

Jesus

And His Enemy

The Devil

Introduction

Jesus, the Son of God, is the only hope for a world afflicted with a disease called sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, their very natures were infected with a virus like affliction that caused them to act and react in ways that were no longer pure and innocent. Jesus has come to offer man hope, healing and life. His Spirit is pure, holy and full of love; he is loyal, trustworthy, generous, longsuffering, patient and kind. He is the king over a kingdom that is eternal and the values of that kingdom are eternal in nature.

Satan on the other hand is the god of the temporal. What he has to offer has to do with this present life. Whereas, Jesus came to give us life, Satan wants to give us death. He tries to conceal his evil intent by offering sinful pleasures that appeal to the fallen natures of those whose hearts have been corrupted and are full of evil. The pull of Satan is always downward, even when it seems that he is trying to involve his victims in some kind of self-improvement scheme. Biblically speaking, down is away from God, and up is toward God. Self-improvement efforts focus us upon our own self-efforts and therefore away from the Lord God.

At some point in time past, Satan was evidently a powerful and beautiful angel endowed with grace and influence in the realms of heaven. It seems from all that is taught about him that he was able to influence a third of the angels in heaven to follow him in a rebellion against God. He attempted to overthrow God's sovereign authority and to procure the worship due God alone.

The ensuing war in heaven resulted in Satan being cast down to this lower realm where Adam and Eve were living in peace in the Garden of Eden. One day Satan took the form of a serpent and came to Eve with temptations to forsake obedience to the command of God. After successfully tempting Eve to rebel against the command of the Lord, he became the god of this world.

The sin that Adam entered into was not a native condition in the soul of man, but rather affected the soul of man like a disease affects the body. The manifest characteristics of the disease affected his behaviors causing them to be unbecoming to the man that God created in the image of God and placed in the garden. When a sinner sins he is manifesting what his corrupted nature desires. This fall into sin resulted in spiritual death and lost fellowship with God.

Humanity has been a helpless victim of this sinful condition and has struggled to live a life of stability and civility with varying degrees of success. This sinful condition has been passed from generation to generation causing pain and suffering in every victim.

Social scientists and planners, politicians, law enforcement officers and educators seek to control and accommodate what few of them understand. Rejection of the Biblical account has left them frustrated and confused, but to those who have experienced salvation through faith in the redemptive work of Jesus and experienced the life changing power of the Holy Spirit, it is not confusing at all.

There is a war being waged, and the battleground is in the heart and soul of humans. Jesus died to save sinners, but Satan is determined to frustrate that process.

The struggle that we have been thrust into concerns which way we are going to look in our living. Is our life going to be lived with our focus upon the God of the Bible, with faith in him, or are we going to live our life with our face toward self, sin, Satan and temporal pleasures?

In the following chapters we will be discussing different elements of this struggle, how in each and every case Jesus is striving to bring us close to himself while Satan is trying to prevent that from happening.

This struggle produces real life drama, the sort of which we experience on a day-by-day level. Salvation is not disconnected from reality; it is reality. It is practical, but it involves war. The prize of victory is eternal life and it is for

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Lesson One

A Life Worthy of the Lord

Col 1:10-22

Paul, in writing to the Church of Colosse says, “And we pray this in order that you may **live a life worthy of the Lord.**”

Why is living an overcoming life in Christ important? Is living in the Spirit necessary? **Yes**, if we want to please the Lord! The prayer and desire expressed is that we might live a life worthy of the Lord. everyone whose name is written in the Lambs Book of Life.

There is an incomprehensible truth, that we have been included in Christ! (See Ephesians 1:13) What a great privilege it is to be part of his body the Church and as such we are a visible part of Christ! The world judges the validity of the claims of Christ on what they see in us. If they see hypocrisy they will not want to become a part of us. Jesus deserves our very best since he gave so much for us.

We have an enemy who is seeking to destroy the plan of God by causing us to abandon our life in the Spirit for a life in the flesh. Temptation is a condition of desiring something being offered; therefore Satan knowing what appeals to the fallen nature of Christians tempts them to leave their life of victory in Christ to allow for selfishness and sinful indulgences.

Satan is a defeated foe, yet he has been all too successful in continuing his dirty work against those who should be enjoying the peace of God that is found in Christ. It is impossible to be living in the Spirit and living in sin at the same time. Living in the Spirit is living in “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23) Living in the Spirit is the heritage of the saints.

Living in the sinful fallen nature (or living in the flesh) when manifest are obvious: “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal 5:19-21)

If we can be honest with ourselves we can take a personal inventory of our spiritual condition by saying “I demonstrate love in all situations, am always joyful even in sorrow, peaceful in the midst of turmoil, I am faithful, patient, and kind, abounding in goodness and I’m always in control of myself.” If this isn’t consistently true, we need to grow in our knowledge of the Lord. This fruit of the Spirit should be present in every good work, but to accomplish it we will need to be “strengthened with all power according to his glorious might.” (Col. 1:11)

The Apostle continues his teaching in Colossians 1:10-22 by stating that to accomplish what is desired of us we must “grow in the knowledge of God, thus being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might.” This is

way we will be strengthened resulting in the ability to “have great endurance and patience.”

It is a fruitless endeavor to attempt to please the Lord without first being filled with the power of his Spirit, because there is nothing in our fallen natures that pleases the Lord! What we do, and how we live, must spring from the life of Jesus living in us if it is to please the Lord.

While striving to please the Lord we are told to joyfully give thanks to the Lord. Now, that’s what Satan hates to see in Christians. It takes an eternal perspective to be able to be joyful in circumstances that are sometimes very unpleasant to endure. Individuals who are able to see beyond the parameters of this life and see that there really is a God who loves them and has an eternal place prepared for them are able to be patient in affliction. The Apostle Paul wrote these words, “and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” (Col. 1:11-12)

We who are “In Christ” or in the “Kingdom of Light” have been rescued from the “**dominion of darkness**” and have been “brought into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. 1:13-14)

In our struggle against the wiles of the devil, we must know the one we serve, Jesus.

Who Jesus Is

When considering the subject of how to deal with Satan, the first observation I make is that Satan is not the focal point of our study; rather, it is Jesus and our relationship to him.

There have been a lot of books written and sermons preached on the subject of how to take authority over Satan, and many of them are very helpful, but I have learned from experience in life that if we truly walk in the Spirit we will find that freedom is our inheritance.

The reason Satan has been so successful in many people’s lives is that they are unaware of how carnal their lives are and therefore how vulnerable they are to being demonized, or tricked into allowing some satanic influence into their lives.

It is our fallen natures that are the habitation of demons. I wonder if the reason some people always seem to need some sort of deliverance is that they are living in their fallen natures.

I once prayed for a young man who was demonized by his own declaration. He asked me if I could cast them out and I replied that I could. I summoned my son-in-law and associate minister, Jeff, and we took him into the prayer room of the coffee house where we were ministering. We began to command the demons out of the young man, and in our ignorance and zeal, prayed and commanded while the young man writhed in agony. He kept encouraging us to continue because he said he could feel them tearing him as they were coming out. It was the worst scene I have ever experienced in prayer for someone as he and we struggled against the demonic presences. Finally, he was peaceful, and exhausted. We rejoiced in victory.

The next day my wife taught a Sunday school class that he attended. As they talked with him about a committed life to Jesus they found that he had no interest in serving the Lord. All he wanted was to be free of the torment of the demons that were afflicting him. Quite some time later I learned that he had died in a violent traffic accident. Only the Lord knows if he had received saving grace.

We made some very basic errors in the episode just related. First I didn’t inquire into his relationship with Jesus. Since that night I have learned that deliverance is the heritage of the saints. Had I followed the Biblical instructions to first submit to God, then to resist the devil, then to cause him to flee, the struggle would have been minimal. (James 4:7-10) Simply put, I should have led him in the sinner’s prayer before attempting to cast out any demons. The reason for the struggle was that he was not submitting to God in his heart; he just wanted to use God against his torment.

I have learned that the best and most effective way to deal with the devil is bring Jesus into our lives. Now, when someone indicates that they are being demonized in some way, I try to identify the weakness in their relationship to Jesus that allows for such activity. There are principles in the realm of the Spirit, that when adhered to, guarantee our freedom from victimization from demonic forces. Most of my teaching is about identifying how we can live in the promised land of Love, Joy and Peace, where we are able to be patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and full of self-control. When we live this way Satan is powerless against us. It is when we allow for the works of the flesh, that is, our fallen natures, that we find failure to be our constant companion.

You may say, “that sounds good but how can it be in my life? My spouse is so irritable and carnal, my boss is so unreasonable, and those bill collectors are always calling and coming to our door.”

The answer is that it can’t be if you are trying in your own strength.

Some people try to bring the power of the Lord into their carnal life by exercising some form of faith but are frustrated because they are really living outside the realm of the life of the Spirit. I don’t condemn people like that because many have been miss-taught and see the power of the Lord as a means to obtain what their carnal heart desires. (See James 4:1-6) Is it any wonder that the Lord doesn’t answer those prayers?

They may have had an experience of being filled with the Spirit, but living in the Spirit is quite a different matter. Through observation and practical experience, I have come to realize that there is quite a difference between living in the Spirit and having a manifestation of the anointing of the Spirit. There are people who are living very selfish and sinful lives, but manifest the power of the Spirit through some gift or ministry. Jesus warned us that on the judgment day some would come to him and be told to depart. He said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, '**Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?**' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you.** Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Mat. 7:21-23)

Some people take promises out of context such as, "Ask what you will" with the promise that it will be done and after asking for some carnal blessing have wondered why their prayers aren't being answered. They were never taught that by the time Jesus spoke those words to his disciples he had already schooled them in the principles of the Spirit. These words were not an open ended invitation to abuse of divine power, but rather, the assurance that when we are moving in the will of God with the mind of the Spirit in full operation in our lives, when we ask he will be there for us.

Understanding Jesus is essential to our life of victory in him. When we commit our lives to Jesus we are committing our lives to God. Speaking of Jesus the Apostle Paul wrote,

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of his body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Col. 1:15-18)

In considering who Jesus is, I note that he is the visible part of God. We are not permitted to see the Father or the Spirit except as seen through Jesus, but we see Jesus.

The term "firstborn over all creation" refers to his supremacy in all things and also the fact that he was the first of a new race, the redeemed of the earth. Jesus, though always God and always existent, took upon himself the form of a man being born into this world through Mary. He subsequently, after his death and resurrection, became the head of a whole new race, the children of God. This was accomplished by his death on the cross to pay the sin penalty that was against all people of the fallen race, who through their identification with his death and resurrection, receive by faith a new life in Christ. We thus are his offspring having received our new birth through him. This is why he is referred to as the firstborn. This does not imply that he was a created being as some have supposed, but only that his body was created in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

If Christ were a created being how could he be creator? The fact that he was active in the creation of all things is clearly taught both here in Colossians and in the Gospel of John. "In the beginning was the Word, (by clear implication, Jesus) and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:1-3)

Not only was Jesus before all things, but also he holds all things together! In other words he is the cohesive power that holds all matter together. He has thus involved his power in an ongoing way so that if he withdrew it, all things would cease to be!

This brings us to an interesting observation concerning the very character of Christ with reference to those who opposed him. The very people who were mocking, beating, cursing, and whipping him were being held together by his power! We are never aware of this power, it like gravity, is a constant in all things, but it is there nonetheless. Scientists have terms for it, but seldom acknowledge that it is the ongoing power of God.

Jesus is the head of the Church, his body, and was the first to partake of resurrection power. He is the supreme sovereign over all that exists. He is

pictured in the book of Revelation as the rider on a white horse, with a name written “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.”

Satan is way at the bottom in the order of created beings. He is the most insignificant of all. He has been stripped of his power and glory and all he has now is the ability to lie and deceive. It is my opinion that he is less even than the least in his own realm, the fallen angels that he once out ranked!

