

LIFE AFTER CHRIST

Overriding verse is Colossians 2 vs 6. This verse is important in our total understanding of our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. i.e.; in the same manner in which you have received the Lord Jesus, so walk with Him. How did you receive Him? Answer – by faith - that what you have heard concerning Him you believed, and now you walk with Him in the same manner. By faith. Not by trying, or working, or studying, or by doing. Rather now you walk with Him in the same manner. Not by doing, but by just being. Not by trying, but by believing.

Chapter 1 - What Does It Mean to be “Born Again?”

You have given your life to Jesus Christ. You have accepted His forgiveness, and are now Born Again. You came into this world with an active soul, that is your mind was active, your will was intact, and your emotions were on alert.

We are made up of spirit, soul and body. Our souls were active, and our bodies certainly functioning properly, however our spirit was dead in trespasses and sin. This was our condition before we received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

When you accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, your spirit became alive. The person of the Holy Spirit came into your life and quickened your spirit, and you became born again, or as the Apostle John put it, “born out from among the dead ones.”

You now have not only an active body, and your soul is active, but now your spirit is alive unto God. You now possess the very life of the Living God within your body. He has chosen to live inside of you and to never leave. As the writer to the Hebrew church stated in Chapter 13: 5 “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

As a “born again” believer, you are now able to understand spiritual things. Before God came into you, the bible says that you were a “natural man” and the natural man cannot understand the things of God. This is no longer the case with you. You now contain the receiver (or the Holy Spirit) who is able to understand the things of God and explain them to you. John 16:15.

For example, think of it this way. God the Father is sending a message to earth. The message that He is sending is His Son, Jesus Christ. This message can only be understood when the person receiving this message has within himself, the Holy Spirit, who is receiving the message sent from the Father, concerning His Son Jesus, and now you are able to understand spiritual things.

A marvelous transformation has taken place within your life. You now have meaning in your life. You now have purpose in this life, you are a child of the King, joint heir with the Lord Jesus Christ, and are forever a part of the family of God. This is what the Apostle Peter is telling us in His first epistle chapter 2 and verses 9&10.

With this understanding, we are now able to understand why Jesus came into the world in the first place.

God had instructed Adam when He placed Him in the garden, not to eat of a certain tree in the garden. You can read about this in Genesis chapter 2, 16& 17. Adam through his wife Eve disobeyed the voice of God and ate of the forbidden fruit. This was the first sin by man against God. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he forfeited the very life of God. His soul was active, His body was active, but his spirit became dead. Then according to Genesis, he reproduced after his own kind. That is to say, all of his offspring came into the world in the same condition he found himself. An active soul (mind, will and emotions) an active body, but a dead spirit.

Now what can a dead spirit do? It can either become alive - “by receiving the Holy Spirit within” or it can remain dead. At our conversion, every one of us experienced the same thing. Our spirit became alive.

Every human being is born into this world in the same condition. We were born as sinners, because we all had dead spirits. We were not sinners because we sinned; we sinned because we were born sinners. Did you get that? Our condition was not one of choice. Every offspring of Adam came into this world in the same condition. The natural outcome of our condition is that we sin.

This must be understood by the whole human race. This is the reason Jesus had to come and take all sin upon Himself, as the final sacrifice for all sin. This is what the Apostle John is telling us in 1st John chapter 2 and verse 2. To quote it “and He Jesus Himself is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

He Himself actually became sin, and in doing so the wrath of God that was due each of us, was poured out on Him. He paid for the sin of the entire world. He took all sin upon Himself when he was crucified, paid the penalty for all sin with His death.

Once the sin issue has been taken care of by the Lord Jesus Christ, this leaves only two kinds of people in this world. There are those who *believe* in what He did on the cross, and those who *don't believe* what He did on the cross. Believers go to heaven based upon their belief in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and those who don't believe His sacrifice for sin, end up in the same place as the Devil, the lake of fire.

You will notice however, that even though Jesus paid for the sin of the entire world, all of us still sin. The difference between believers and unbelievers is that believers go to heaven, and unbelievers do not. Will there be sinners in heaven? The answer is no. Will there be believers who occasionally sin in heaven? The answer is yes. This is what the Apostle John is telling us in His 3rd Chapter verse 18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already; because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

This is the distinguishing feature about all peoples on earth. Those who are believers, and those who do not believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Because of what He did on the cross, the issue of sin was settled. And those who believe in His finished work on the cross have their debt paid, and they are forgiven. People who do not believe in His finished work on the cross, have to stand before God on the basis of their performance, and all will fail. Why will they fail? First, because they are unable to live up to the stringent requirements of fulfilling the law perfectly, and because they do not believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Believers go to heaven, unbelievers do not. It is as simple as that.

That used to be who you were, until you gave your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. As a believer, your sins are forgiven. They were paid for at the cross by Jesus Christ, but forgiveness for those sins was issued to you at your conversion. Our forgiveness was purchased for us at the cross, but was only imputed (charged to our account) at our “new birth.”

