

The
Lamb's Wife
Has Made Herself Ready

Holy Spirit

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Sermon Notes From A Series Of Lessons
by
Douglas L. Crook

Preface

This book is made up of the sermon notes for messages preached at Abundant Grace Fellowship in 2011. There is no pretense of this book being a polished commentary on these essential doctrines. It is published with little editing and likely contains many typos, which you are encouraged to report to me when you find them so that I may correct them in the next printing of the book.

This book of sermon notes may be useful to some in helping teach small Bible Study groups or for use in your private devotions. Some may find it useful as a reference book for a list of Scriptures and brief commentary on the different doctrinal subjects.

A digital version of the book in PDF format is also available on our website. An EPUB version is also available upon request.

May the Lord be glorified and His people be edified as we allow the seed of His Word to take root in our hearts and minds.

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**A Series Of Lessons On
The Essential Doctrines
Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ**

by
Douglas L. Crook

Introduction

This book contains a series of lessons on the essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is my desire that these lessons would be helpful to the reader for their own spiritual edification and as a resource to help share these fundamental truths with other believers one on one or in Bible Study groups. We will be considering the truths and teachings that I believe are the responsibility of every Christian to know, to experience and to communicate to others. For the Christian to be ignorant of these essential doctrines or worse to reject any of them is not without consequence. If we are going to bring Jesus Christ the degree of glory that He deserves and if we are going to enter into the fullness of His will and purpose for us, we must be firmly established in our faith concerning these doctrines.

Colossians 2:1-10

1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,

2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith
(the understanding and belief of the teachings or doctrines of the

Gospel of Jesus Christ), as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

NKJV

This systematic study of these Biblical doctrines is not intended to force feed you with doctrinal formulas that you then can regurgitate on command to demonstrate that you belong to our group. This has often been the only result in the lives of many that have had the privilege to hear sound doctrine taught. Priceless doctrinal truths are reduced to nothing more than emotional buzz words if we do not allow doctrine to have its intended purpose in our life. What is the purpose of sound doctrine?

1 Timothy 1:1-7

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,

2 To Timothy, a true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia — remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

7 desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

NKJV

If we do not let sound doctrine transform our hearts, minds, words and actions, then our teaching devolves into idle talk and buzz words. A buzz word or phrase is a word or phrase that is

used simply to elicit an emotional response in the moment. Words like “Grace,” “Love,” “Truth,” “Bride...” The words and phrase can elicit a “Praise the Lord” or “Amen” which they should. It’s good to praise the Lord for truth and to say amen to the revealed will of God. However, if that is the only response to truth, then the response is meaningless and we have replaced sound doctrine with buzz words. The proclamation of truth must be accompanied with the teaching of the substance of what the word or phrase means or how it will transform your life. If the “praise the Lord” and “amen”s are not followed by a changed life, the results are believers who are not understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. I want us to both understand the will and purposes of God and allow them to transform us within and without. I want us to honor God by saying what He says about Himself, us and His will. Throughout this series of lessons on the essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ be aware of their value and their purpose:

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

NKJV

Only sound doctrine has the power to transform lives.

Lesson 1 Dispensations

I believe it important that we begin with a lesson on dispensations because an understanding of dispensations is the only way for us to understand what has actually been revealed to be a doctrine or teaching that God has given to the Church to be received, believed and taught by the Christian believer.

Miles Coverdale, the English Bible scholar who was the first one to translate the entire Bible into English, wrote the following in the old English style:

It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or wrythen, but of whom and to

whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after.

It is generally accepted that the Bible is the Christian's book of faith, but without an understanding of dispensations the Bible will often times seem to contradict itself and leave us to guess what is true and what is not. The following quote explains the problem very well.

Quote: Charles Baker

Suppose you should ask, "Does God have any instructions for us on the kind of food He wants us to eat?" You scan through your Bible and come up with the following verses. Genesis 1:29 tells you God gave every herb and the fruit of every tree for man's food. And Genesis 9:3 says, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." But then you come to Leviticus 11 and discover some animals are unclean and are strictly forbidden, and that certain tests must be applied to animals, fish, and birds to determine whether they are clean or not. Then you run across 1 Timothy 4:4, 5 and hear Paul saying: "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Now which of these instructions would you follow? It is evident that you could not at one and the same time eat only vegetables, eat all kinds of animal meat without discrimination, and eat only the meat of clean animals.