Jesus is the representation of all that God is, portraying the unity of the Godhead, the very heart and soul of God, putting it in human terms. His mission was to reconcile to himself from a fallen race all who will avail themselves of the power of his blood shed on the cross.

We were once alienated from God and were enemies in our minds because of evil behavior, but now he has reconciled us by Christ’s physical body through death to present us holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation — if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. (See Col. 1:20-23)

The first purpose concerning us given in Colossians 1:10 was that we would live a life worthy of the Lord. In Colossians 2:2 we see his purpose is that we may be **encouraged in heart** and **united in love**, so that we may have the full riches of **complete understanding**.

Stay Focused

Colossians 2:6-7 states, “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, **continue to live in him**, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and **overflowing with thankfulness**.”

Pleasing the Lord is not an on-again off-again sort of life; it is a constant condition of life. Living in the Spirit is not such a difficult thing to do, because it allows for a natural life. Our natural life is not a carnal life, nor does it require sinful living. God created us to be humans and to conduct ourselves in a natural way while living here on this planet.

Living in Christ requires a constant state of being in faith, in love, and to live in obedience to the principles of the Spirit. Our life in Christ or in the Spirit, that is, in uninterrupted fellowship with Christ, occurs until we do something that is in violation of the principles of the Spirit.

At the point of violation, the Spirit’s relationship with us changes in that he now is no longer passive, but rather, deals with us in the Spirit of the Father who disciplines the son he loves. This may involve the lifting of the sense of peace we have become accustomed to, or, a profound sense of conviction.

Some people who depart from living in the principles of the Spirit go on rebelliously and seemingly are unaware that they are no longer living in the place of fellowship with Christ. These sorts of people would rather live away from fellowship, for when they attempt to return to fellowship they are confronted with the need to repent. The Spirit does not forget, though we might, therefore, to come back to complete fellowship always requires some level of repentance.

People who willfully walk away from living in the Spirit have no alternative than to walk in their fallen natures. Often by the time they come to their senses, they have many more violations than the original violation.

While dealing with people who have lost their peace, I always ask them where they lost it? There is always a definite point where a violation occurred. It would be one that they knew they were committing, and, though they may not at once recall it, it is usually serious enough that the Spirit will bring it back to mind. When this point of violation is identified and repented of, peace returns and the process of growth continues. I have found that on many occasions violations occurred in the intervening time. They are seemingly less significant than the original violation yet may require additional repentance.

It is my experience with the Holy Spirit and his work that he is not a “nitpicker.” He may allow many minor violations to pass without any conviction or discipline because we are not at the point of growth to deal with them. Grace covers a multitude of sins or violations but when it is time to grow up in Christ, we will be called to a life of holiness.

When we are called to a closer life of holiness and fellowship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit becomes more exacting in teaching us. What was once allowed is no longer allowed. Our consciences become alerted to whatever violations the Spirit is working on in us. When our sense of peace is disturbed, we know we have violated the purpose of God; therefore, turning away from the violation is not an option.

The Apostle reminds us that we have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority and to see to it that no one takes us captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Satan has been hard at work trying to confuse the issues of our walk with Christ. The early church was under constant assault by those who wanted to enslave them with some form of legalism that was philosophical in nature or the result of human traditions. It is by this method that Satan has tried to take us away from focusing upon our love relationship with Christ to a legalistic relationship that depends on man's teachings rather than on a life in the Spirit.

There are many men who would rather be your teacher than to allow the Holy Spirit to do the teaching in your life. It is not possible to have a life in the Spirit without recognizing that it is he who is the teacher. We who are teachers in the body of Christ never take away from the work of the Holy Spirit as he works directly with each believer. We are co-workers with him, but never apart from him.

The Jewish rite of circumcision symbolized this work that I am addressing. It is also seen in the teachings concerning baptism. Both teach that we are to put off the sinful nature or deem it dead. Baptism speaks to us of our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection. As partakers of his resurrection we are no longer bound by, nor do we continue to practice, those things that were designed to teach us about what we now live in. When Christ was nailed to the cross, so were all those symbols that we now receive in spiritual form.

We are now free of accusation concerning what we eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (See Colossians 2:8-17)

Set Your Heart on Things Above

Colossians 3:1-4 says, "Since, then, **you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above**, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds** on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." This is the secret of living in the Spirit, getting focused. First, our hearts (that is our affections and the internal mechanisms of what proceed from that level) must be set (indicating a conscious act of our will) upon things above. Next, our minds must also be set (like setting a clock, again, an action of our will) on heavenly things as opposed to earthly things. This doesn't mean that we won't think about natural life issues, but it does mean that every thought will be tempered by the heavenly awareness. Every thought, desire, affection, goal and motive will issue forth from our heavenly perspective. For this reason we are told to "**Put to death**, therefore, (*from*) whatever belongs to your earthly nature: **sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.**" (Col. 3:5) Note that the word from is in brackets and is my insertion to help explain the essence of what is being spoken here. We all have natural natures but what is not native to that natural nature is the sinful part that resulted from the fall. These are the cause of the wrath of God that is coming.

God is very upset that sin has marred his cherished creation. All of us have been marred by the sin of our fallen natures, but God is doing a work of restoration in us as we first rid ourselves, and yes, this is something we must do, "of all such things as these: **anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie** to each other, since **you have taken off your old self with its practices.**" (Col. 3:8-9)

We are active participants in the process as we put to death these old violations, but we don't stop there.

We now “**put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” (Col. 3:10) Again, this is an action of our will. This process requires the impartation of the knowledge of our creator so we can imitate him. We do this like putting on clothing, in this case the clothing is the righteousness of Christ that is put upon our natural natures, thus covering our flesh so our nakedness will not be seen. Nakedness, as used in this context, is to be without the covering of the righteousness of Christ upon our natural natures.

Lesson Two

Dealing With the Devil is Dealing With Sin

I. The love of the Lord for his people.

1John 3:1-10

In 1John 3:1 we read, “**How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**” This is a most amazing statement! I wonder if anyone has ever truly grasped what is said here. It seems to me that most Christians read this with sleepy eyes and a ho-hum attitude and shrug it off as though John didn’t know what he was talking about. Further, the truth is that it hasn’t yet appeared what we will be, but when we see him we will be transformed totally into his likeness for we will see him as he is. We are the offspring of Jesus and therefore God’s children. What that means in matters of privilege, we can only guess. We know that since we are his children, he is our Father, and cares for us dotingly, to the extent that even the hairs of our head are numbered! Our Father knows about every detail of our lives and has lavished on us the designation, CHILDREN OF GOD.

We can legitimately revel in this knowledge, but does that exclude suffering from our lives on earth? Obviously not. We may realize the enormity of such a reality, but the world doesn’t see us that way. And why should they? They didn’t see Jesus that way either, John says, “the reason that the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” (1John 3:1)

Just because the world doesn’t recognize who we are, doesn’t make it any less real. If we believe this truth we will purify ourselves, patterning ourselves after the purity of Jesus.

I find it interesting that John says that if we have this hope in us we will purify ourselves. Some people think that it is God’s responsibility to do all the purifying and cleansing of our lives on earth. This just is not Biblical, as we will see demonstrated in this lesson. What Jesus did when dying in our stead on the cross was to remove the sinful record and replace it with the record of his righteous life. He has forgiven us for all our sins, and has written our names in the Lamb’s Book of Life. He also has given us the Holy Spirit as our instructor and enabler so that we have this resource of knowledge and power to draw upon. There is very little more to do, but we still have our part.

John tells us what sin is in the simplest way possible, “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, **sin is lawlessness.**” (1John 3:4) What we must understand is that God gave a moral law as well as a civil law. He also gave Israel a form of worship with many symbolic rites. The summary of the law that applies to us was given by Jesus and still

remains in force, “Jesus replied: ”“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matt. 22:37-39)

There are many instructions in righteousness that apply to Christians and each is an explanation of some facet of Christian living. All of the Biblical instructions are for us today, though some were intended to teach us about our present relationship to Jesus and therefore are now replaced with what those rites foreshadowed. Those who love God love righteousness and desire to manifest purity and holiness in their lives. John goes on to say, “But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. **No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.** No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.” (1John 3:5-6) From this we see that there must be an ongoing desire in our hearts to be pure in all our ways.

What is righteousness? That’s a good question. John tells us “Dear children, **do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.** (1John3:7) Simply put, rightness is righteousness. Holiness is the condition of being totally committed to God, and from God’s perspective, God being totally committed to us! It also is used to set apart the character of God as being uncompromisingly pure.

John then makes a heavy statement, “**He who does what is sinful is of the devil,** because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.**

Further he states, “**No one who is born of God will continue to sin,** because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: **Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.**” (1John 3:8-10)

John didn’t mean that anyone who falls into sin is therefore a child of the Devil, but what he did teach was that sinning has nothing to do with Jesus or the Father. And further, that if we have the Spirit of God in us, we will want to break free of continued sinning. We will do everything we are instructed to do in the Word, so that we can live a life pleasing to the Lord. There is a part of us that gravitates to sin; it is called the sin nature. The nature that comes from God that we receive at our new birth experience hates sin and all wrongdoing. Our new nature loves God and his righteous character and wants to emulate it. This creates a problem for us because we now have two conflicting natures. The way of peace is to follow the instructions in the scriptures and deem the old nature dead. Even though it is still there, it need not be catered to nor pampered in any way. We are under no obligation to it and should never feed it. The weaker it becomes the happier we are!

James has some strong instructions for us to consider and we will pay heed to them if we want to progress in our spiritual life in God. Those who ignore what is said here will continue to live a life that is marred by sin and therefore displeasing to the Lord.

James 4:7-11

Man’s Part

Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you. **Come near to God** and **he will come near to you.** **Wash your hands**, you sinners, and **purify your hearts**, you double-minded. **Grieve, mourn and wail.** **Change** your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble yourselves before the Lord**, and

God's Part

He will lift you up.

Notice that James gives us some very strong words concerning our part that we must play in this matter of cleansing. Notice the words underlined, submit, resist, come near to God, wash, purify, grieve, mourn and wail, change, and humble. These all indicate actions on our part. If we are to be pure we must involve ourselves aggressively in the process. There is no place for passivity in the process. In the process God responds to us by coming near to us, and finally lifting us up!

There is nothing about the process that is to be the “forever” experience of a Christian, but there is a place for it when sin is being experienced. The subject of this study is dealing with the Devil, and in this passage of scripture we are assured that by following these instructions, he will flee from us. Some may say, “I thought all sin was cleansed when I accepted Jesus into my life. The answer is that we were totally forgiven all our sins, past, present and future. Forgiven and cleansed in the sense of lifestyle and actions are very different. The blood of Christ washes the record away, but the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit cleanses our actions as he teaches us about righteousness, sin and judgment.

I have outlined some truths to help us understand what we will deal with in our lives.

I. Sins of the flesh.

If we are Christians, how can Satan have any power over us? He can't, unless we give him power by yielding to temptation. Temptation only has power against us when we want what is being offered. It is our flesh nature that desires what is forbidden.

What is the “flesh”?

It is the fallen sin nature.

There are three categories under which we can classify our struggle with sin.

I John 2:16-17

For everything in the world—the **cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes** and the **boasting of what he has and does**—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

The following lists are not necessarily complete but can serve as a guide to evaluate whatever sins we may be struggling with.

1. Lust of the flesh.

- a. Sexual sins, adultery, fornication, lusting, perversion, homosexuality
- b. Allowing desires for things to direct our lives (horoscope, terra cards, psychics, etc.) c.

Desiring the forbidden, drugs, alcohol, pornography.

- d. Coveting what belongs to someone else.
- e. Desiring relationships with people who are “off limits.”