There are 4 major imputations listed in scripture. To impute something, is an accounting term which means that it has been charged to your account. I like to think of it this way. Tooth paste is imputed into the tube. It is placed within the tube you purchase at the store. In the same manner, the sin of Satan was imputed into Adam when he sinned in the garden. The second is the sin of Adam imputed into every man woman boy and girl born after them. We all came into this world with the sin of Adam imputed into each one of us. That is what the Apostle Paul means when he writes in Romans chapter 5, verse 12 “therefore, just as through one man (Adam) sin entered the world, and death (spiritual death) through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

So the sin of Adam was imputed into every person born after them. The next great imputation was when the sin of all mankind was imputed (charged to His account) into Jesus Christ at the cross. It was at this time that Jesus became the sin of all mankind. He cried out from the cross “my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” It was at that time on the cross that Jesus became “sin”. Fellowship with the Father was broken at this time, thus His saying “My God, My God.” Rather than My Father, My Father.

The fourth and final imputation was when Jesus Christ, (now restored to the Father before He ever left

the cross) cries out to the Father and says “Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit.” Luke 23:46. He has now become the “righteousness of God in Christ.” The final imputation is that life imparted into every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Once you and I believe in the record concerning His Son Jesus, we become as “righteous” as He (Jesus) is righteous.

Some would tell you that you have received a pardon for your previous failures and sins, but I have further good news for you. If you and I were pardoned, we would still carry the guilt of what we have done. When the governor pardons a criminal, he is set free, but still carries the guilt of what he has done. Scripture teaches us that we were not pardoned, but rather acquitted. Since we are acquitted, we no longer carry the guilt of our past life .

It is as though in the court of heaven the gavel has come down concerning our lives and claimed “not guilty.”

I know that is sometimes hard for us to comprehend, knowing our past lives, but the truth remains. We are forgiven sinners, based upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross in our behalf. That beloved is worth getting excited about. Especially if you really realize just how bad off you were before He saved you.

Chapter 2 – Now What Happens to Me?

If you will, please pardon the personal reference here, but this is my testimony. I remember what happened to me when I gave my life to the Lord Jesus Christ in 1958. I did so in a Baptist Church in Las Vegas Nevada. The pastor preached a sermon that was directed straight to me. He taught that Sunday morning that as a sinner, I was separated from the Almighty God, and that if I did not give my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, should I die this day, I would split hell wide open.

I want you to know that I knew I was a sinner. I was in the Air Force, had been married for a short time, but was fully aware of my shortcomings. He was talking to me. There may have been a hundred people there that morning, but he was speaking directly to me personally.

I was grateful when he offered a solution to my situation. If, he said, you have never openly confessed before men that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, never have received Him in your life as Lord and Savior, you better do it today because you have no idea what may come of yourself if you leave this room and do not get this matter cleared up.

I want you to know that he scared the hell right out of me. I ran down that aisle and gave myself to the Lord Jesus Christ. I received Him that Sunday morning, and for the first time in my life I knew that if I would die at that moment, I belonged to Him.

The next Sunday morning, the preacher preached another message pretty much in the same manner, and again, I felt convicted of my sin and at the end of the service, I again ran down the aisle and gave myself to the Lord Jesus Christ. He had preached me again into hell, and I needed out of that. The answer was the same. Accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you will be saved.

The difference this Sunday is that at the end of the service they were having a baptism service, so I was baptized that morning as well. Born again, baptized in the Baptist Church and now everything is going to be alright.

Virtually every Sunday morning the ritual was the same. The pastor preached on sin and the wages of that sin, I was convicted of my sin, but after two weeks of going down to the front, I was a bit tentative to say the least. I couldn't keep doing that, so I just buried what I was thinking.

My honest thought was however, now what do I do with my life. If I die, I am going to heaven of that I was sure. But now what? How do I go on with my life? What was that conversion all about? Was that all about my destination when I die? I was 20 years old, and death was not upper most in my mind. I wanted to go out and live.

Now let me digress for a moment. As I research the early church in the book of Acts, I noticed something very interesting. In Acts chapter 2 verse 41, right after some 3,000 souls were added to the

church, verse 42 states that these folks “continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers.”

Apostle’s doctrine? What is that all about? Actually the word doctrine means teaching. These folks were sitting around being taught. Taught what I asked myself?

You see, I feel that this is one of the main problems with the Church today. We arise being preached to, and we are having fellowship for sure. There are countless pot lucks, and breakfast meetings, ladies gatherings, but we are sorely lacking in teaching. My concern is over the lack of teaching. About what you say? About Him is my response. Scripture teaches me that I am to “grow up in the knowledge of Him.” I am to look unto Him, the author and finisher of my faith. If I am to become “like Him” it is imperative that I learn about Him. I do not read the book to learn how He would act in a certain situation and then set about to re-produce that act.