These commands would appear to be contradictory, and apart from a dispensational division of the Bible we would just have to explain away everything except that which we took a fancy to follow. But when we understand the first command was to man in Eden before sin entered the world; that the second was to Noah after the Flood when climatic conditions were changed and man was spread abroad; that the third was under the Law of Moses to the people of Israel; and that the fourth was written by Paul to the Christian for today, all of difficulty disappears.

The apostle Paul wrote:

2 Timothy 2:15

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

NKJV

The only way to properly divide the Word of Truth is to know how God Himself has divided the history of man into different ages or dispensations in which He dealt with man according to a specific revelation of Himself and His will. Since the creation of Adam in the garden of Eden, God has progressively revealed to man more of His plans and purposes for the human race. God held each generation of the human race accountable for their actions according to the revelation that they had been given during the time in which they lived.

The word dispensation is a Biblical term. It is used 4 times in the New Testament in the KJV. ***Eph. 1:10 / Eph. 3:2 / 1 Cor. 1:17 / Col. 1:25*** The root of the Greek word is used over 20 times in the New Testament. In the Greek it is a compound word meaning “house” and “law.” Our English word “economy” is derived from this Greek word. It refers to the standards or principles used to manage the affairs of a household or to the responsibility of managing a household according to certain standards.

Throughout the history of the human race, God has declared 7 different dispensations in which He has revealed different standards by which He would judge and interact with man. Men and women of faith, the household of faith, down through history have believed God’s revelation of Himself and have enjoyed a right standing before God based on their faith. God announced these changes in His dealings with the human race at different times in history, not because He couldn’t make up His mind how to deal with man, but because He was gradually and progressively revealing to Adam’s race His full and final purpose of reconciling man back to His Creator.

As a child goes through school and passes from one grade to the next they experience many different changes, techniques and approaches in learning as they receive their education, but it is all with the same purpose and goal of completing their education. Each new dispensation or age revealed just a little bit more of God’s plan of redemption until the fullness of the

revelation was given to the apostle Paul in this dispensation of Grace.

You will not find in the Bible any statements like; “and thus ends in this very moment such and such dispensation and thus begins such and such dispensation.” Often there is a time of transition from one age to the next. Nonetheless, seven distinct dispensations can be noted in man’s history by understanding that each dispensations is characterized by two specific things.

1. A new revelation of the will of God that forms a covenant that establishes a relationship between God and man that is different than it was before the new revelation was given. One man in each dispensation is entrusted with the new revelation to share with others. God interacts and judges the human race according to the revelation they are given in the time in which they live.

2. Every dispensation ends with a judgment of God on those who have failed to live by faith in the revelation of God’s plan of redemption.

When studying dispensations it’s important to remember that there are some principles that are introduced in one dispensation and that carry on to the next dispensations. The principles of conscience and human government, for example, carry on past the dispensations that carry their name into the dispensations that follow. Other principles end with the end of the dispensation in which they were introduced. The Bible clearly teaches us that the Law has been done away with and is not the basis on which God deals with the human race today.

It is also important to understand that in each age, an individual attained to a right standing with God by faith in God’s grace to provide a Savior. Men and women of faith in the Old Testament looked forward in faith to the cross. Men and women of faith since the Cross look back in faith to the finished work of Calvary. Faith in every age produces obedience, but each dispensation required obedience to a different revelation.

The Bible does not give all of the ages or dispensations a specific name. Bible scholars have given them names to make them easier to study. It’s not as important that you remember the names of the dispensations as it is that you understand the events and revelations that establish the basis of God’s dealing with man in different ways at different times in history. If you understand

that God has at different times dealt with the human race in different ways according to different levels of revelation, you will be able to rightly divide the word of truth and you will properly understand your privileges and responsibilities before God today. If you don't understand human history in the light of a dispensational view, then you will find yourself outside the will of God and you will suffer the consequences.

I will quickly and briefly give you the 2 characteristics of each dispensation and then in our next lesson we will consider more in depth the dispensation in which we live.