2. Lust of the eyes.

- a. Wanting to look better than we really are.
- b. Coveting things to make us look good.
- c. Sexually, coveting someone for the sake of physical beauty. Voyeurism, seeking sexual material for sexual gratification.

3. Pride of life.

- a. Boosting about what we do or have.
- b. The desire to impress others by flaunting our stuff.
- c. A prideful attitude.

II. Sins of the Soul have to do with our attitudes.

1. Rebellion and compliant rebellion. (Compliant

rebellion is when we do what we are required to do, but are still rebellious about it.)

Results in self-will.

2. Hatred, can result in violence or murder, or just extreme discomfort at the thought of someone who has wronged us.

The remedy is forgiveness.

3. Deceitfulness, lying, or hiding the truth about something.
4. Covetousness, wanting what is not ours.

5. Resentfulness, results in a general unhappiness.

6. Unthankfulness, ingratitude. Comes from a prideful attitude. Nothing is ever good enough.

7. Self-exaltation. Always wanting to be number one. The inability to be happy about someone else's success or good fortune. This results in resentment.

III. Sins of the spirit.

1. Denying the Lord Jesus Christ. Being ashamed of your Christian faith.
2. Witchcraft, horoscopes, fortune telling, astrology.
3. Idolatry

What we are to do.

Gal 3:26-27 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ.**

I like to think of the cleansing process as being like washing before eating. In the daily course of life, our hands and feet get dirty.

When Jesus was preparing to serve his disciples the Passover meal before being crucified, he took a bowl of water and washed the feet of the disciples. Peter objected to what Jesus was doing and said that he should be washing Jesus' feet.

Foot washing is a symbolic act that speaks of the need to wash that part of us that is in contact with the road of life. Feet represent our daily life experiences and are sometimes called our walk.

When Jesus explained that this was necessary if Peter would be one of his, Peter in his gung ho manner said then wash all of me. Jesus then explained that he didn't need a total bath, only his feet, or walk needed washing. The symbolic lesson is clear. Peter didn't need to be born again over and over every time he slipped up in some matter of life, but he did need his walk to be cleansed.

This cleansing of our walk is an ongoing experience, and, depending on what we are doing in life, may require frequent repetition just as we sometimes need to repeatedly wash our hands. As we move about in this world we encounter sinful attitudes, conversations and actions. As a result, we need to take time with the Lord and allow him to purify our attitudes, thoughts and actions.

We react to our environment and sometimes what is happening is threatening to our spiritual sense of peace. If we react sinfully, we will want to follow the instructions of James 4:7-11. This is necessary not because we need to be born again and again, but rather, because we need the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse away the contaminations of sinful actions and to heal us of a wounded spirit.

We could say that we go to the washbasin and put in water that represents the Word of God. We take the soap that represents the blood of Jesus that was shed for us and scrub clean our hearts, minds, and emotions. We may rebuke Satan in the process and command him to get totally away from us, our house, our family, our job site, and out of every relationship we have in our life. We need not succumb to Satan's tricks nor should we repeat past failures. We should learn from our mistakes and think about how to avoid temptation. This may mean changing some things we do that provide opportunity to be tempted. The Holy Spirit will give us wisdom in such matters if we are willing to be taught.

Lesson Three

Dealing With the Devil Requires Living by the Spirit

In Galatians 5:13-18 we are told that we have been called to be free and that we are, but we are warned not to use freedom to indulge the sinful nature. What we are to do is serve one another in love.

We are instructed to live by the Spirit and that doing so requires not gratifying the desires of the sinful nature. Admittedly these two opposing forces are at war with each other causing some discomfort to the person who desires to please the Lord. There is an internal tug-a-war going on in the person who is not totally committed to his life in the Spirit. Any area of indecisiveness becomes a war zone in the person who has developed an appetite for sinful indulgence.

When a person is under siege his spiritual life is stymied so that he can't do what he wants to do or knows he should do. Battling with temptation is not a sin; it is when we succumb to sin either in our heart, mind or acts that we suffer loss. We need to avoid the situations that create a temptation scenario. Since we are not under law we need not suffer with guilt because Jesus has taken our sin to the cross, yet we do suffer from the knowledge that our behavior is less than acceptable with the Lord. Everyone who loves God wants to please him.

There is a day coming when everyone must give an account of himself to the Lord. Just what that will involve is a point of differing opinions, but one thing is certain, Jesus deserves our very best. If we give him less we will suffer for it.

We are told that those who are living by the Spirit are not under law. What that means is that sin has no place in the realm of the Spirit.

Those who are in the Spirit are governed not by "thou shalt nots," but by a new realm of desires, all of which are righteous. There is no need for law where there is no lawlessness. The law was given to govern the sin nature; the nature that is of God needs no law.

We have been given a new commandment in Christ—love one another. The fruit of this life is "**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, **let us keep in step with the Spirit.** (Gal. 5:22-25)

Separation From the World Necessary

Those who are not under law are those who are living by the Spirit, not those who are living after the flesh. Ephesians 5:5 says, “For of this you can be sure: **No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.**”

How much plainer can it be written? Despite all this, some will try to accommodate the sin nature thinking that it okay because we’re not under law. Even if they were by some stretch right, they are still wrong because they are disobedient and God’s wrath comes on the disobedient. You see, its not the letter of the law that counts because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but it is who we are seeking to obey, Christ or sin.

Those of the world care only for what pleases them; therefore, we are not to partner with them. This is true whether it is marital or a business partnership. Friendships, too, are off limits, especially with the opposite sex when they involve any level of intimacy, sexual or non-sexual.

Casual friendships are both good and desirable because these are the means of spreading the gospel, but healthy boundaries must be observed lest we become partakers of their sins! There is always the danger that while befriending a non-Christian, we might be tempted or pressured to partake of something sinful.

In 2Corinthians 6:14-16 the following instructions are given on the subject. (Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?)

We were once a part of the darkness of the world and indeed were dark before Jesus came in with the light of his truth. This being true, we are admonished to live as children of light, and the fruit of the light consists in all **goodness, righteousness and truth**. For this reason we have an obligation to find out what pleases the Lord.

Obviously then, we will “have **nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness**, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention

what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: **‘Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’**” (Eph. 5:11-14)

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore **do not be foolish**, but understand what the Lord's will is. **Do not get drunk on wine**, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit**. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. **Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks** to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 5:15-20)

The Sinful Nature

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: **sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like**. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this **will not inherit the kingdom of God.**” (Gal 5:19-21)

Is there any need for further discussion? Any allowance for fleshly or sinful nature manifestations is off-limits for Christians. Those who are “in Christ” have nothing in common with the world. Get as far away from the world as you possibly can and get as close to Jesus as you possibly can. If we are going to be over-comers in life, we must stay as far away from sin as possible. This is not law; it is just good sense.

Lesson Four

Our Bodies a Temple

1Cor. 3:16-17

“Don’t you know that **you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.** **1Cor. 6:13-20**

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that **your bodies are members of Christ himself?** Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But **he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.**

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”**

The Armor of God

Eph. 6:10-18

Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God** so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,** but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The attacks of Satan can come from:

- 1. Rulers, as in governments of the world.** This could also be a reference to fallen angels who were in positions of authority before they fell. (*Jude 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.*) In such a case our battle would then be with governments who are under the domination of these fallen angels.
- 2. Authorities, powers (κλυ), referring to evil angels,** perhaps a lower rank angel that would work through whatever authorities they could dominate, such as government officials, administrators, employers, and even parents or other family members. **Powers of this dark world** could be a reference to the cultic bondage exercised through false religions and cults that pervert the true gospel of Christ Jesus.
- 3. Spiritual forces of evil,** the remaining horde of evil beings, or demons.

It doesn’t matter how the battle is being waged, the victory is well within our grasp as we are equipped with all the appropriate armor for the battle. We do not stand in the armor alone, but rather, we stand in the power of his might.

It is a futile effort to try to stand against a demonic attack without the power of God enabling us to do battle. With his armor we not only can survive the battle but we are able to destroy the attack of the enemy with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

The armor protecting us covers all vital parts:

1. **Our loins** with the **belt of truth** so that we are able to keep our sexual life acceptable before God.
 2. **The breastplate of righteousness guards our hearts**; our affection for the righteousness of God keeps us from embracing evil desires.
 3. **Our feet, or our daily walk** (life), with the **preparation of the gospel of peace**, keeping us in a non-aggressive attitude. In other words, we don't seek out the battle; Satan must bring it to us.
 4. We have a **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. One turns away the arrows of false accusations, temptations, betrayals, and wrong teachings that weaken us.
 5. **Our head** is covered with the **helmet of salvation**, or the knowledge that it is by grace we are saved. When this helmet is properly used it guards us against wrong headedness.
 6. The **sword of the Spirit** enables us to destroy the attacker (The demons and their doctrines, not the people they are using.) with the truths of the Word of God. **The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is our only weapon we are given in this setting.**
7. **Pray in the Spirit** on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, **be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints**. We cannot overemphasize these last instructions. Pray in the Spirit means that we are not praying unguided prayers. It is assumed that we understand that prayer is for the purpose of communing with God for the advancement of those things that pertain to the Kingdom of God, and not what pertains to the fulfillment of some selfish desire. It is appropriate to petition God concerning matters of our personal life, our families, our friends and church brothers and sisters. We are told to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and to pray for our leaders in government. We are to pray prayers of thanksgiving, praise to the Lord, and prayers for guidance in spiritual matters.

In addition to the instructions to pray we are told to be alert. When Gideon in the Book of Judges was commissioned to go to battle, God told him to take his army to a brook nearby and allow them to get a drink. He was told that his army was too big, so he was to watch the men when they went to get a drink. Those who lifted the water to their mouth with their hands were able to watch for the enemy while they drank. These were to be set aside. The rest were sent home. If we are to be useful to the Lord we must remain alert at all times. It's when we let down our defenses and become complacent that we are vulnerable to attack.

Once the Lord has cleansed us it is vitally important to invite Jesus to live in us. **With his presence within, and his power (the Holy Spirit) enabling us, we are able to guard our hearts against all aggressors.**

Lesson Five

Temptation

Mat 4:1-11

After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Spirit led him into the desert where he fasted for forty days.

Afterward he became hungry and Satan appeared to him tempting him to turn stones into bread. I note that Satan recognized that Jesus had a legitimate desire for food. I also note that Satan had the knowledge of the power of Jesus to do what he was suggesting. It isn't hard to conjure up thoughts of hot bread with butter on them when you're hungry! What passed through the mind of Jesus before he replied is a matter of speculation, but it is obvious that Satan was baiting Jesus into a transgression. But, what was the transgression? Wouldn't it be legitimate for Jesus to fix himself a nice meal, so what if he used some supernatural power to do it, isn't that okay?

I don't know of any direct commandment that would have been broken, but in the Biblical account of the life of Jesus, I don't see him using his power for personal benefit. Certainly he only used his power when given authorization by the will of the Father. Jesus lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.

The principle of only doing supernaturally what he was authorized to do is an important one for us to understand. The power of the Holy Spirit is not given to entertain us, though it is very gratifying to experience the power of God at work. Jesus was hungry, but he could wait to eat until food was prepared for him. Staying under the authority of the Father even in moments of duress was essential to the mission of being the sinless Lamb of God. Satisfying urges just because they are strong urges, does not justify transgressions. The argument that God will understand is never justification to sin.

Having concluded the first temptation, Satan took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest place on the temple. How did they get there? Did they walk and then climb up there? Or did Satan use some supernatural ability to transport them? This raises the question; can Satan work miracles? If so, how? Satan must have supernatural power because when the antichrist comes he will be able to display signs and wonders to the world. The world of the occult has as its major attraction the ability to work miracles. We aren't told how Satan got Jesus to the highest part of the temple, but the fact remains that he did get him there.