I read the book to learn about Him, and then when He wants to re-produce Himself in my life, I release Him in my surroundings and He accomplishes His desires in all I do and say. You see, this is what I believe Jesus meant when He said “I of my own self can do nothing, I only do what I see the Father in me doing.” John 5:30. John 5:19. Let me quote this verse; “Most assuredly I say to you, “ the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the father do: whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”

This was the situation that I was facing right after I gave my life to the Lord Jesus. I needed to be taught. I needed to, as the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:12,” apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” King James Version, or to put it in a little easier understanding, he is saying “I want to get a hold of who it is that has a hold of me.” I want to understand more about who it is (the Lord Jesus Christ) who now has a hold of me.

Teach me about Him. Expand my understanding of who He is. Talk to me about Him. Tell me more about Him. The pastor of this church where I gave my life to Christ had a burden for the lost. His message was one of evangelism. That was the gift that God had given him. He was not a teacher and spend his entire time getting people saved. Now that I was saved, I needed to know about Him.

Basically most every church has a basic theme depending upon the gifting of the leaders. But in every church there needs to be those with the ministry gift of teaching. Most churches spend a great deal of time with breaking bread and fellowship.

Breaking bread and fellowship is worthwhile and very important for sure, but not at the expense of teaching. It is the doctrine, the teaching that feeds the Saints and makes them grow up into Him OK, now to answer my question listed above about what’s next. You and I need teaching.

Chapter 3 – Teaching About What?

I think it is a smart idea for each church to be able to expand on the things “most commonly believed among them.” That is to say, every church should have in writing exactly what they believe as a community. However, I want to expand according to scripture what Hebrews lists as first principle teachings.

Hebrews chapter 6 goes on to list these **first principles**. We note however that before these first principle teachings are presented, they follow the words “therefore, leaving”

Now let me camp here a moment. Anytime you see the word “therefore” it is always a good practice to determine what the word is there for. It usually follows after the previous passages that relate directly to what the writer was saying.

In Hebrews chapter 5, the believer is encouraged to go beyond the “milk” of the word, into the meat of the word. In other words, do not get bogged down on certain teachings. Further, we note that the writer is highlighting on milk verses meat. Milk is the by-product of another person’s effort. The milk of the word of God is the result of someone else’s study. The writer is encouraging every believer to continue to study the scripture for themselves.

So, Hebrews 6 starts out with “therefore” and then tells them to “leave” these first principle teachings. That is good encouragement for all of us. We are to know these first principle teachings, but go on beyond them to the “meat” of the word of God.

The first principle teachings begin with “the elementary principles of Christ.” What does this include? Well, who He is, where He came from, what was His purpose in coming, where He was before He came to earth as a Man, how He fits into the three persons of the Godhead, what He accomplished, and where He is at this very moment, etc. These are the elementary principles of Jesus Christ.

The next principle listed is: “the foundation of repentance from dead works” What is this all about? Actually there is a difference between “good works” and “dead works.” In 1st Corinthians chapter 3 these works are either “gold silver and precious stones” for which the believer will receive a reward or “dead works” which Paul calls “wood, hay and stubble.” The dead works are burned up and are of no value regarding rewards given to the believer at the Judgment seat of Christ.

The believer is not judged, just the work he has done on this earth while in this earthly body. If the work endures according to verse 14, he will receive a reward. The dead works are burned up and the believer suffers the loss of rewards. Now the important thing to note here is that the same work can be either a good work or a dead work. The distinguishing feature is the “motive” behind the work.

Let me give you an example of a scriptural principle. Suppose that your local hospital is going to add on a new wing to treat certain conditions. If you donate to the new wing, and your name appears on the wing as being the sponsor of the new wing, you have received your reward. Dead work, no heavenly reward. However, should you donate to that wing without anyone knowing that you did, you stand to gain a reward for your generosity. Same work, but different motives.

Here is another example. When it comes to giving in your church, if you are doing so because you fear that God will somehow get even with you if you don’t give, your work is a dead work. If on the other hand, you find yourself giving according to 2nd Corinthians 9:7 as a cheerful giver, your rewards are guaranteed.

Next you find “of faith toward God” listed as one of the elementary principles. Much needs to be said about this subject, but let me remind you that it is His faith that you and I exercise toward Him. He has given you and I that measure of faith (or belief – same Greek word). We need to caution ourselves about making our “faith” or lack thereof, the important fact. When I was pastoring, I came across a rather scary situation. There was a couple who had been part of my church for several years and they moved to another town,

Their testimony was that their grandchild had somehow wandered out of the yard and ended up in a pond they had made to raise catfish. They found the little girl face down in the pond and called 911. The little girl lived for a week, before succumbing to her injury. When it came time for the funeral, the pastor refused to perform the ceremony telling the grandparents that if they had had the proper faith, that child would not have died.

These folks called me and asked if I would perform the funeral. I of course agreed. The scripture that the Lord gave me regarding this situation was from 2nd Samuel chapter `12. You will remember the story. David fasted and prayed for His son to be healed. After 7 days it came to pass that the child died. You can read all about it, but it is noteworthy that verse 22 and following says “while the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said: Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*” You and I live “by the faith of the Son of God.” It is His faith that is in view and my trust in that faith.