1. Innocence

This dispensation is known as the age of innocence because, from his creation to his fall in sin, Adam had no knowledge of evil by experience. The revelation God gave Adam of His will was that he and Eve could eat of all the trees of the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they ate of that tree, God said they would die. As long as they lived in faith and obedience to that revelation they would enjoy daily fellowship with their Creator. If they did not live by faith in the revelation they would die, and suffer separation from their Creator.

Of course we know from the Genesis account that Adam chose to disobey God's revelation of His will and man's innocence was forever lost. Adam plunged his entire race into sin and death.

The judgment that marked the end of this first dispensation was the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden. But there was also another judgment that took place at the end of this first dispensation. God killed innocent animals and shed their blood in order to clothe the nakedness of Adam and Eve. The shedding of the blood of these innocent animals together with the promise of the victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent were the first lessons in God's plan of redemption for the human race through the sacrificial death of His Son.

2. Conscience

The character of the next dispensation is revealed in the account of Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:7

7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

NKJV

Since Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man has been conscious of right and wrong. Adam taught his growing family about God and His standard and of the need for sacrifice to cover sin. Cain knew what kind of sacrifice was acceptable to God, but chose not to offer it.

Genesis 6:5

5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

NKJV

Despite being conscious of good and evil, man chose evil. This period of God's allowing men to be guided by their conscience came to an abrupt end with the judgment of a universal flood that destroyed all but 8 souls. Only Noah and his family survived the judgment of God by entering the door of the ark of safety. The salvation of Noah and his family was yet another glimpse of the grace of God that saves from wrath by grace through faith.

3. Human Government

Adam was the individual in the first two dispensations that received the revelation of the will of God for the age in which he lived. The revelation for the next dispensation was entrusted to Noah. God makes some promises to Noah and his descendants and gives them new revelations of His will. God's covenant with Noah is registered in ***Gen. 8:20 - 9:17***.

Meat is added as permitted for food as long as the blood is drained from it first. Man is told to multiply and be fruitful and replenish the earth. God promises never to destroy the entire human race again by the judgment of water even though they remained as evil as before. The rainbow was given as a sign of the covenant. Lastly, capital punishment was instituted for the crime of murder. This judgment was to be carried out by society as an act of justice not by individuals as an act of vengeance. It was the beginning of the rule of human government.

This dispensation ended in judgment when man refused to replenish the whole earth, but instead concentrated in the plain of Shinar where they built the tower of Babel to unite the whole human race in one place to build what they would presume to be the perfect society. The judgment was the confusion of speech that brought disunity and forced man to spread out and replenish the entire earth.

4. Promise

After the judgment of God at the Tower of Babel, God begins a new age in which He will reveal His will for the human race through one man and his family. God called Abraham and in chapter 12 of Genesis God gives Abraham a sevenfold promise that established a covenant relation between God and Abraham and his descendants. Part of the promise was that God would make of Abraham's descendants a great nation and that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Abraham believed the promises of God and his faith was counted to him for righteousness by God.

We call this the dispensation of Promise because the covenant God made with Abraham was based solely on what God promised He would do for and through Abraham. Abraham's only part was to believe.

From this point in history until the Age of the Church, Israel was to be God's instrument through which He would reveal Himself to the rest of humanity, the Gentile nations. Though we see three more dispensations after the dispensation of Promise, the promises God made to Abraham are still in effect. Through the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ, all the world has been blessed with a Savior. The nation of Israel will yet be the greatest nation on the earth.

The Dispensation of Promise, however, ended with the judgment of the children of Israel for their failure to walk in the faith of their fathers. The children of Israel fell into the bondage of slavery to Egypt.

5. Law

The next dispensation was entrusted to Moses. The Law of Moses, the ten commandments and the first 5 books of the Bible were added to the promises of Grace made to Abraham. The Law was intended to be temporary and was for a specific people, for a specific time in a specific place; the Jewish people in

the land of Palestine until the time when the Messiah would come.

Galatians 3:19

19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

NKJV

Galatians 3:24

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

NKJV

Colossians 2:14

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

NKJV

Romans 10:4

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

NKJV

We'll look more at the purposes of the Law in a separate lesson that contrasts Law and Grace, but for now it's important to know that the dispensation of the Law that was given to Israel ended at the cross. Neither Jew nor Gentiles today are living under the dispensation of Law.