Once more Satan tempted Jesus to use his supernatural power in an unauthorized way. Making a minister look good or proving a point is not what God's power is for. God's power is given for the purpose of ministering his love and compassion. It is sometimes used as evidence of the validity of the Gospel message, but it too is a manifestation of the love of God enabling people to believe in him.

When Jesus was ministering the power of God to needy people, spectators were usually there, but when asked to do a sign or miracle for the sake of a sign or miracle, Jesus always declined. The reasons people desire to see miracles are often selfish and come from wicked hearts. Satan's purpose was to capture Jesus' attention and to distract him away from what his Father was saying to what he (Satan) was saying and thus destroy God's plan. Jesus would have none of it, he replied "**It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'**" (Matt. 4:7)

Satan was foiled once more, but he still had another idea. From the temple Satan took Jesus to a high mountain where he showed him the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. Satan was getting desperate by now, and perhaps a bit reckless. He told him that if he would bow down to him, he would give him all this. Was it Satan's to give? Of course not, but that's beside the point. Bowing to Satan wasn't even remotely in the realm of being a temptation for Jesus.

Jesus was God made flesh and living among us. He was totally human, yet totally God. It had to be that way so that in the end of his earthly life, he could become the sin sacrifice for the world.

If he were not totally human with all the same needs, and yet live sinlessly, he could not be a substitute sacrifice. That is what was and is needed, and that is what Jesus did for us, became our sin sacrifice.

Perhaps Satan had the idea that God was a little slow or a bit weak, that he was somehow better than God, and that in the weakened state of being a man, maybe now he could get the upper hand.

Jesus was a king, but his kingdom was not of this world, but if it had been, the Father would give it to him, not Satan. Jesus' knee only bowed to his Father. He replied, "**Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'**" (Matt. 4:10)

Temptation is temptation because we want what is being presented. We have normal appetites for food, love and pleasure. These are not sin, but when Satan comes into the picture, everything is quickly twisted into some form of evil. The desire for food becomes lust for food. The desire for love becomes sexual lust. The desire for pleasure becomes pleasure seeking at the expense of a well-ordered life. It is the fallen nature that is Satan's domain and every sinner has within his life some manifestation of the fallen nature.

This condition is unavoidable until we come to Jesus. Afterward, it is no longer necessary because we now have a new nature created and inhabited by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Satan doesn't like to be ignored so he tries to get our attention away from serving the desires of the Lord Jesus in our lives. The way to detect the presence of the tempter is to know the Lord Jesus intimately. Since Satan seldom appears to people in a visual way, we need to develop sensitivity to the presence of good and evil. One way to detect Satan's presence is when the thought comes to mind concerning some temptation, "What's wrong with it?" If he can engage us in a debate and if we don't have a ready answer, he will seek to exploit our ignorance and lead us into a fall into sin.

Sometimes he will simply capture our attention by suggesting that everything that is pleasurable in sin and through that means distract us into guilt feelings that take our attention off the Lord and onto what Satan is accusing us of.

The purpose of temptation against Christians is the same as his temptations against the Lord, he wants to capture our attention and in so doing gets our attention off Jesus. This was what he tried to do to Jesus; he tried to get him to act according to his satanic suggestion rather than according to what his Father was saying.

Lesson Six

Sound Instruction for Christian Living

2 Tim 2:11-25

"Here is a trustworthy saying: **If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.** If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." (2Tim. 2:11-13)

Paul admonished Timothy to remember that it is our association with the death of Jesus on the cross that qualifies us to be inheritors with him in his kingdom. Even if we sometimes struggle with our faith, it is our association with the death of Jesus that qualifies us for redemptive benefits. We are a part of him once we have been born again, and when we are going through difficulties we still are safe from being disowned, because he can't disown himself!

We need to be reminded of these things, and to remind those around us.

It's so easy to get caught up in legalism and literalism; therefore, Paul said, "Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. (2Tim. 2:14)

Our life in Christ is a living way that means that there is flexibility yet within boundaries. Stiffness is associated with death but life is associated with movement. It is a work of Satan to try to get us all tied up in literal definitions and ridged rules that tend to stifle the spirit of divine life within us. This is why we have been set free from the restraints of the Law, but not to allow for sinful living.

Paul continues his instructions, **Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.** (2Tim. 2:15)

A workman correctly handling the word of truth, what a concept! The issue here is focus. There are those who focus upon the scriptures to the point that it becomes idolatry. God wants our focus to be upon him, with his words held dearly because they reveal his heart and mind. Every word is important when understood in the light of the mind of Christ.

A few years ago there was a great emphasis upon the Rhema Word of God, that is a word from the Greek that refers to a word meant for immediate application. This stands in contrast to the Logos that is the total scripture. There are times when the Holy Spirit must give us guidance concerning something that is presently happening, he will thus guide us as he sees fit, delivering the needed message to us. Because this is very specific and not intended to be applied to all situations it is referred to as a Rhema Word.

Rightly dividing the Word of truth has to do with understanding the relationship of divine principles as they relate to real life. Rightly dividing the Word of truth also has to do with the understanding of the time and circumstances that a given passage makes reference to.

A passage may apply directly to a historic circumstance or be predictive in nature, and yet contain a profound spiritual truth valuable as an instructive principle. Rightly dividing the word of truth has to do with understanding these ramifications and treating them accordingly.

Some passages are addressed to a specific recipient, but the content is valuable for the body of Christ at large. In such cases we understand that it had a specific condition as its primary focus, but the principles are still worthy of our acceptance and application.

There are some things that Christians need to avoid. One of these is characterized as "godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly." Paul said.

One thing remains sure in the midst of whatever uncertainties we may be experiencing.

"The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." (2Tim. 2:19)

We are encouraged to reach for spiritual purity and excellence as Paul uses a natural setting to illustrate the point. He speaks of an affluent home where there are a variety of pots or vessels for various purposes. First he lists what they are made of starting with gold, obviously the more valuable, and then silver, but also wood and clay. Wood and clay are obviously for use as ordinary containers. Unlike the pots that have no say over either the material they are made of or what they are used for, Paul said that if we don't want to be an ordinary pot, then we must cleanse ourselves so that we will be found worthy of use in more noble things.

In the very practical side of things, for example, if a person wants to be a secretary they must first be found to be capable, reliable, trustworthy, and discreet. If they are sloppy, careless, brash or dishonest, they will either never get the position or will be quickly terminated.

In spiritual matters it is the same. If a person is a gossip, disloyal to leadership, unfaithful or untrustworthy, they will not be called upon for a position of responsibility in the church.

This matter goes even further; the Lord who is assembling his kingdom for eternal purposes will only select people for responsible positions who possess the qualities he needs for his purposes.

It is for these reasons that Paul tells Timothy to flee the evil desires of youth; those carnal distractions that come from desires that relate to the here and now, the pursuit of a career, seeking fame or fortune and romantic pursuits.

There is an obvious need to put those matters into the mix of what our life is about, but they should always be secondary to the pursuit of righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with a pure heart.

Timothy had been called to be a minister, therefore, he was warned about some matters unique to his calling. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, he was told, because you know they produce quarrels, and the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone. (See 2Tim. 2:23-24) If Timothy were to allow himself to get caught up in petty arguments he would subject himself to the temptation to become resentful of those who oppose his ideas, this would interfere with his ability to gently instruct those needing hope.

There are so many who have been caught in Satan's trap and they need to see that God is there for them if they will simply repent and seek the knowledge of the truth. Arguing never leads people to repentance. Repentance is a gift of God's love. If people are to ever break free from Satan's grip they must have hope, therefore, it is the primary job of the minister, to minister hope. Without hope there can be no faith, and without faith no one can please the Lord.

Our enemy is the devil, and our work as Christians is to defeat his power over the hearts and lives of people. Keeping our focus upon what is important is vital because Satan is so clever about creating distractions. Paul gave Timothy a charge as his spiritual authority in Christ,

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, **I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.** For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. (2Tim. 4:1-5)

Paul was nearing the end of his life's work and for that reason was giving some wise instructions to the man who was taking up the responsibilities that Paul had carried for the many years of his ministry.

Paul knew all about the tricks of Satan, how he seeks to pervert the gospel and sidetrack believers from the pursuit of godly character to the pursuit of power, thus gratifying their carnal natures rather than calling people to Jesus.

Concerning his personal ministry Paul says,

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2Tim. 4:6-8)

Lesson Seven

Taking the Land of Promise

The Land of promise is symbolic of entry into the life or walk in the Spirit.

The enemy is Satan and his strongholds are self-interest, lust, greed, power seeking, covetousness, idolatry and pride. **The weapons** of the enemy are deceit, violence, threats, seduction, intimidation and trickery. **The strategy** of war is to separate us from our source of life and power, which is Christ. **He will attack** our communication system, our unity of rank, and exploit the ignorance of our mission. He will do anything to cause confusion and disunity. **Unbelief is his number one ally.**

Our weapons are faith in God, obedience to the Spirit, the honor and use of the word of God, and the support of the body ministries.

A Call to Arms

Expecting the impossible is second nature to those who walk with the Lord. Joshua was told, "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses." (Josh 1:3) None of the strongholds of Satan are strong enough to stand when the person of God becomes skilled in the use of the power of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus will enable us to walk in the Spirit, conquering every attempt on Satan's part to distract us from the purity of our life in Christ. Every place we set our foot when in conquest mode will be given to us in victory.

There were many enemies in the land. They were strong and not always dislikable. The task of uprooting them and driving them from the land was not always easy. It required perseverance, dedication to the mission, and the ability to resist the temptation to question the purpose of total obedience.

Joshua provided a steady hand and good strategies for victory, but the people lacked the will to complete the task. Like so many of us, they didn't drive out all the inhabitants of the land. Some seemed to even be useful to them because they were willing to serve them.

Many people stop short of total victory in their lives because they see some characteristic of their fallen natures that seems to be useful in the pursuit of some goal they have in life. For example, it may seem useful to an employer to use methods of intimidation, such as anger, threats, or put downs as a means of motivating people, but is that what the Lord is wanting of us?

Many people resort to fits of temper when someone is challenging their authority. Satan exploits goals or desires that are held to be of more value than the pursuit of the pleasure of God. If we don't understand the significance of carnal loves or desires, we are vulnerable to Satan's temptations.

The reason for the failure of the Israelites and Joshua to complete the job had nothing to do with any lack in God's provision. He said to Joshua at the very beginning, "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. **As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.**" (Josh 1:5) This promise is applicable to all who desire to drive the enemy out of their land, the land being their life experiences. There is no characteristic in a fallen nature strong enough to resist the power of the Lord when there is a desire for victory that is greater than the love of sin.

Compromise is easier than conquest, therefore, many people settle for coexistence with a flaw in their personhood, rather than seeking deliverance from what it is that plagues them. If we do not drive the enemy out of the land of our soul, we will be short that part of our inheritance. The whole land has been promised to us, but conquest is necessary to liberate the land.

Satan always wants to maintain a foothold in the soul of every person who sets out to live a godly life. If he can gain even a little spot he can set up a base of operations. That is what he did to the Israelites. In their future history, they were defeated over and over again as a result of the influence of the idolatry of the people they allowed to remain in the land.

Joshua was counseled—no—commanded,

"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." (Josh. 1:6-9)

This was not an optional charge given to Joshua. It was required of him to stay focused and to remain in the word at all times. The result would be success and prosperity.

Some people in Christianity today want success and prosperity but they aren't interested in conquest against the enemies of the character of God within. They have a perverted view of what prosperity means. Their unconquered greed wants wealth rather than provision. Godly prosperity means walking in the provisions of God. The wealth of the world has limitations, but the provisions of God do not!

Joshua was counseled to never be terrified, or discouraged because the LORD God would be with him.