Then the writer mentions “doctrine of baptisms.” It needs to be understood by the new believer that there is “water as well as Spirit baptisms” that are necessary and available to every believer. Every believer should be water baptized. Not that it is necessary to go to heaven (the thief next to Christ on the cross), but it is the outward sign of an inward conviction, and a cleansing of the defilement of this world we live in.

Further, there are those who believe in the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” of which I concur, that ushers us into the “power” of God. This is listed I believe in John 3: 5 as one who when baptized of water (even) the Spirit, can enter into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God here is the power of God. Notice that in verse 3, that the individual is not able to see (perceive) the kingdom of God, and then in verse 5, cannot “enter into” the kingdom of God.

In any case, different denominations treat this issue from a different perspective, and the new believer needs to be taught what their particular denomination believes.

The next area the new believer needs to be aware of is “the laying on of hands.” This deals with anointing power passed on through the laying on of hands of the leadership of the church, as well as teaching the new believer the power he or she now has as they pray for others and lays hands on them in doing so. The new believer needs to be taught about the power attached to the laying on of hands. Next we find “resurrection of the dead” and how every person will be resurrected from the dead, whether a believer or an unbeliever. In other words, at the time that the sperm met the egg in the womb of the woman, a “soul” was created. That soul was created to live forever. The question before the individual today is “where will that soul spend eternity”? For the *believer*, he/she will spend it forever in the presence of the Lord Jesus. To the *unbeliever*, he/she will share in the place set aside for Satan and all of his minions, that is the Lake of Fire.

Then Paul mentions “eternal judgment” as the seventh “first principle” that should be understood by all believers. We must remember beloved that the word “death” in scripture does not mean **annihilation** (being brought to nothing, or destroy entirely) but it means “separation.” That is the reason why scripture teaches that the believer will never be separated from the presence of the Lord Jesus. He will never see death.

These “first principles” need to be understood by every believer, and they should be taught accordingly.

You will notice then verse 3 says “And this we will do if God permits.” I once asked the Lord to define this verse for me. I felt He told me that He has set certain churches and certain denominations within the Church in order to teach the Saints the principles that have been entrusted to them. The fact remains however that the believer is not supposed to “camp” there, but rather learn what is necessary and move on into maturity.

You will note however that the writer of Hebrews lists these as elementary principles. In other words, they are elementary teachings that need to be settled in the minds of the Saints. However, we are encouraged to move on beyond these first principle teachings.

The majority of teaching taking place in churches today usually revolve around these first principle teachings. That’s fine as a foundation, but we are encouraged to go beyond them.

Once the new believers are introduced to what their church believes, and how they relate to the first principles listed in Hebrews 6, what are they supposed to be taught?

Herein lays the problem. All too often the individual domination then expands upon their views relating to behavior, dress, food to eat etc. and still fail to unveil the glory of the Lord Jesus. The Saints are left wanting.

Now I want to examine what I believe is a crisis that awaits the new believer.

When you and I read in scripture that we are new creations in Christ Jesus, and that we have the mind of Christ, and that the old man in each of us has been crucified with Him, we want to believe this about ourselves. We want this to be the case in our lives.

However, when we are completely honest with ourselves and we don’t always find that the activity of the “old man” is as dead as scripture says he is, how do we handle this challenge?

We talk about Christ being “in me” however in practical terms; far more of me show up than Him.

How is it that I can say with authority that I am now a partaker of His divine nature and actually express Christ when in fact I don’t always do that?

When I read in scripture that I have actually “put off the old man, and have put on the new” it seems a

like there is a great deal of the “old man” still around in my life.

Here-in lays the problem for the believer. How do I get beyond what the scripture tells me of my new creation in Christ Jesus, and my present behavior?

Some would express various ways to overcome these problems in our behavior, but we must be careful not to place the believer under condemnation. It is true that our mind needs to be renewed, and this is done through our understanding of scripture. Starting this behavior and stopping that behavior has its root in the “law.” Remember according to Paul, “the letter (law) killeth, the Spirit gives life”

2Corinthians 3:6

If we are not careful, this kind of teaching will cause us to look inward. This kind of teaching will cause us to “try to become something” that scripture teaches us is already the case. You and I will never become more righteous than the blood of Jesus Christ has made us at our conversion, As one brother once stated, trying is lying.

The word “ought” needs to be removed from our vocabulary. This kind of thinking belongs under the old covenant of law. If you do this, God will do that kind of thinking. All too often our leaders will tell us that if we would just spend more time in prayer, or reading more of the scriptures or fellowship more with the Saints, these things will not be in our lives.

Beloved, I have no problem with praying, reading scriptures or fellow shipping with the Saints. All are beneficial to the life of the believer. The truth is we need to have our minds renewed, and these things are necessary to renew our minds. I have found however, that still I find myself in the Romans 7 predicament. You will remember that Paul said “the good that he willed to do, he did not always do. Those things that he preferred not to do, that he found himself doing. You will notice that the answer to his situation was not in “doing something else to stop doing what he was doing.” I will comment on this further in the book.