The dispensation of the Law ended in the judgment of the nation of Israel for their complete disregard for the Law and their failure to walk in the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The nation was taken captive by Assyria and the Babylonians. The end of the Law is also marked by God's judgment of sin when He poured out His wrath on His Son on the cross. A ripple wave of God's judgment of Israel's unbelief was felt by the nation in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

6. Grace / Church

Since the cross God has been dealing with mankind on the basis of a New Covenant. It is a Covenant that is established and affirmed by the shed blood of the sinless, incarnate Son of God. The Covenant is between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It provides forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who believe

that Jesus died for their sins, was buried and rose again the third day.

A number of different names have been given this dispensation that reflect its important revelations; Church, Grace, Gospel of Jesus Christ, Mystery. The fullness of this revelation was given to the apostle Paul and God's revelation of Himself and His purposes was brought to completion.

Colossians 1:24-26

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship (dispensation) from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill (fill up and complete) the word of God,

26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

NKJV

This is why it is essential for us to understand dispensations and to know that we are living in the Age of Grace, the Age of the Church and that Paul was the one that God entrusted with the revelation of the doctrines that are to govern our conduct and mission. All the Bible is Holy and inspired by God and is profitable for our spiritual growth and understanding, but we can only understand and apply that knowledge in a way that honors God in this dispensation of Grace in the light of Paul's revelation. It is in his writings that we will find the essential Church doctrines that will firmly establish us in the will of God and prepare us for eternity.

To try to live by the rules that governed a different dispensation instead of the one we live in is as foolish and harmful as an American trying to drive in the US according to British traffic laws.

This Church age will also end in judgment of the apostate Church and of the Christ rejecting world. This time of judgment is known as the Great Tribulation.

7. Kingdom

The last dispensation does not introduce any new revelation, but does establish a new order of things. These changes were previously predicted and announced, but will then be fulfilled. It is a time that many Old Testament prophets

prophesied about when the nation of Israel will be placed as the head of the nations and Jesus will rule the nations for 1,000 years of peace and righteousness when the lion will lie down with the lamb. Many politicians refer to this prophecy in trying to promote peace in our time, but it will not happen in this dispensation of the Church.

Even this last and glorious dispensation will end in judgment because of the vileness of the sinful human nature.

Revelation 20:7-10

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

NKJV

This chilling prophecy only reminds us of the truth revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “You must be born again.”

It is essential to understand how God has divided man’s history with different and progressive stages of the revelation of His plan to redeem to Himself all who live by faith in His grace. We live in the dispensation of the Church, the Grace Age. We will be held accountable for our acceptance and application of the revelation that was given to the apostle Paul. We are to understand all the rest of the Bible in the light of Paul’s Gospel. The doctrines that we will study in this series of lessons on the essential doctrines of the Church are doctrines that are taught by the apostle Paul. If we are going to be faithful and healthy members of the Body of Christ, we must know, experience and proclaim these truths to others.

Lesson 2 Paul's Dispensation

In this lesson I'm going to focus on the dispensation in which we live today, the dispensation of the Church, or the dispensation of Grace. We are going to be held accountable one day before our Creator for what we knew and obeyed of the revealed will of God to the Church. As was the case in each of the other previous dispensations, God chose one man to receive the fullness of the revelation that would serve as the standard by which all men are to be judged during the Church Age. What I want to establish in this lesson, by the Scriptures, is that the apostle Paul was God's chosen vessel to receive and hand down the teachings and doctrines that are to govern the hearts, minds and conduct of men and women of faith today.

All the apostles, Peter, James and John, had received new revelation of the will of God for the Church, but only to Paul was given the fullness of the revelation of God's will for this Church Age. New things were revealed to Paul that were not revealed directly to Peter, James and John.

Colossians 1:24-26

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship (dispensation) from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill (fill up, complete) the word of God,

26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

NKJV

If Paul is truly God's choice to receive and hand down God's revealed will for this Age, then we must understand Paul's teaching and heed his exhortations, warnings and instructions or we will be judged by God as faithless and disobedient. How can we know for sure that Paul was God's choice? How do we know that he was not a self-promoting egotist who deceived others for personal gain?