Follow the Lord

Josh 3:3-4 "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. **Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.**

When we begin our journey with the Lord into the land of promise, we are going into uncharted territory as far as our personal experience goes. The life in the Spirit for us is new and what has been previously understood must now give way to the reality that this is "a new and living way." The Holy Spirit will guide every step, and when we understand that and live contentedly within that understanding, we will not waste our time and energy upon foolish and fruitless endeavors. The most efficient Christian life is one that is full of communion with the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ. They always reveal the heart of the Father in whatever way is needed in our life's experiences.

When the Israelites began their conquest, they had to wait for the Lord to lead them into each battle. The land was conquered one battle at a time. They were not permitted to go ahead of their ability to possess what they conquered. Again, this is a new and living way; therefore, possession of the land conquered was more important than the quantity of land.

In real life terms, the Lord will enable us to conquer the enemies within as we learn to fellowship with him in righteousness. It's easy to get caught up in winning battles, but winning battles is not the focus of our Christian life, fellowship with God is. The reason we must fight the good fight and win over sin is because it interferes with our fellowship with the holiness of God! Focusing on the sins that need to be conquered distracts us from fellowship. They need to be conquered, not because they need to be conquered, but rather, it is because the enemy is interfering with our life in Christ.

The Israelite army would conquer a town and then their families would move in and take possession of the town. If an enemy was a threat to their safety or they needed an additional town, they would conquer it. All conquests revolved around the practical need to possess the land. They were to be fearless and ruthless in their obedience to cleansing the land.

Don't pamper Satan! He will take advantage of every opportunity to compromise your life. Every allowance for your fallen nature will interrupt your fellowship with the Lord.

We as Christians have a right to live in peace, and we can if we are willing to be ruthless in how we deal with temptation and evil in our lives. Throw out the ungodly literature. Don't invite sinners into your home unless it is to minister Christ to them. If you hobnob with the ungodly you will soon be ungodly too.

The Israelites miraculously crossed the Jordan River and made camp at Gilgal. The land was theirs to possess, but enemies were all around. They were in the land, but that was all.

The crossing of the river is symbolic of our identification with the cross of Christ. There we identify with the principles of the cross and leave our old life of wilderness wandering behind.

The principles of the cross of which I speak are expressed in the words of Jesus in his cross experience; first, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) And secondly said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) The first statement referred to is what I call the vertical dimension of the cross, which is surrender to the will of God, no matter the cost, and the proclamation of forgiveness made on the cross I call the horizontal dimension. Our identification with the cross in this practical sense is the point of crossing over into the purposes of God. (The principles of the cross are not to be confused with the redemptive work of the cross. We accept and believe in him for redemption, and identify with the principles the cross. This is an important point in our walk with the Lord. We cannot save ourselves, but we must offer ourselves to him in obedience and forgiveness of others.) The next spiritual lesson to be learned is that before we can possess the land of promise, we must align ourselves with the covenants of God; therefore, circumcisions had to be done upon all the males because those born in the wilderness hadn't been circumcised.

Circumcision in the flesh had a practical purpose that was also symbolic of a spiritual truth. The practical reason for circumcision was a matter of personal hygiene because the people of that day didn't understand the need to cleanse themselves. The New Testament refers to circumcision of the heart, meaning spiritual cleansing so that we don't infect one another with sinful attitudes and practices. Circumcision therefore is a symbol of spiritual cleansing.

Isn't it interesting that as long as you live in a wilderness of wanderings, not really of the world, yet not really committed to an all out walk with the Lord, circumcision of the heart never takes place. It isn't until we get serious and desire to live in the Spirit that the Holy Spirit begins to work on such things as selfishness, unforgiveness, anger, greed, lust and such things.

Carnal Christians don't worry about little fits of rage, or a bad attitude, but when you start a life in the Spirit, everything begins to matter. Circumcision of the heart means that God takes his two edged sword and cuts away all that carnal life stuff, and what is left is a pure life in Christ! It may take a few days to heal, but sooner or later, we will hear the command to move on into the interior of the land of promise.

Consecration Necessary

Josh 3:5 Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."

Before the Israelites could cross the Jordan River, they had to prepare themselves. Advancements into what God wants of your life should always be done purposefully and after having counted the cost. Some of the Israelites wanted to live on the wilderness side of the Jordan River. Even though that would be permitted, they still must participate in the conquest of the land. They didn't see anything so special about living inside the promise land as long as they weren't kicked out of Israel!

It seems to me that I see people like that today. They want the benefits of grace but not the benefits of a totally committed life in the Spirit. They want their cake and eat it too, as the saying goes. It seems more fun to them to indulge in

some carnal pleasures that they know would not be permitted if they were totally committed. They want their daily allotment of grace (manna). Crossing over Jordan involved a change of diet; they were now going to eat from the provisions of the land.

I have made the statement that the work of salvation, as important as it is, is not the goal of God with regards to the Christian's life. What he wants is fellowship with us, and salvation is necessary to make that possible. His focus is upon bringing us into fellowship, but ours may only be to get our sins forgiven so we won't go to hell. Obviously something has to change or God's purpose won't become a reality.

The nation of Israel was to be a united kingdom with all members equally participating, therefore, they all had to cross the Jordan River, and they all had to be circumcised and participate in the conquest of the land even though they were permitted to go back and possess the land they desired.

God isn't interested in having two classes of Christians, committed and non-committed. Some Christians will end up being more involved in the affairs of the kingdom than others, but all must go through the full metamorphosis process. It seems that the greater the cooperation and the greater the value we place upon the process, the greater will be the prize. Those who passionately love God and want to be a part of all that he is doing will be the great winners in the end.

Knowing who is in Command

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come."

Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. (Josh 5:13-15)

As the Israelites were about to proceed with the conquest of the land, an angel of the Lord or perhaps Jesus in his pre-incarnation form, challenged Joshua concerning his authority over him. It doesn't matter how long we've been a Christian, or what our role in the church is; authority belongs to the Lord.

The lesson here was an important one even though Joshua immediately responded in the correct way indicating his understanding of his place in the kingdom and his reverence for divine authority. God had met with Moses at the burning bush with the same instructions; to take off his sandals because the ground he was standing on was holy.

There are two ways of looking at this declaration of holy ground; one is that the literal ground was holy because God was there, or that the position that God had called Joshua to was holy ground.

The removing of the sandals, I am told, was a form of recognition of the status of a slave. Slaves didn't wear sandals, I am told, only freemen. If this is true, Joshua needed to always remember that he is God's servant, ruling the people by divine permission only.

Those who are given a position of authority in the church are truly servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who look at their place as being a place of honor or power are in violation of the principles of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

Jericho was their first assignment and the place and time of this encounter was while Joshua was near the city. Perhaps he was looking at it and wondering just how they would go about attacking it. The Lord gave him exact instructions on how to proceed, and when Joshua obeyed, not altering a thing, victory resulted.

Stay Focused

The Lord instructed Joshua and he instructed the Israelites and everyone was to act exactly as they were told.

We can read stories like this and say, of course they did, but in real life application, are we as obedient as they were? Do we understand how vital it is to obey the Lord explicitly? If we take liberties with the application of the principles and commands of the scriptures, we will suffer the result of such actions.

It takes faith to stand by your convictions. How many young people have fallen into a trap in the area of picking a life mate. The scriptures tell us not to be unequally yoked together but many ignore this instruction to their life long hurt.

No Compromise

Joshua gave specific instructions concerning the wealth of the city they were about to enter; everything was to be consecrated to the Lord. He told them that if anyone violated this command the whole nation would suffer for it. He was right, and that principle is still the same. No one is so detached from the whole that his or her actions don't matter.

Sometimes we hear arguments about whether a given sin is of public concern or is a private matter. It may be true that some sins are of greater concern socially than others, but all do matter. There are reasons why sins are sins. Sins committed do matter. Some matter as a principle or attitude. The attitude that allows for a sin no matter whether public or private is an attitude of permissiveness if not rebellion. This sort of attitude has an accumulative effect upon society as a whole. Sins done in secret soon become sins done openly.

Each Man is to do His Own Job

When Joshua instructed the nation of Israel concerning the conquest of Jericho, they were to complete all the marches as he had commanded them, and after the trumpets sounded, they were to give a loud shout and then each man was to go straight in to the city. They were, in effect, being told not to try to do the job that someone else is responsible for, just what is before them.

It is a principle in the kingdom of our Lord that we do what we are assigned to do. When we try to go beyond that, we get into difficulty. There are reasons why people try to do more than what the Lord is asking of them, and often those reasons have to do with pride.

Pride driven ambition is a part of the fallen nature of man and is therefore part of what we are to deem dead. Some people like to be active in church services because they enjoy the attention they are getting. Real ministry is most effective when the minister is ministering because he is called to do so. Sometimes people who are called are even reluctant to do what they are called to do, but do it anyway. There is no particular virtue in reluctance, however, if a person has a need for attention, success, or fulfillment and that is what is motivating him, it is coming from his fallen nature.

Desiring to do the best job possible in the task to which we are called is pleasing to the Lord, and ironically, when accomplished, provides a sense of joy to the minister. This sense of personal satisfaction is not like saying, "Aren't I great," but rather it is an occasion to give thanks to the Lord because we recognize that without the presence of the Holy Spirit we would not be able to function as we did.

Finishing the Battle

After conquering the city, the Israelite people gathered the wealth of the city to put it in the treasury of the Lord's house. They also went to the house of Rahab who had hid the Israelite men when they were spying out the city, and brought her and all her family to safety. She and her family were spared because she hid the men and they promised her that if she would hang a red cord from her window that she would be spared.

Having completed the task, they then prepared to attack the next city. It was a small town and therefore they assumed that they could easily capture it. They didn't inquire of the Lord; I guess they didn't feel the need to, why bother him? Things didn't go as planned however; someone had disobeyed the Lord and took part of the wealth of Jericho for their own gratification.

At the time it didn't seem important, and Achan just took some stuff to his tent and hid it. After all no one knew he had it, and no one even knew it existed so what was the big deal? It was just a private sin—wasn't it? God, however, knew all about it and he wasn't going to let it pass.

The men of Israel may have thought they were pretty good with their swords and that they were the ones doing the fighting, so what does the Lord have to do with that? Human egos quickly forget that God is needed.

Early on in my ministry the Lord began to train me in knowing where success in ministry comes from. In Christian circles we speak of the anointing, and what we are talking about is the presence of the Holy Spirit in what we are doing. When a preacher preaches under the anointing, thoughts and ideas flow in a stream that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit. The speaker may not be aware of the extent that this is working and may think it is his own brilliance that put it all together.

The same is true of musical ministries. A person with talent can perform, but a person with talent and a ministry anointed by the Holy Spirit can minister.

When the Holy Spirit is doing the ministry through the vessel, taking credit to one's self is like taking part of the booty to your tent and hiding it. It may not seem like a big thing to gloat privately, but God sees it and is not pleased. Gloating is different from basking in the glory of a job well done. I think that everyone who has just experienced an outpouring of divine presence has a deep sense of satisfaction that fills his or her heart and mind. This joy is not saying, "wasn't I great," but rather, "wasn't it great to be allowed to be involved with the Holy Spirit!" We are workers together with him, and when he uses us, it brings us great joy.

The army of Israel didn't know that Achan had violated the command of the Lord, so off they went to fight against Ai. The men of the town came out and started fighting and Israelite men began falling down dead. Soon the rest of them had to flee for their lives. What was the difference? At Jericho everything went so well with no known Israelite casualties.

Joshua went to the Lord with this. After all, hadn't he been told that no enemy would be able to stand before him? Weren't they commissioned to drive out the people from the land?

The gifts of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is not an on again off again sort of experience unless there is a violation of a principle of the Spirit that causes a lifting of the Lord's blessing.