The words “ought” and “trying” and “should have” are associated with the law. Remember that the law says “do this and you will live”. The law says “if you will do this, God will do that.” The law always put the responsibility first on me, and then God will do His part.

Beloved, this whole understanding is contrary to the teachings of the “gospel of grace” in the New Testament. Law says “do this”, grace says “it is finished” Law says your part must be first, in order for the Lord to honor His part The New Testament teaches that “because of what Jesus has already done for you, you respond in like kind. The law says “don’t lie” the New Testament tells us that we are no longer liars, so stop lying. Always what Christ has done for us precedes any activity on our part. We respond to what He has already done for us, not in order to get Him to do something for us.

We love, because He first loved us. We forgive one another, because we are forgiven.

Our New Testament is very clear about the law. Jesus Christ according to Ephesians 2 “abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself *one new man* from the two, thus making peace.”

Jesus abolished the enmity (hatred, hostility for opposition) that was in the law regarding us, and He actually fulfilled all of the requirements of the law on our behalf, giving us *peace* with God. There are three kinds of peace listed with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Peace *from* God -proving the hostilities toward His people have ceased, the peace *with* God, proving that reconciliation is now possible for the people of the earth, and the peace *of* God – that scripture tells us that we as believers now possess.

Now picking up the theme listed about our “trying” or “ought to” kind of thinking we must settle upon the fact that we have no human nature.

We are expression of the nature we contain. Before we gave our lives to Jesus Christ, we expressed the nature of the entity that controlled us. That enemy was contrary to all that God stands for. We were by nature sons of disobedience. Paul put it this way in Ephesians 2:1 and following - “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, *in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*”

We walked according to Satan's direction. Oh, we often did good things, but that did not change whose direction we were under. Likewise, now that we are under a “new ownership” we may occasionally function according to the previous owner, but in no way does that negate our present position with Christ.

A man is either “in Adam” or he is “in Christ.” We express the nature of the one who lives in us. We are either expressing the one of the Spirit of disobedience – Ephesians 2,2 or according to 2 Peter 2:4 “partakers of the divine nature of Jesus Christ.”

We are what we are at our center. Our nature is the one who lives in our center. A temporary deviation in our activity does not alter the basic nature we now contain, it is just a deviation from that nature.

Jesus Christ has become our new center, and we are now beginning to express His divine nature.

We may move into the flesh, but this does not alter the center.

Just as a slave to Satan can do a few “good thing,” he is still a slave to Satan.

A slave to Jesus Christ can do a few bad things, but he is still a slave to Christ. Do not confuse a temporary mismanagement of the believer, as a change of his “center.”

It was very liberating to me to understand that there is no third position for a person to be in. A friend of mine by the name of John Wytock wrote a song once talking about the believer who found himself: “if doing good, would go here and doing bad would go there, but where do you go when you are just so, so in between?”

The answer of course is that there is no in-between. Believers go to heaven, because at their center they now contain the Lord of Glory, non-believers do not go to heaven, because they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are two kinds of folks in this world – period.

Chapter 4 – The Secret That Sets Us Free

Look with me at a few scriptures. 2nd Corinthians 4;7 “but we have this *treasure* in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” What do you suppose the treasure is? Yep, I believe you are right. The treasure here is the “deposit of wealth or treasure” – referring of course to the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives. He is the treasure within our lives. He is the depositor of His very presence in the person of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives.

Look again at the Apostle John and how Jesus put it in John 14:16 “ I will pray to the Father, and He will give your another Helper, that He may *abide with you forever* – then verse 26 of the same chapter “but the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” And then in chapter 16 verse 7 Jesus said; “nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Holy Spirit) will not come to you; *but if I depart I will send Him to you.*”

Then in verse 13 of the same chapter John says “However, when He the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it unto you.”

So the treasure within the earthen vessel is the presence of the Holy Spirit of the Living God.

Well then – what is this *vessel* thing all about? Again, you have hit the nail on the head. When Paul is speaking about the vessel, he is speaking about you and me. He is referring to the believer. The believer is now the “container” if you will, of the Holy Spirit of the living God.

Just to remind us of a fact, – a container contains. It holds something. My flower pots contain various kinds of flowers. My plants are all in pots, and they contain everything from ferns, to pepper plants. All various sizes, shapes and colors. Some are terracotta, some are basic clay pots and others, cedar wooden containers.

The color, type and shape of the pot are not important. What is important is what it contains. So too, the vessels that contain the Holy Spirit are not in view. Their shape and color and condition are not

what are important. What is important is what the pot (vessel) contains. Fat, skinny, black, white, yellow or brown make no difference. Oh, and just to throw in a real challenge, I do not look for *improvement* in the pot when I plant whatever it is that I put in it.