Paul's conversion was unique. His conversion and calling were so unique and important that it was not left to anyone else.

Jesus Himself appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and caused him to bow before his Lord and Savior. Paul's conversion was immediate and drastic. He went from killing and imprisoning Christians to proclaiming the risen Christ and encouraging the saints. Paul already had power, wealth and prestige when he persecuted the Church as Saul of Tarsus. After his conversion and calling as the apostle of this Church Age, he counted it all as lost trash for the sole purpose of being obedient to his heavenly calling.

All Scripture Profitable

In this Church Age, we are to major in Paul's Epistles. They are the standard by which we will be judged by God. When I say that, I am not saying that the rest of the Bible is not important or profitable.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

NKJV

We do not major in Paul's Gospel at the expense of ignoring the rest of Scripture. We do however, look at all other Scripture in the light of Paul's Gospel.

Rightly Divide

2 Timothy 2:15

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

NKJV

Some principles and teachings are not limited to a time or people. Others are clearly revealed to be limited to a specific time and people. We must rightly divide these teachings in the same way that God does. The only way to do that is to look to the revelation God gave Paul for us. All Scripture must be understood in the light of Paul's revelation.

Let's look at some of the things that Paul wrote about his revelation and calling. If these things are not true, then they are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul is a liar and a deceiver and we must tear out 13 or 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament.

Not from man:

Galatians 1:11-17

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.

14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,

16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

NKJV

If Paul was God's choice to receive a new revelation for a new dispensation, he would have to receive that revelation directly from God just as did Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses.

2 Corinthians 12:1-4

1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I know such a man — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows —

4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

NKJV

In the Arabian desert God gave Paul a special revelation for the Church.

Ephesians 3:1-4

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles —

2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

NKJV

My Gospel

Because Paul's revelation was uniquely given to him, he used the term, "my gospel" to distinguish from other teachings being proclaimed at the time as being the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 2:16

16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

NKJV

God will judge all men of this Church Age according to their understanding and obedience to Paul's revelation. The lost will be judged for their rejection of Paul's message of justification by faith alone in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The members of the Church will be judged by their obedience to or disobedience to Paul's instruction concerning God's will for the Church's mission, message and conduct.

Romans 16:25-27

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began

26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith

27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

NKJV

The Christian cannot be spiritually strong and established without an understanding of and submission to Paul's teaching. Simply put, you cannot please God without an understanding and obedience to the doctrines revealed and taught in Paul's epistles.

If these statements by Paul about his teaching are not inspired by the Holy Spirit then we must tear out half of the New Testament books of the Bible.

Gospel of God

Paul's use of the term "my gospel" was not a claim as the source of the message. Paul simply acknowledged the uniqueness of his calling as God's chosen vessel.

Romans 1:1

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

NKJV

Romans 1:9

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,

NKJV

Apostle to the Gentiles

The Church is primarily made up of Gentiles since the Jews as a people and as a nation have rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Individual Jews are invited to be saved and many have been in this dispensation, but in this Age of Grace the call is primarily responded to by Gentiles.

Romans 11:13-15

13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.

15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

NKJV

Galatians 2:7-9

7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter

8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave

me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

NKJV

Paul's writings are inspired Scripture

2 Peter 3:15-16

15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

NKJV

Now, if Paul is not who he says he is, apostle to the Gentiles, the apostle of this dispensation of the Church, then we must also tear out the epistles of Peter, James and John because they gave testimony to Paul as being the apostle to the Gentiles. If he is not, they too are liars and their writings are not inspired. I believe the evidence that Paul is God's chosen vessel to reveal to the Church the will of God concerning the mission, message, doctrine and conduct of the Church.

This series on essential Church Doctrine will be a systematic, topic study on many of the specific doctrines found in Paul's writings. If we are going to bring God the greatest degree of glory, we must know, understand, proclaim and be established in these truths. Many of the doctrines that we will study can be found in the writings of some of the other New Testament writers and some even in the Old Testament Scripture, but Paul expounds them more fully. However, there are some truths that are found nowhere else except in Paul's writings. Here are just a few of them.