I am sure that grace covers a lot of misdeeds and inconsistencies until the Lord wants to make a point. The Lord could have overlooked Achan's sin on the basis that it was individual and not collective. He could have rationalized that it wasn't what Israel was about that day, that all the people had been scrupulously obeying every command and only one man messed up, but it was important to make a point right now at the onset of this campaign so that they would always know that victories come because God is with them.

There are people who are walking in the blessing of the Lord, and yet are transgressors in some area of life. Others looking on may wonder how can this be? It can only be because God hasn't yet brought this matter to a place of dealing with it. When it is time to deal with a matter, we are given the opportunity, and, if we fail to do as he has instructed us, he will take measures to straighten it out. Sometimes this is simply lifting his presence in such a way that we have to face failure. This is what he did at Ai.

When Joshua asked what was wrong the Lord told him about Achan's sin. At this point it was revealed that Achan's sin was not a private matter after all. When a man of God sins, the whole church suffers. This is a principle of God. Achan's sin affected the whole nation. This is awesome to contemplate, but it was a special occasion and a special dealing of God.

Without a doubt, grace covers a multitude of sins, and God often gives people a space to repent, but if grace is taken for granted he may expose the sin in a way that is very embarrassing, as we have seen in recent times.

Lesson Eight

Come Out From Among them and be Separate

When the Apostle Paul said, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" he spoke directly to the issue of our separation from the world and our walk with the Lord.

The fundamental principle involved in relationships is agreement. Communications that involve skepticism, antagonism, or rivalry are always strained at best. True friends are at peace with one another. If there are hidden agendas or false motives, the relationship will be strained even when it is not outwardly evident. Any falseness will be like an internal wall that is impenetrable. When the wall is found to exist the result will be suspicion that leads to doubt. For true fellowship to continue the area of conflict must either be resolved or an agreement to allow its existence must be reached. The wall will limit the depth of fellowship, but other areas of fellowship can be developed to compensate.

Too many marriages are built on a hormonal attraction with limited attention being given to the issue of common faith. Just because a person professes a faith in Jesus does not automatically determine what his or her values are. Just as a person's concept of God in general may vary drastically, so those who embrace Jesus also have very diverse opinions on how that faith determines behavior.

When it comes to marital relationships the extent of intimacy is limited by the size and scope of whatever walls exist. The reasons why they exist vary, but the result remains the same, limited intimacy.

The most important marker of a good relationship is agreement in the area of faith. It is the cornerstone upon which an intimate relationship can be built. Faith in God determines what moral values will be embraced. Faith in God in and of itself is not sufficient to guarantee agreement upon what these moral values are. Here is where our concept of God comes into play.

People of faith do not always share the same concept of God. This is becoming more and more evident in the current spiritual war being waged within our society. Among those who claim faith in God, the concept is so very different that one cannot always conclude that it is the same God at all.

A person may claim to be a person of faith, but have very opposite values, because they have a different concept of God. For example, if a person believes in a God whose concerns are the preservation of life on earth and one who's concerns are only for the welfare of that life on earth, they will then be consumed with temporal issues. Their view of morality will be regulated by what they see as the common good. Contrastingly, those who see God as being consumed with an interest in the eternal destiny of man will have limited concern for what are seen as temporal issues.

The Apostle continues, "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'" (2Cor. 6:16) Taking communication to another level, we find the same principles at work in our relationship with God as we do with a spouse. The only way to have a meaningful relationship with God is to be totally and exclusively devoted to him. **"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."** (2Cor. 6:17-18)

If we are careless in our human relationships, we will also be careless in our relationship with God. Among all the things that God has warned us about and told us not to do, it's the ones that involve other God's that are the most offensive.

As Christians we are introduced to a new insight regarding our bodies that was never understood by those living in the age of the Law. Their bodies were never likened to temples, because their bodies were in an unredeemed state. They could be ceremonially clean while still having sin in their hearts. It wasn't until after the atoning death of Jesus and the subsequent impartation of the Spirit of life, that our bodies are said to be temples of the Spirit of God. There is now a greater responsibility to live apart from all that contaminates our bodies and all that is within.

Satan has targeted contaminating the body and mind of Christians because their bodies are the temples of the Living God. Satan really wants to desecrate God's house! He hates God and anything he can do to frustrate God's plan brings him great delight.

As we look about us in this present world, it shouldn't be too hard to see that certain activities are satanically inspired, because they potentially lead to destruction.

When I lived in Nevada I had an opportunity to see the gambling industry at close range. Whatever your view is regarding gambling; I think it is safe to say that Satan is at work in it. The way casinos operate, it is obvious that they have something in mind other than entertainment. They understand how to stimulate people into engaging in activities that are designed to strip them of their wealth. This is obviously destructive to the victims, but every now and then someone wins so the beat goes on, as the saying goes.

We can enumerate activities that have within them the potential of very destructive results. Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and sexually stimulating activities, to name just a few, when taken to the end of the road, lead to destruction of mind, body and soul. Is it unreasonable then to say that indulging in these sorts of practices is akin to idolatry? Would these activities have any interest if Satan weren't using them as tools of his efforts to get at God through hurting us?

When I lived in Nevada, we would sometimes walk through a casino to get to a restaurant part of the establishment. The food was usually good and reasonably priced, but I always had the uncomfortable feeling that satanically inspired temptations were close at hand. Was I in an idol temple? Some would say yes. Should a Christian go there? It would not be appropriate for me to make Christian law because law tends to bondage and bondage to death. I do feel very strongly that when we see such things going on around us that we should exercise extreme caution and sensitivity to the Lord so that we don't even touch what is contaminated in his sight.

Satan likes to get us to dabble on the fringes and to taste the bait that leads to his trap. Designating activities and classifying them as good or bad has a show of wisdom, but it also has a downside. What is better is to understand what is going on in the world of spiritual battles and to make judgments based on knowledge of what is really happening. If we see that something is bait, we should leave it alone.

Using fishing as an example; a fisherman will take bait, put it on his hook and make a pretext of feeding a fish. His purpose is not to feed the fish, but rather to catch the fish with his hook. The fish isn't interested in the hook, what he wants is the food. Some fish catch on to the game and try to eat the food without getting caught by the hook. The fisherman's skills then come into contest with the skill of the fish, but in the end the fisherman usually wins as the appetite of the fish leads to carelessness.

Satan has a lot of bait and doesn't mind the game. As long as you will play with his bait, he will continue to re-bait the hook.

As an example, not every person who experiments with sex gets a venereal disease, and not everyone who indulges in alcohol becomes an alcoholic, and so on, but when carried to the end, if it is Satan doing the fishing, you lose and destruction is the result. Even if the results sited don't occur, the violation against the command of God against fornication, adultery and drunkenness lead to spiritual death.

I have done enough fishing to discover that some fish are wise enough to figure out that what appears to be food is really bait, and no matter what you do, they will not touch it. They must be good Christian fish! These same fish haven't decided to never eat, but they are very alert to what is food and what is bait.

If we as Christians will listen attentively to the counsel of the Lord, we will indeed come out from among them, (The world and all those who would entice us into sin.) and be separate from them. If we don't want dirty hands we won't touch what is contaminated. The Lord wants Christians to have clean hands and clean hearts, spiritually speaking. The best way to assure that this is the case is to stay away from what even has the appearance of evil.

We do well to pay heed to the scriptures that say, **“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”** (2Cor. 7:1)

Lesson Nine

Satan's Strategy to Neutralize the Power of the Church

It should come as no surprise that Satan has a plan to neutralize the power of the Church. We Christians are the targets of Satan as he seeks to weaken and embarrass God at every opportunity. His plan is well known by God; therefore, it is exposed in scriptures so that the saying that we are not ignorant of his devices is true.

The mode of operations in Satan's plot is revealed in the story and prophecy of Daniel. I want to point out that though most Bible scholars study this book to find a historical format to use to try to interpret predictive prophecy, I see it in a somewhat different light finding some very instructive spiritual principles. It is therefore not my interest to endeavor to expound in detail the historic fulfillments or to speculate on future historic fulfillments. I will leave that to those who are called to do so.

The story of interest is found in the eleventh chapter of Daniel and is about a conflict between the king of the north and the king of the south. Historically, these were Persia or Syria to the north and Egypt to the south. Israel is located between these two opposing forces. They are like the struggle of Satan and God for the souls of humanity. Neither the king of the south nor the king of the north could be said to represent righteousness, only that they were historical enemies. In the final stages of the conflict described, the king of the north aligns himself with the role characteristic of Satan with reference to the people of God.

If we shift our thinking to the time nearer these end times, we would realize that some of the references to conditions could be applicable to spiritual conditions with history acting as a commentary.

There was an incident that occurred in the struggle between these kings when Antiochus Epiphanies fulfilled, at least in shadow, this prophecy. The prophecy speaks of causing the daily sacrifice to cease.

The picture is of Israel representing the people of God. The prophecy speaks of the people of the covenant. Christians are also people of the covenant, only it is called the new covenant. When the prophecy refers to the temple fortress it is a possible reference to the church because we are described as warriors being told to put on the whole armor of God. We are also told that our bodies are temples of God. The expression, "temple fortress" would then be applicable to the age of the Church.

And if we were to fast-forward to our present time we would see that the people of the covenant are then Christians.

The subject of what we are speaking of has to do with Satan's plot to neutralize our power, so the first object of his attack will be to stop the daily sacrifice.

This is symbolic of our daily commitment of life to serve the Lord each day. It could be a reference to what the Apostle Paul spoke of as dying daily. Our daily sacrifice may be a commitment to a devotional time or it could be our commitment to living righteously even when we are experiencing an unrighteous world.

The next act of strategy has to do with the abomination that causes desolation. Antiochus is said to have entered the temple in Jerusalem where he sacrifice a pig on the altar; an act of supreme desecration. Not only was it an act of desecration because he was offering it to a foreign God, but because the Jews regarded the pig as a most unclean animal. We might be tempted to stop our thinking with this historic fulfillment had the Lord Jesus not renewed the prophecy to a time yet future.

Because he renewed the prophecy, we are then encouraged to see it in symbolic light revealing a most interesting and applicable thought.

The pig, according to the Law, was unclean because the requirement to be a clean animal was that it had to chew the cud and have a split hoof.

The pig has a split hoof but doesn't chew the cud. The following explains how each of these conditions that make an animal unclean can also relate to the Christian life.

In the scriptures in many ways we find a linking of Spirit and Truth as essential elements in the spiritual life of a believer. In the temple we have bread representing the Word of God, and light coming from the candlesticks representing the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit upon the word. Jesus spoke of people worshiping in Spirit and in Truth; people who have what these represent in balanced application in their lives. For us to have the sort of life that is pleasing to God we must have these conditions manifested in our daily life; our walk that is symbolized by feet.

We thus have a picture of a Christian identifying with an animal with split hoofs, meaning that they have an ongoing balance of Spirit and Truth in their daily life.

The other condition that makes an animal unclean is the lack of the ability to chew the cud. This ability is symbolic of contemplation. When an animal lies down to chew the cud, he is revisiting what has been taken in that day. I have watched animals chewing the cud and often it is with eyes closed and a very contented look. The pig has cleft hooves but doesn't chew the cud. This is so instructive of a condition we see in Christian lives of those who have a great balance between knowing the word and spiritual light to understand it, but are lacking in a life of contemplation that results in renewed spiritual life. The abomination that causes desolation is when a balanced life is present but a life of spiritual contemplation, or perhaps I should say worship, is lacking. In other words, we can have everything in order in our lives as Christians and still not have what God is looking for in our daily sacrifice. He wants a life of fellowship to be present.