Notice now the balance of the verse in 2nd Corinthians 4 is: “that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. What is in view here? Correct. The *excellence of the power* is in view. In other words, *the power in the pot is not the pot*. It is the Lord Himself that is the excellence of the power. In other words, we look to the Lord for what is coming out of the vessel, and not the vessel itself.

Well this makes sense does it not? When Paul writes in First Corinthians Chapter 1: verse 27 and following, “but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen – then at the end of the verse “to bring to nothing the things that are” beloved, He is speaking about you and me – the vessels.

Let me give you another example from scripture. Jesus is speaking about His relationship to the believer in John 15: 1 and following: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine dresser. Verse 4 “abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit: *for without Me you can do nothing.*”

When Jesus is talking here, he is not meaning that you or I cannot drive a car, or wash the dishes, or mow the lawn, He means you can do nothing of spiritual value apart from Him. In other words, it is the life of the Lord Jesus that is in view here.

It is as though you were looking at a table lamp. The light is off, and you turn it on. When the light comes on, what you are viewing is how electricity actually reacts to the filament in the bulb to produce light. You do not see the electricity, but without it, the bulb would not illuminate. That is what Jesus is saying here. Nothing of spiritual value can come out of the life of the believer unless He (the power source) is active in our lives.

Without that power source, nothing of spiritual value can come from each of our branches. It takes the life of the vine coming through the branches to produce any sort of spiritual fruit. We are not the vine, we are not the fruit. We are the conduit He chooses to use to bring forth His light. Got it? Should you remove the branch from the vine, it would wither and die. Why? Because the branch cannot produce anything by itself. It only has value as it is attached to the vine.

You will notice further beloved, that there is no sweat on the part of the branch to produce this fruit. I have a garden full of tomatoes. Those silly red things just naturally form from the tomato vine (assuming the squirrels don't get them first) to produce delicious red tomatoes that we enjoy all year long. If the garden gets the proper sunlight (sun-light) and water, the fruit is just there.

The same is true of you and me. As we abide in the vine, His fruit will become a natural part of our lives. We must always remember that it is His fruit and He is the source of all of that fruit. I become a fruit-bearer, but He is the source of that fruit.

In Galatians 5:22, When Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit(notice the capital letter in the word spirit) being love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, they are all a part of who He is. He is love. Not that He has love and gives it to me, rather **He is** love. Same is true of joy, and peace and self-control. That is all a part of who He is and you do not separate who He is from what He produces.

I can no more produce peace in my life than I can produce love. The best love I can muster is self-love. That is to say love that expects something in return. It is like saying “I love you” to your spouse, and waiting for her response of “I love you too.” The love of Jesus Christ is not like that at all. In fact, the apostle John tells us in His first Epistle, chapter 4 verse 10 “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins.”

Agape love is who He is. As He chooses to reside within every believer, His love is there and all we need to do is release it to those around us.

With regard to the issue of peace, peace is not the absence of conflict. I can do all within me to avoid conflict in my life and still not be at peace. Peace is a person, and His name is Jesus Christ. In 1st Corinthians chapter 12 Paul mentions the issues of the “fruit of the Spirit” available to every believer. It must be noted that there is no separation between the fruit and the giver of that fruit. When there are diversities of gifts given to the church, it must be understood that they are all a part of the person of The Holy Spirit. Every gift given to the church for the building up of the church is the manifestations of the Holy Spirit Himself. If it is a word of knowledge, or healing, or word of wisdom, prophesy, discerning of spirits, tongues or interpretation of tongues, it is all the manifestations of the person of the Holy Spirit.

That is why Paul is so specific in telling this church that they have need of one another. Every member of the church has a specific gift ministry to the entire body, and if used correctly he or she needs to be given the opportunity to bring forth that gift. It is, however, the Holy Spirit in action when the gifts are released into the congregation. How long will these gifts be in operation? Paul addresses this situation in Ephesians 4:11 and following “And He Himself (Jesus) gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man in the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” Well, we are not there yet would you agree? Just as Jesus has given these men and women to the church, He has also given His gifts to edify and build up the church.. I do not see this ceasing until His return to rapture the Church. Surely, we are not all in the unity of the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God, and we certainly are not yet a “perfect” or mature man or woman.

Paul uses the example of the body needing every part to function correctly. The “big toe” may look funny and may be clumsy, but still necessary for balance and until the body grows up properly. Another example from scripture of who and what we are, is listed in 1st Corinthians 3, verse 16. Paul tells us that we are the temple of the living God. We know that we are not made of brick and mortar so what is He referring to?

Again, temples contain something. In this case Paul further explains in this same verse that as containers we contain the Spirit of God who dwells within each of us. The temple of God is holy (that word here means separate), *which temple you are*. As temples, we are cautioned to be careful about what we allow to come into this temple. Making sure it is for the benefit of the temple and who we contain.

Chapter 5 – How Is It Then That This Secret Sets Us Free?

When I speak of freedom, I speak of a lack of restraint. I am speaking about freedom from “doing” or “trying to become” or any effort on our part for improvement. I often hear of testimonies where we are told that so and so used to do such and such but now they are set free from that same behavior. I praise God that deliverance has come to them and that these things are no longer a part of their lives.