The Law

Romans 5:20

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

NKJV

Romans 7:13

13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me

through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

NKJV

Romans 10:4

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

NKJV

Galatians 3:11-12

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

NKJV

1 Timothy 1:8-11

8 But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully,

9 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

NKJV

The spiritual equality of the believing Gentile with the believing Jew.

Ephesians 2:16

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

NKJV

Ephesians 3:6

6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

NKJV

Colossians 3:11

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

NKJV

Mystery Christ in you the hope of glory - special, future glory.

Colossians 1:26-27

26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

NKJV

Philippians 3:7-14

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

NKJV

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

NKJV

2 Timothy 2:12

*12 If we endure,
We shall also reign with Him.*

*If we deny Him,
He also will deny us.*

NKJV

If we want God's best in this life and in eternity, we must heed Paul's message. It is the message and revelation by which we will be judged by our Creator, God and Savior.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

NKJV

The Church has swallowed all kinds of fads, programs, fables and teachings without putting them to the test of whether or not they are from God.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

22 Abstain from every form of evil.

NKJV

2 Timothy 1:13-14

13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

NKJV

May we fully understand and appreciate what has been committed to us. We have been entrusted with Paul's Gospel which is the Gospel of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lesson 3 The Trinity

In this lesson we are going to consider the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine was not a new revelation given to the apostle Paul, but it was more fully revealed to him concerning the roles of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in this Church Age. On our website (agfwheatridgeco.com) we have a brief statement of faith that declares that we are Trinitarian. Our faith in a Triune Godhead is based on the revelation throughout the Bible that God consists of three, distinct persons who are one in nature and purpose. This truth was hidden in the Old Testament, though it was hinted at throughout the Old Testament. When we come to the New Testament, the Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals clearly the distinct persons and roles of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Many attempts have been made to explain the oneness of God in three persons. All attempts fall woefully short of adequately explaining the infinite God with finite terms. I will add my feeble attempt to try to help our finite minds comprehend the infinite God. In the human experience we are familiar with the concept of a ruling congress. We refer to congress in the singular. The US has only one congress though it is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate and each of the two houses are made up of many different individuals. There is only one God made up of three divine persons. Unlike our congress, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always in agreement and always work together to execute the same plan. All three possess the same divine nature and attributes that make them God.

One God

The doctrine of the Trinity seems to be in direct contradiction to the revelation of God to the nation of Israel and yet we Christians claim to worship the God of Israel.

Deuteronomy 6:4

*4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!
NKJV*

Lord in the Hebrew is Jehovah, the One who exists in and of Himself. Our God in the Hebrew is actually plural: "elôhîym." The word "one" means united. It's the same word

used to describe the union of Adam and Eve “*and they shall be one flesh*” in **Genesis 2:24**.

There is no contradiction between the Old Testament revelation and the New Testament revelation. The revelation of the New Testament is simply more complete and expounds on the oneness and uniqueness of God.

It was necessary for Israel to understand the uniqueness of their one God in contrast to the many different idols of their heathen neighbors. Heathen idolatry and mythology are the product of the vain imaginations of the human heart and mind corrupted by sin. Satan not only didn't mind men being religious, he actually promoted it because it kept them from honoring and giving glory to their true Creator. In contrast to the vain imagination of man's sinful heart, the revelation of the One true God was given to Abraham and his descendants. Abraham was called out of idolatry to serve the One True God instead of worshipping many different gods, each with his or her own agenda, purposes and standards.

Isaiah 42:8

*8 I am the Lord, that is My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.
NKJV*

Isaiah 44:8

*8 Do not fear, nor be afraid;
Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
You are My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed there is no other Rock;
I know not one."
NKJV*

There is no other God. Jehovah alone is God and He alone is able to declare and accomplish His purposes and therefore is worthy of worship and service. That truth revealed in the Old Testament does not contradict the truth of a Triune God; it simply lays down the foundation for the unity of purpose and nature of the Godhead.

The idolatry of the nations led to vain, vile and self-destructive practices. Their loyalties and trust were divided among many different gods which many times contradicted one

another. To please one god meant many times displeasing another. You could do and say anything you wanted to and find some god, somewhere that was said to bless such actions. Satan had the human race blinded to the self-destructive power of sin and the lust of the flesh until God called Abraham and revealed Himself to him. Jehovah is God and He is One. Creation has only one Creator. Man owes his beginning and existence to One Source. There is only One Power that rules and overrules all others and is above all others. There is only One Deity that exists apart from any other source and is eternal. Therefore, there is only One God that is worthy of our undivided, unconditional worship and service. He is Jehovah the God of Israel.

