them, who despite of affluence, are still not happy. It is because the **joy** of the Lord is not present in their lives.

PEACE

Another wonderful virtue imparted to us by the Holy Spirit is **PEACE**, which is actually the peace of Jesus Christ as it is written in **John 14:27**; "**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you, I do not give to you as the world gives.**" Despite the uncertainties of the future, despite the various problems attacking our economy, despite the present upheavals in our society, a spirit-filled Christian could still remain relaxed, calm, and serene because the **peace** of Jesus Christ is in his heart. One perfect example in the life of Christ demonstrating His **peace** was during the coming of a battalion of soldiers to arrest him in the garden of Gethsemane. A large group of soldiers armed with swords and clubs came to arrest him that night of his betrayal. Jesus yielded himself freely to them. That is the perfect **peace** of Jesus Christ.

LONGSUFFERING

Long-suffering is synonymous to patient and enduring. **Long-suffering** is one of the virtues possessed by God so by Christ also. God was **long-suffering** to Israel, as Jesus Christ was **long-suffering** to his disciples. The disciples during their early life with Jesus were still carnal. Jesus has been very **long-suffering** in dealing with them. As Christians, **long-suffering** must be one of our virtues. We must be **long-suffering** with the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters in the faith. We must be **long-suffering** with the people we are privileged to be working with who are on their Christian journey in striving to obey God and follow the teachings of Christ.

KINDNESS

Kindness could be considered as synonymous to **compassion, generosity, goodness of heart, goodness in deeds** or **actions**. The virtue is very much present in the person of the Father and so with the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has shown great **kindness** to a lot of people surrounding Him during His sojourn here on earth. He has shown **kindness** by healing their infirmities, their disabilities and physical defects, by feeding them and by teaching them the ways of God. As we become controlled by the Holy Spirit, **true kindness** radiates from us. We become more considerate to people, we become compassionate to the needy, to the ones who have not been called to God's precious truth. That is why some are more efficient servants of God. They seem driven to be of service in helping others because this fruit of the Holy Spirit is greatly imparted to them.

GOODNESS

According to Jesus, only one possesses this virtue, and that is **God** as He counseled the rich young ruler. How does **goodness** differ from **kindness**? The word is synonymous to **suitable** or **worthy**. The term is also used for the servant who invested well his resources. He is called **good** and faithful servant. It also indicates that something is functioning well. If we said that this watch is no **good** anymore, it won't keep track of the right time any longer. Jesus said that a **good** tree produces **good** fruit, that is the tree functions properly. Something is **good** when it works. Jesus constantly produced and He never failed. His teachings made a lasting and profound impressions. **Goodness** is one of the virtues imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. We could only function well as Christians if we allow the Holy Spirit to **control** us. We can become the **good** trees that produce **good** fruits as the Holy Spirit **controls** us.

FAITHFULNESS

God was **faithful** in fulfilling his promise to Abraham. He is ever **faithful** to Israel. Jesus was **faithful** in his **love** for His disciples. Jesus is **faithful** to his promises. Jesus showed his **faithfulness** to the scripture and to the will of the Father until his death on the cross. He is **faithful** as High Priest. Jesus calls Himself the **Faithful** Witness. He is the standard of **faithfulness** by which we measure ourselves. God is ever **faithful** to us at all times though sometimes we fail. As we are filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit, the virtue is reflected upon us. We also become **faithful** to him. We become **faithful** to our commitment to others. **Faithfulness** is not inherent in man, it is only a **God-given virtue**.

GENTLENESS

Gentleness is synonymous to **meekness**. Jesus claimed **meekness** for himself and significantly coupled it with being "**lowly in heart.**" His **meekness** is worthy of our imitation. **Meekness** of a Christian is displayed by accepting God's dealings with us as **good without any resistance**. This is a display of **lowliness** before God and **humility** before men.

SELF-CONTROL

Self-control is a discipline, but it cannot be imposed from an outside source. **Self-control** cannot be achieved by training, rather **self-control** is **a fruit of the Holy Spirit**. The spirit-led Christian should have this quality, not as a result of will power or effort but as a result of the work of the **Holy Spirit** in his life. Jesus exercised much **self-control** during his earthly life. A spirit-led Christian should have **self-control** in

all aspects of his/her life. He should have **self-control** in his thoughts, words, deeds, and emotions and he should know well how to handle his emotions and thoughts. He should be becoming an **emotionally mature person**.

If you were arrested for being **accused** of being a Christian, would there be sufficient **evidence** to convict you? If you have the "**fruit**" of the Holy Spirit as discussed in these **nine virtues**, there probably would be enough evidence upon which to be convicted. Would you gladly accept the **verdict** -- **guilty** -- of being a Christian following Christ?

Recap

God's creation of man

Man's sin and having been "cut off" from God - - cut off from God's purpose

God so loved the world -- sent His Son as Redeemer

Christ sent Holy Spirit as the Comforter to guide and direct Christians

God must call man to repentance - **John 6:44**

Christ to live His life over in Christians -- thru the Holy Spirit

How some glorified God by the way they lived their lives (Hebrews 11)

The "fruit" of the Spirit

God is reproducing Himself thru His creation of man

Man's predestined potential - - becoming a literal son of God – **Romans 8:14-17**

Provided we make these virtues a part of our daily lives!

Closing thought:

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance godliness; and to godliness, brother kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ***For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them he is nearsighted and blind (spiritually) and has forgotten (or never knew) that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*** This is what God requires of those who would enter His family.

How could we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Please study **Hebrews 2:3; 6:4-6 and 10:26-31**).

A Reminder

It is recommended that you study this article from time to time to be reminded of what you will allow Him to accomplish in your life - - so you can become a spirit composed son of God when Christ returns to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God (see **1 Corinthians 15:50-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**). There is real spiritual meat in this article for those who are willing to follow God's instructions. May God bless all of you as you read and reread this article.