To those who have all in proper balance in their lives but lack a time of fellowshiping with God, it can be said, “This you should have done, and not neglected to take time for contemplation.” Is it any wonder that this is used as a picture lesson regarding what robs us of power in our spiritual life? The strategy of Satan to rob Christians, and also the church, of spiritual power is to take away this important element of our spiritual life. Truly it is the abomination that causes desolation!

To offer a life of legalistic balance without the life function of ingesting fully chewed spiritual food, is to experience loss of vital spiritual strength and vitality. This need is so vitally important to the healthy Christian life that the lack of it is pictured as a marker for the very end. In looking at what is wrong in the general church world I am sure that many conditions can be cited but among them the lack of an intimate life of fellowship and contemplation is a very big problem. Where these are lacking, so is spiritual power.

Satan’s purposes are well served by these two means, causing the daily sacrifice to cease and offering the abomination that causes desolation (substituting activities in place of fellowship) upon the altar of God.

Those so afflicted are only one short step from substituting the even more abominable god of fortresses. It is when trusting the genius of man to solve problems is substituted for reliance upon the Lord God that Satan has achieved a giant step toward his goal of being the central ruling force and object of worship in the hearts of humanity. This idol is referred to as answering to the desire of women. As we have seen the rise of feminism it seems clear that the driving force is a desire for security, a likely candidate for the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is a condition that is readily understood, being based upon the sufferings of women as a result of the delinquency of men, but it is not a condition that God intended for the human race. As women are encouraged to trust in their own abilities instead of God or a husband, they then look for security in activities to secure monetary security. Satan doesn’t care what you substitute for faith in God, as long as you trust in something—anything, other than God, and specifically, Jesus.

These comments are not intended to in anyway put women in a bad light who have to work to help with the monetary needs of a family. Many women, who have wonderful husbands, find that the money needed is just not sufficient unless they also contribute to the household funds by pursuing an occupation or career. Feminism is different in spirit; it is the rejection of the idea that a woman should look to her husband for sustenance and be dependent upon anything other than herself. It is a godly thing for a married woman to also contribute what she can to the family needs, but a spirit of independence is not.

In review, we have Satan’s strategy to neutralize the power of the church as being, stop the daily sacrifice, bring about the abomination that causes desecration, and introduce the idol desired by women, and to introduce the idol of fortresses, trusting in the power of superior military might rather than God.

When the spiritual conditions we have discussed are present in the individual lives of believers, the church’s power has been effectively neutralized!

Lesson Ten

Living the Overcoming Life

Getting us to break free of the grip of the world and the spirit of compromise to embrace the Lord Jesus in purity of heart and worship is the goal of the ever-present Holy Spirit.

Too long the church world has had the idea that what attracts the world to Jesus is to out worldthe world. When the world sees the church displaying what is so shallow, empty and impoverished as displaying wealth and power in terms of the substances of the earth and the vainglory of personal achievements, the message of the cross is lost.

If a person is attracted to Christ by the success story of some person who has become wealthy or successful after receiving Jesus, then it is the greed and lust for vainglory that motivates their interest in Christ. I suppose holding a successful person before the world to show that not all Christians are slobs and ignorant people has a show of wisdom, but the message of the gospel rejects the shallow impotent success of human effort and the inferior substances of the earth as a medium of exchange.

Substances of the earth can't buy any of the wealth of the kingdom of heaven. The only value in any substance is a symbolic value. The real substances of the Kingdom of Heaven are love and faith.

The godly kind of faith that is a substance is the faith that sees eternity as the reality, and time as temporal. Everything that is now present is temporal in nature, and, once its purpose is served, will be disposed of like rolling up a scroll and setting it aside. This present life is like the cocoon that a worm spins while it undergoes a metamorphosis. Another way of putting it is that this present life is like the hull in which a seed is formed. It is the seed that is of value, not the hull. Once the seed is matured, the hull is disposed of. Once the character of Christ is formed in us, all that is of this world is blown away like so much chaff.

When I see Christians glorying in the chaff, my heart is turned sick. There is no eternal value in the sufferings of this life nor is there any value in the success, health, or wealth of this life. Again, the glory is not the hull; it is the seed that was formed in the hull! We as Christians understand that all of life's experiences are for the purpose of producing the character of Christ.

When my children were growing up we used to play games with them and their friends. I began to notice how, even in playing games; the Holy Spirit was doing a work of exposing and purifying us. When someone was repeatedly winning, others were becoming agitated and their uncharitable fallen natures were beginning to manifest. The person winning was also learning that gloating only causes dissention and resentment from the losers. In such situations it is a challenge extraordinaire to manifest an overcoming spirit. Overcoming is learning to see everything in life in the light of eternal values. In watching Christians responding to situations, it is evident how far they have come in their walk with Christ. When the work of transformation is complete, love will be a constant uninterrupted flow, and faith will be unshakable.

Overcoming is the ability to stay solid and focused. When we have built our life structure upon the sure foundation of the knowledge of the pervasive power of God, and the inexhaustible love of God, no flood of adversity or outpouring of success can shake us. Once our hearts are fully enlightened no beauty can distract us, nor can any success contaminate us, because we see everything in the light that exposes it as being only temporal. We continue to stay focused upon that which is eternal.

The plot of Satan is to distract us from the heavenly vision that is the total substance of the kingdom of heaven. Every overcomer will be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

We are instructed at the very onset of our Christian life experience to deem the sin nature dead, yet the struggle to accomplish that is an ongoing battle. Satan is constantly trying to distract us with legalism or liberalism. He tries to confuse death to sin with death to all that is pleasurable. His goal is to confuse our understanding of the love of God by demonizing God's love as displayed in disciplining those he loves. He is always twisting the truth and seeking to distort the spirit of true righteousness until good is seen as evil and evil is seen as good.

The only pure understanding is found in the heart of a believer who is totally focused upon the Lord Jesus. This focus is not philosophical, as in being merely a student of the words and deeds of Jesus, but rather, it is a focus upon the ever-present Spirit and presence of Jesus himself. When our heart is in fellowship with the presence of the Lord Jesus, his words and deeds are understandable and applicable; all confusion is lost in the illumination of his presence.

When Satan comes around with accusations relating to past sins, the Lord Jesus comforts the forgiven past sinner, with the words, neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more. Christians are not sinners saved by grace as some say; they are saints who were sinners but were saved by grace. The lack of present perfection is indicative of the battle that is raging to keep Christians from the joy of being an overcomer in this present life. There are great rewards for those who embrace the principles of righteousness in this present life. Just how being an overcomer here in this fallen world affects our future eternal life is not fully revealed, but affect it, it does.

Jesus taught us in parables about the seriousness of our conduct and how slothfulness will result in great loss, even in the possible loss of eternal life. These matters are serious and that is why Satan is so exercised about trying to confuse the issues and rob us of our joy.

Being an overcomer is within the reach of every believer, but it requires staying focused upon Jesus.

Lesson Eleven

A Call to Service

Gideon Called by God To Deliver Israel from the Midianites

The book of Judges covers a period of time in history from the death of Joshua, the successor to Moses, to the birth of Samuel the prophet. It was a period of time during which the nation experienced the ups and downs of peace and prosperity along with a shift in loyalty from the Lord God to idols.

The idols of Baal and Asherah were the popular heathen religions in the region, and they had an influence upon the people of Israel for years to come. Their commission from God was to cleanse the land of both the heathen and their idolatrous cultures. They settled upon compromise rather than total obedience, and their children for generations to come struggled between the religions of the heathen and pure worship of the Lord God.

Israel had been under a rather loose form of government, with judges or prophets filling the role of leadership. God had set the nation up with the Lord God filling the role of king with his divinely anointed servants under his authority.

When the nation served the Lord he would keep enemies away from them and bless them in material ways, blessing their flocks, herds, fields and families. They lived happy and peaceful lives, but when they allowed idolatry to infiltrate their lives, the Lord would lift his hand of protection and soon some enemy was attacking them.

After one such period of sinful living that resulted in judgment, the Lord called a man named Gideon to be his leader because the people had once more cried out for deliverance. They cried out because God had lifted his hand of protection and the Midianite army had raided the country and plundered the crops of the Israelites. The resultant shortage of food in Israel was getting very serious when the Lord visited Gideon and called him to deliver Israel from the Midianite oppression.

Now Gideon was a strong man with a humble disposition, but God saw qualities in him that would make him a great leader.

Gideon's first assignment was to get rid of the altar of Baal in his hometown and to tear down the Asherah pole that was by it. Being afraid to do this in the daytime, he took his servant with him and tore them down at night. The next day when it was discovered what he had done, the men of the town wanted to kill him, as the town's people were idol worshippers. One of the men of the town spoke up in defense of Gideon, saying that if Baal was so great, he could take care of Gideon, so they agreed to let him live.

After this a coalition of armies from east of Jordan raised a very large army to oppress Israel, so the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon and he blew the trumpet, a signal that an army was being formed. He called men to arms from his own clan and the tribe of Manasseh and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali. More than thirty two thousand men responded to his call, a small army by comparison, but the Lord told Gideon that he had too many men!

Trimming His Army Down to Size

The LORD said to Gideon, **“You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands.** In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, **‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’”** So **twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.** (Judges 7:2-3)

Courage is a God thing! A spirit of fear is never of God. We may ask someone who has done a courageous act if they were afraid? “Yes, of course I was afraid,” is the usual answer. Fear is normal and healthy, but there is a difference between a tormenting fear and a fear that tells us to be careful in a given circumstance.

These men in our story about Gideon who went home were really scared. They were afraid to the point that they trembled with fear. Over two-thirds of the men went home! And why shouldn't they be afraid? There was an overwhelming army of thousands of soldiers just over the hill with camels and equipment of war. In fact the account reads, “The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.” (Judges 7:12)

The reason to be courageous is that God is with his people and fights for them. This battle was not going to be won by the genius of man; the victory was going to belong to God. The history of Israel was one of divinely ordered battles where the Israelis won against insurmountable odds. The only times they were beaten in battle was when they went without the Lord fighting for them.

For the people of God, victories do not depend upon the number of warriors, but rather, the character of the warriors.

God said to Gideon, **“There are still too many men.** Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” (Judges 7:4)

Were there too many men? What are ten thousand men against such a large army? Ten thousand men would be killed in an hour of hand- to-hand combat. But God said they were too many. Gideon didn't flinch. He had settled the matter in his heart; his trust was in the Lord. Twice God had reassured him of his presence and power, now it was time to act in obedience based on faith.

Notice that Gideon wasn't obedient to faith, but rather his faith was based on the assurance that he was commissioned by the Lord and that God was with him.

Faith that is based on an idea or a theological position rather than divine involvement in the immediate circumstance is doomed to failure. Acting in faith is acting under the Spirit's directive. When we speak of being in the Spirit, what we are talking about is being in a position of fellowship where our every thought, word and deed is in harmony with the Spirit's direction. We are lead by the Spirit, motivated by the Spirit, and we rest in the Spirit. We never respond to guilt, nor do we act to please man. We are always confident and we are always vigilant.

When Gideon's army got to the water, the Lord said, "There the LORD told him, (Gideon) '**Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.' Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.**"

The LORD said to Gideon, "**With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands.** Let all the other men go, each to his own place." So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others." (Judges 7:5-8)

Looking in on the scene of these thirsty men satisfying their thirst, I note that the ones who were picking the water up in their hands were the ones who were very aware of the danger they were in. This was serious business and they were cautious not to allow the enemy to take advantage of them in their haste to get a drink.

It wouldn't be unreasonable to assume that this army over the hill had lookouts watching their every move, waiting for an opportunity to attack them. If the enemy soldiers saw them laying flat on the ground with their faces in the water, they could have rushed in upon them and in the confusion of the surprise routed this inexperienced army.

The men who lapped the water from their hands were likely watching the crest of the hill so they could alert the men at the slightest movement. These vigilant men were the ones the Lord told Gideon to single out. They were the ones who would do what they were told to do, when they were told to do it.