Modern day humanism and evolution are simply another variation of ancient idolatry that has been imagined by sinful man in an attempt to deny his Creator and rebel against the Sovereignty of the One True God. There is only One True God. On that firm foundation of the oneness of the God of Israel the full revelation of the Trinity of the Godhead could be revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, there were clear hints of the Trinity given in the O. T.

One of the Names of God in the Hebrew is Elyoim which is the plural form of the word.

Genesis 1:26

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;..."

NKJV

Psalms 33:6

*6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.*

NKJV

These verses attribute creative powers to God's word and speak of His "Breath" or Spirit. Isaiah speaks of the Servant of Jehovah that would bring deliverance and righteousness to Israel and be the Light to the Gentiles. Clear reference is made to the deity of this coming Messiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7

*6 For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called*

*Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

7 Of the increase of His government and peace

There will be no end,

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,

To order it and establish it with judgment and justice

From that time forward, even forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

NKJV

Many references are made to the Spirit of God in the Old Testament beginning with “*the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters*” in **Genesis 1:2.**

1 Samuel 16:13

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

NKJV

The God of Israel, the Servant of the Lord and the Spirit of the Lord are always in agreement, working together to accomplish the same purposes. They are unified, they are one.

New Testament

When we come to the New Testament the Trinity is more clearly revealed. The roles and responsibilities of each member of the Godhead are more openly revealed to us. Each is clearly revealed to be Deity, but each fulfills different functions in the execution of the Divine will.

Deity – Father & Son

John 8:54-59

54 Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God.

55 Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

58 *Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."*

59 *Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

NKJV

John 1:1-5

1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

2 *He was in the beginning with God.*

3 *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

4 *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

5 *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

NKJV

John 1:14

14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

NKJV

Deity – Holy Spirit

Matthew 12:31-32

31 *"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.*

32 *Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

NKJV

That's a remarkable statement by the Son of God who died for the sins of the world. It's impossible to understand that statement unless you understand the Deity of the Holy Spirit and His specific role and ministry in Trinity.

Acts 5:3-4

3 *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"*

4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

NKJV

1 Corinthians 2:11

11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

NKJV

The Spirit knows the things of God, because He is God.

Same Attributes, Same Purposes, Distinct Responsibilities and Roles

The Father gave His Son for my salvation, but He did not die for my sins. Jesus gave His life a ransom for all and the Father has given Him a name above all others, but He returned for a time to Heaven and is right now making intercession for us at the right hand of the Father in His glorified body. It is the Holy Spirit that was sent to dwell with us on earth, till Jesus' return, to be our Advocate, Comforter and Guide.

Paul puts it this way in –

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

NKJV

Father – Author of all the works, operations or activities of heaven and earth. **Son** – Administrator and Executor of the will of the Father and director of all ministries that honor God. **Holy Spirit** - The Enabler and Giver of Gifts that bring the will of God to bear on mankind and enables us to serve God.

This is the Triune God that we serve and worship. What a glorious truth to know that the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are faithfully channeling all their power and resources to fulfill their purposes of grace in my life.

John 10:27-30

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

30 I and My Father are one."

NKJV

Paul adds that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Blessed assurance is ours! We now go on to spiritual maturity by casting our cares on the Father in Jesus' name and by being led by the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

NKJV

In Paul's Epistles we find the fullness of the revelation of what the grace of Jesus Christ has afforded us, of how the love of the Father is manifested to us and what it means to have communion with the Holy Spirit. Without an understanding of and submission to Paul's teaching we cannot worship the Triune Godhead in spirit and in truth. What a privilege, what joy and peace to understand that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are for me and not against me.

Lesson 4

Angels, Satan and Demons

Revelation 5:11-12

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

To receive power and riches and wisdom,

And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

NKJV

The Bible teaches us that there are other beings created by God, besides humans, that inhabit an unseen realm, but that have a great influence on the visible world in which we live. In this

lesson we'll consider some of what the Bible teaches us about angels, Satan and demons.