It must be noted here beloved, that it was His deliverance that set them free. It was not an act of their will, or their perseverance, or self-help, it was the deliverance of the Lord that set them free. There is a tendency when we hear of a great deliverance that we immediately want to know what they did to get free from that behavior. It is not the success of a specific program that changes their behavior. He who is set free, scripture says is free indeed. There need be no follow-up on their part for this deliverance. It is just like the blind guy Jesus ministered to in John chapter 9, when asked what happened to him. In verse 25 the healed blind man said “one thing I know, once I was blind, now I see.”

That is our testimony. Once I smoked, now I don't. Once I drank too much, now I don't. Once I was into sexual sins, now I am not. Once I lied and cheated in my business practices, but now I don't. It was the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in my life that changed me and everyone else who has experienced this transformation.

Any effort on the part of the pot, plant, or temple to change its behavior only frustrates the work being done on their behalf by the Lord Jesus Christ whom they contain.

When we read in Romans 7 of the battle going on within the life of the believer who “wants to do good, but can't seem to find or do it” or when “evil is present within me, they desire not to do that evil, that becomes the very thing they find themselves doing.”

Notice in verse 24, Paul asks the question – *Who* will deliver me from this body of death? Not what can I do to deliver myself from this body of death, but a Who. Verse 25 of that same chapter answers the question of the who. “I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! It is not “a what” that brings deliverance, but a who – the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Side bar here beloved. Often times we are far more concerned over what we are doing wrong, than He is. We want to stop this behavior because it makes us look bad to other saints. We want to stop this behavior because we view it as unbecoming to our new stature in life. After all, we are now His and we need to look like it to the world.

The question I have for us today is – are we willing to keep our sin, and let Jesus Christ be our total righteousness? Are we willing to be a person in desperate need of Him at all times in our lives. Or are we more concerned about how we look to others. God does not “help those who help themselves” as some would say. He helps the helpless.

Further, I find it ironic that the more I criticize behavior in the lives of the brethren, the more prone I seem to be toward that behavior myself. We say in our heart, (never out loud of course)– I am glad I am not like so in so. I got rid of that thing in my life, and will be glad when He does too. Why have you noticed his behavior at all? He certainly has a temper, or he certainly treats his wife poorly, or is too lax in his discipline of his children.

Scripture teaches a great lesson in 1st Corinthians 4: 7 and following; “For who makes you differ from another (notice it is a “who” not what), and what do you have that you have not received.” In other words, you and I received something that makes us different. We did not create the difference, nor did we do anything but receive it.

Continuing, “now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it.” So then if we have deliverance in an area of our lives that others still are hung up on, we received that deliverance from the Lord Jesus and having received it “freely given” we have nothing to boast about.

Ouch. It was much more fun to boast about giving up this, or being delivered from that.

Now back to the question listed at the beginning of the chapter. How then if I am to see myself as a vessel or a branch attached to the vine, or as a temple where God resides, how does this information set me free?

The answer lies in my ability to grasp what it is that I now possess. To know fully *who I am*, with no thought of what *I ought to become*. I must comprehend and forget about the whole notion of receiving something further. Rather than live the life listed in Romans 7, enjoy the life listed in Romans 8. For example we would do well to know down deep that we are already “heirs of the living God” and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Should we suffer with Him, we know that we will also be glorified together with Him.

We like Paul already have the first fruits of the Spirit and like him “groan within ourselves eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of this body. We are fully aware of everything that comes our way, is working together for our good. Further we have deep down understanding that nothing can separate us from Him. We further know that He never condemns us, and we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

The way Pastor Joseph Prince puts it in His book, *Destined to reign*, If we believe right about ourselves, we will walk right. Believing is the key to behavior. When we know who we are, who we

are attached to, and where we are headed, it will totally transform our behavior.

The key to every aspect in our Christian growth is to learn about Him. Of course the more we know about Him, the more we search the scripture to find Him, the more we know about ourselves.

Your example of this is listed in Luke 24: 13 and following. Here were two men walking on their way to Emmaus (7 miles from Jerusalem) and while they were walking they were downtrodden. Their heads were down as they recapped the preceding events. Here this Jesus, whom they thought would deliver them from their present circumstances, was actually put to death on the cross.

Their hopes were crushed.

Without their knowing who He was, Jesus appeared to them and asked them what was wrong with them. Their answer was “are you new in town, do you not know what has been happening?”

Jesus responded with “what things are you talking about?” They went on “the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and entered into His glory?”

Notice now verse 27: “and beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Our teachers should be opening the scriptures to find Him everywhere. When talking about the sacrifices by the children of Israel, we should be looking for Him. When we see the children of Israel and their deliverance from Pharaoh, again, looking for Him. When studying the covenant of Abraham, and David, when we see Saul and Samuel, we should be looking for Jesus Christ. When we see the life of Moses, we need to be looking for Him.