God Strengthens Gideon's Faith

The Lord understands our humanity and how faith needs reinforcing to be strong enough to produce decisive actions, therefore he sent Gideon to the camp of the Midianites during the night to strengthen his faith.

Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. "*During that night the LORD said to Gideon, 'Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.'* So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. (Judges 7:8-10)

Fear is an emotion that is not evil, because, like pain, it is given to warn us of dangers we might otherwise ignore. Gideon had fear, but he didn't allow his fear to cancel his faith. God understood that Gideon's fear was normal fear, and arranged for him to be encouraged. The God we serve is a loving God who understands us and cares about what we are going through. Courage is the ability to override our fear and do what needs to be done. It took courage for Gideon to even go into the camp to hear what was being said, but when he heard what was being said, he knew for sure God had delivered them into his hand.

Just as Gideon arrived, a man was telling a friend his dream.

“I had a dream,” he was saying “A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.”

His friend responded, **“This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.”** (Judges 7:13-14)

What an awesome moment.

When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, **“Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands.”** Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. (Judges 7:15-16)

Gideon didn’t waste any time, he had his marching orders and with confidence he implemented his plan! He had men he could trust, and they trusted him. He had the assurance that God was with him, so now was the time. Sometimes waiting is good, but when it comes to moving in God, hesitancy can be disastrous. The time was now, the encouragement had been given, and Gideon was ready and so were his men.

“Watch me,” he told them. **“Follow my lead.** When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”

Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords.” (Judges 7:17-22)

The secret to great victories is demonstrated in this story. We see, perfect alignment with the plan of God, vigilance based on a healthy respect for the dangers involved, faith in God, and respect for authority as essential ingredients of success in battle. We also see, God went ahead of Gideon and prepared the minds of the Midianites to be defeated by their own fears. Their fear led to confusion and confusion led to a victory for Israel.

In this story we find instructions concerning our enemy, the devil. Sometimes he comes against us overwhelmingly. He is a merciless foe, just as the Midianites were to Israel. He comes to steal, kill and destroy, but God sees all and delivers the righteous when they pray.

Truly righteous people are a minority; therefore, those who follow Satan come in great numbers. Our job is not to count the enemies, but rather, to look to the Lord. Our commander has called us to battle, and following his orders is of utmost importance. We are not free to set the battle in array at a whim, but rather, to do so when our commander tells us to. Just as the troops under the command of Gideon had to watch him and do as he did, so we must keep our eyes on Jesus and do what he indicates is his plan.

When Gideon went to the Midianite camp he put burning torches in clay pots—now I’m not sure just how that was done, but the symbolism seems clear. Our humanity is sometimes referred to as clay pots. Torches were used to give light to those moving about in the darkness. Like Gideon, God has placed the light giving presence of the Holy Spirit in the clay pot of our humanity. It wasn’t until the clay pot was smashed that the enemy saw the light.

Light comes as a relief to those who desire to do what is right. To those who do evil, however, light is an enemy. The Midianites were bent on evil and light was not what they wanted to see! Light produced panic in their hearts because God had planted fear in them. In the dim light they could only see men running in fear, and thinking they were the enemy, began to kill them. As they fled in the darkness they managed to kill most of their own army. By now Israel was bannng together and the men who had been sent home were emboldened to fight and joined in the pursuit. By the time it ended, the Midianite army was no longer a threat.

When God gives a victory it is the result of a well-conceived strategy. He sets the stage by preparing our heart. First God prepared the heart of Israel for victory by allowing oppression to increase.

This is a familiar tactic that we see God use repeatedly in people when he wants to take them into some new level of experience in him. If there is an area of bondage in our lives, he will allow it to cause us difficulty and sorrow until we are sick enough of it to want to be set free.

When we cry out in sincerity and sorrow, he knows it is time to bring a Gideon on the scene. Gideons are the means that God uses to orchestrate the victory. It could be an anointed ministry, or perhaps an inspired thought that leads to a victorious action. The means is not as important as the result.

Have you ever watched a child grow? Sometimes it seems they stay the same and will never grow, but then, when the time is right, they will seemingly shoot up! Height will then be followed by development, filling out the new frame. We see this same pattern in Christian growth. The end result is that we end up in the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Growth is not something that man can orchestrate. It is a God thing. As we grow in him, sometimes it involves acts of service, yet at other times, we must accept being served. Growth is not only a personal private matter, but it is also a part of a bigger picture, the development of the Body of Christ.

Christians are never an island unto themselves. Those who seek to remain apart from the rest of the body will wither and die.

Christianity is two-dimensional. First, there is the vertical dimension, our relationship with Jesus, and second, the horizontal dimension, our relationship to other Christians. These must be kept in balance to remain healthy spiritually.

God is never as concerned with Christians conquering the world as he is in Christians conquering the world in them! When the call to service is given in the Christian life, it is a call to drive out the enemy from the land of the soul. We serve the Lord best when we serve him with pure heart worship.

Too long the focus of service is directed toward evangelization of the world to the neglect of personal victory in Christ.

When victory in Christ is achieved, evangelization results. Those who are walking in victory evangelize. It is a law of the kingdom. It's like a spontaneous explosion.

Electrical charges flow from a positive charge to a negative need. A controlled flow from positive to ground is what causes a light bulb to give light, electric motors to run, and a host of other positive applications that benefit man.

So it is spiritually, a positive charge must precede useful service. Those who lack a spiritual charge or the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives will also be deficient in service. This is why God is so concerned with our daily Christian life experience.

If our daily life is not right, we are useless as Christians in the all important work of evangelism. God is seeking an army of overcomers to light the way to heavens door. The light from the overcomer's torch will drive the enemy into oblivion!

Christians need never hang their heads in shame; we have what the world needs and wants. The problem is in our ability to articulate the answer. The reason we have difficulty is that we haven't allowed the Holy Spirit the opportunity to clarify God's plan and desires to us. If we are confused, is it any wonder that the world is confused?

When revelation power manifests truth in clarity, power is released to set the bound person free. Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

Lesson Twelve

About Bearing Good Fruit

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

"No good tree bears bad fruit," a truth so simple we almost pass over it. What we are will be manifest, we cannot prevent that; it is what we have stored up within that will determine what will be seen in our lives. Just like a fig tree that bears figs, so we manifest either good or bad based on what is in our hearts. **What is it that our thoughts are upon?** Modern computers are so much like our brains; what we program in governs what comes out. When we have learned the ways of the Lord, our thought life will be a reflection of his presence in our lives. We cannot please the Lord when our thoughts are upon what pleases us without regarding the Lord in our lives. In the book of James it is said this way,

For where you have **envy** and **selfish ambition**, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

What causes **fight** and **quarrels** among you? Don't they come from **your desires** that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. **When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.**

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? **Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.** (James 3:16-18, 4:1-4)

It's very difficult to be comfortable as a Christian when you long for what the world has to offer instead of longing for the manifestations of the kingdom of God. It isn't until we truly pray, "not my will but your will be done," that we are at peace with God. **Once the kingdom of God and its success becomes our first and only priority; we begin to live in peace.** We can then be peacemakers having first tasted of the fruit of peace in our own lives. **Good trees bear good fruit, therefore, peaceful people spread peace!** Those who are fully committed to the kingdom of God will spread the same commitment to others. **Equally, when we are living lives of duplicity, we will spread confusion.** Those to whom James was writing had forsaken a life of single-minded commitment to the Lord. Questioning the validity of the law put them in the position of judging it! Isn't that where fallen Christianity ends, questioning even God?

If we want to do a **reality check** on our own lives, we have only to look upon what our life produces.

1. Is it peace?
2. Do we settle arguments or do we stir new ones?
3. Do we speak of what God wills, or do we speak of what we will? Do God's or the world's values govern our speech?

For a Christian, to live by values of the world is to be a spiritual adulterer. We can't have it both ways. **Either we will love the Lord and all that he stands for, or we will love ourselves and the ways of the world.**

When we love the Lord, and meditate on his laws, we are storing up good things in our hearts.

When Christians meditate upon the world and what it has to offer, confusion and evil will grow in their hearts.

One cannot be a good tree, without first growing up a good tree. That is to say, we are what we are by nature, and since we are born in sin and out of fellowship with God, a new birth is required.

A Perplexing Question

James must have felt what Jesus felt when he said, "**Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"** (Luke 6:46) That's a perplexing question. How is it that we can use a title to refer to God, or Jesus, such as Lord, without realizing that the use of such a title implies subservience to the one to whom it is applied? Using the name Lord when addressing God, and disobeying his revealed will at the same time is to speak fraudulently. **It is hypocritical to say we are Christians, and to then live as though there is no God. We will all be called into account for the way we live, whether here in this world, or in the hereafter.**

Jesus, speaking of those who hear but don't practice, said,

He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. **But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.** (Luke 6:48-49)

Only God can utter such words and make them meaningful. No one else can say, "My words are a foundation to build a life upon." All purely human words are flawed and inadequate, but when God speaks, we are to listen, because they are words of life and wisdom.

Summary

In these lessons we have discussed Satan's intentions to bring us into disrepute with the Lord God by tempting us to abandon the simple commands of the Lord. Commands that when observed, bring us into a relationship with God that is life giving and full of joy, peace and love. Satan hates mankind because he hates God. Every temptation that comes our way has at its core a manifestation of hate toward God.

We see Jesus, the hope of all human beings, having purchased our salvation on the cross, and by conquering death, hell and the grave, he gave us a hope that is eternal in nature. It is only by our faith in him that we have any hope of dealing with our chief adversary, the devil. As we through faith in Jesus, deem our sinful fallen nature dead, we are enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to turn away from the works of our fallen natures, and to manifest the righteousness of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in our daily lives.

For too long, religious teachers have put importance on what happens to us as Christians, upon what we do in the practice of our religion, and not upon the action of the heart and soul with reference to believing in Jesus who alone can heal the hurt in us that has resulted from sin. It is the spiritual quest of the spirit of man reaching for the Holy Spirit of God that finds Jesus as the only answer to the hunger of his heart. Every part of our quest for God must pass through Jesus, because there is no other way to the Father, no other remedy for sin, no other access to power from on high, only what comes through Jesus. No wonder Christians love the name Jesus! No wonder we sing songs of worship and praise to him! There is something about calling on the name of Jesus that causes a surge of worship to arise from the heart of every born again believer!

If you haven't yet found true peace in your heart, if you are still struggling against the guilt that comes from the knowledge that something just isn't quite right in your heart, then turn to Jesus, call upon him, ask him for cleansing and purification from sin and victory in your life through the impartation of his Holy Spirit.

You can study and study and study, but never come to the point of victory in Jesus, but in one moment when the deep of your heart touches the deep of his heart, a miracle of the greatest magnitude takes place as he grants you an infilling of power from on high.

Never again are you a helpless victim of sinful desires, now you have a power to resist that is supernatural in nature. Nevertheless, you learn that no amount of power from on high will take the place of your own will. It still is necessary to take action when tempted, when pressed and pressured by the enemy. Call upon him who is able to activate the power and to drive the tempter away.

We never come to a point in our walk with the Lord where we can go it alone; it is always Jesus who is the focal point of everything. We need the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, but we soon learn that the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Jesus. No matter how precious our life in the Spirit becomes, it is always Jesus that we worship. Even when we call upon the Father, it is in the name of Jesus. There is no other name given among men that God will honor and give salvation through, only the name of Jesus.

Call upon him today, ask him to enter your heart, and grant to you the power he promised, that comes from the gift of the Holy Spirit, that you might be washed and cleansed from all sin, and have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. He will give you overcoming power as you continue to reach for him.

May God's richest blessings be bestowed upon you and enrich your life with the knowledge of Jesus and fill you with his mighty power by the gift of his Holy Spirit