Beloved, as you grow in your knowledge of the Lord and Savior, you must be aware of the overriding principle in scripture. That is the “grace of God.”

Peter put it this way in his second Epistle, chapter 3 verse 18. “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” If you are to grow in knowledge, you must be willing to grow in your understanding of the grace of God. Grace again is the unmerited, unearned, total favor of God toward you. You can't earn it, you can't merit it through your performance, and you can only receive it.

If you are not willing to receive something you do not merit from Him, you will never come to know Him as He would like.

Chapter 6 – The Secret to a Successful Life “In Christ”

Once you come to the conclusion that there is nothing that you could do in order to come into a relationship with the Lord Jesus, except believe in Him, you are now a candidate to grow up, or mature in your knowledge of Him.

It must be understood as a new believer that your works could not get you into a relationship with Him. Further we need to understand that now that we belong to Him, we are no more able to work to keep that relationship with Him, than we were able to work to get into relationship with Him. Why would this be the case?

Here-in lies the trap from Satan. He is saying too many believers, o.k. now that you have received the lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, it is like the purchase of a new truck. The down payment has been made, and you are now part of the family of God, however you need to keep making the payments to insure your relationship continues. This is a lie beloved, and you must not buy into it. Not only did He make the down payment by placing the Holy Spirit within all of His believers, He continues the work from that point forward. His promise is given in the book of Philippians chapter 2 verse 13, which

states “*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” In other words, it is God Himself within the life of every believer that is putting the desire for His work to be done in each one of us, and then He Himself is doing what He desires.

I know how foreign that thinking is to we people who are type A personalities, but the truth remains. The finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ is where we find His peace.

As I mentioned earlier, we are not able to work the work of God. If we were able to work the work of God in our lives, we wouldn’t need His presence inside of each of us.

Remember the question that the disciples asked the Lord Jesus in John chapter 6 verses 28 & 29? Like all of us, once that came to know Him, they wanted to make sure that their life reflected His presence within. They asked; “what shall we do, that we may work the works of God? Verse 29 gives the answer. Jesus said to them, “this is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

In other words, the work that all of us desire as the Godly fruit in our lives is simply to “believe” that Jesus Christ is the one inside of each one of us in the person of the Holy Spirit, doing the work of God. I know that sounds very simple, but remember the admonition given to the church by the Apostle Paul in 2nd Corinthians 11:3. He said “but I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so you minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

This statement is in relationship to their sitting under false teachers that are teaching them that it is what they *are doing* that is placing them in right relationship with the Lord Jesus, or is *keeping them* in right relationship with Him. He goes on to tell them in verse 14 of the same chapter –“and no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”

In other words, Paul is cautioning the church to be aware of false teachers who would teach them that it is their works that keep them in right relationship (righteousness) with the Lord Jesus.

Nothing could be further from the truth. You and I maintain our relationship with Him by believing in Him.

Right believing produces right living. Knowing who you belong to, and the price He paid to get you, and the love He has for you always, is what keeps us. For, it is the love of God that constrains us.

Chapter 7 – The Conclusion to the Matter.

Paul mentions in Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 – “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” You and I are to help build the confidence in every other believer that “you didn’t start the Godly work in your life, He did. Further we are to help others to see that He promises to finish the Godly work in all of their lives.

This pamphlet is meant to help the new believer as well as some old “frustrated and ready to quit” believers, invigorate and stir up the life of the Lord Jesus within .

Now this is very important. Once we have understood that it takes the life of God within to produce the life of God, we are candidates to perform His work. You see the miracle that took place in our lives is that there is a new power within each of us.

That power is there for the purpose of expanding His life to those around each of us. In other words, it is not me trying to become something, or me trying to expand His kingdom, but it is He inside of me desiring to expand His kingdom.

My job is to let it happen. My responsibility is to release His life in every situation I find myself. He

within me is desirous of expanding His life everywhere. I am a willing participant. He is the power, I am the vessel He chooses to use. The result of all of this is that “I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me.” I am now in union with Him, and He is the power working in me. He is the healer, working through my prayers. He is the deliverer working through my mouth. He is the provider working through the provisions He has entrusted me with. He is the comforter working through my listening and my acknowledgment of the importance of another human being.

Do you get it? Wow, what an opportunity we now have. Each of us are filled with the Divine Life, the God like life, the very life of the Living God, ready to meet any challenge that comes our way.

It is not a life of strife. It is not a life of strain. It is not a life of trying. It is not a life of becoming something, it is not a life of effort on my part. It is a life of releasing the power within.

Once I was lost, now I am found. Once I was in the world, under the instruction of the enemy, now I am a joint heir of the very God of this universe. I am now a conqueror capable of releasing the very life of the Living God into every situation I find myself.

I myself am not improving, but the more time I spend with Him, His very life is reproduced within me. It gets to the point where to spend time with me is to spend time with Him. The more of His life is released through me, the more outward evidence of who He is and of the greatness of our God.

I thank you Lord Jesus for finding me, saving me, filling me and using me.