Down through the years there have been many abuses and corruptions in the teaching of many who consider themselves experts on angels and demons. Some have focused so intently on angels and demons that angels and demons are more important to them and considered by them to be almost as powerful as or more powerful than God. That, of course, is nothing less than idolatry. There are those who consider themselves experts on demonology and spend most of their time trying to cast out demons out of God's people to cure them from everything from headaches to addictions.

Nevertheless, those abuses and corruptions do not annul the teaching of Scripture that there is a very real, though unseen, realm that is occupied by angels and demons. An understanding of their existence, roles and influence is part of the essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You cannot accurately consider yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ and deny the existence of angels, Satan and demons. You cannot declare that you believe the Bible to be the Word of God and at the same time deny that angels, demons and Satan are real. The following list shows us how often the Bible mentions the existence of these beings.

Angels

34 Books of the Bible
305 in the Bible NIV

114 references in the OT
180 in the New Testament
13 in Paul's Epistles
13 in Hebrews

Satan - adversary

13 in the Old Testament
36 in the New Testament
10 in Paul's Epistles

Devil - accuser

35 in the New Testament
5 in Paul's Epistles
1 Hebrews

Demons

4 in Old Testament

78 in New Testament

5 in Paul's Epistles

Some would say that it is primitive and foolish to continue to believe in angels and demons in this modern, scientific age in which we live. We might as well believe in elves, leprechauns and nymphs. Well, the Bible is our source of truth. The Bible doesn't mention elves, leprechauns or nymphs. It does, however say much about angels, Satan and demons.

Does society accept the reality of the existence of any other unseen realms? What about the realm of microorganisms? You can't see with the naked eye the common cold virus, but does anyone doubt it exists? Oh, but we have microscopes that we can actually see that they exist. That's true now, but that has not always been the case. Before the invention of microscopes and man's understanding of how germs attack the human body, did microorganisms still exist? Of course they did.

The spirit realm of angels and demons is just as real and its impact on the human race is just as great as the realm of microorganisms. Just because man cannot presently see this realm doesn't mean that it does not exist.

From time to time God has allowed man to get a glimpse of this unseen realm by allowing angels to take on visible forms, but for the most part it remains hidden until the end of this Church Age. In eternity the believer in Jesus Christ will possess a spiritual body that will enable us to actively be a part of that spiritual and eternal realm.

Because there are so many references to Angels and demons in the Bible I could not possibly exhaust the subject in one lesson so I'm just going to give you a summary of my study of the subject and then you can dig deeper into the subject for yourself to see if my conclusions are scriptural or not.

Angels

Psalms 148:2

2 Praise Him, all His angels;

Praise Him, all His hosts!

NKJV

Psalms 148:5

*5 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
For He commanded and they were created.*

NKJV

Angels are created beings. Your loved ones do not evolve into angels to watch over you when they are dead. The Scriptural evidence points to the fact that angels were created by God sometime in past eternity before the Genesis account of the creation of our universe and the human race.

Superior to man - in power, glory and majesty.

2 Peter 2:11

*11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might,
do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.*

NKJV

2 Kings 19:35

35 And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses — all dead.

NKJV

So the next time you call a cute little child an angel, just remember what one little angel can do.

Angels do not possess the attributes of divinity, but they are glorious, embodied spirits. They are not omnipresent or omniscient, but they are swift to be deployed to announce, execute and understand the will of God and they are immortal.

Luke 20:36

36 nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

NKJV

When man has been given a glimpse of angels, the description varies from the appearance of bright shining light, fire, wings, the appearance of man and sometimes so ordinary in appearance that we are unaware that they are even angels.

Different kinds and ranks:

Innumerable:

Hebrews 12:22

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,

NKJV

**Seraphim
Cherubim
Archangel
Gabriel
Michael**

Some occupy a closer place to the throne of God than do others.

Worship

Nehemiah 9:6

*6 You alone are the Lord;
You have made heaven,
The heaven of heavens, with all their host,
The earth and everything on it,
The seas and all that is in them,
And You preserve them all.
The host of heaven worships You.*

NKJV

The Seraphim and Cherubim seem to be the closest to the throne of God and constantly fill the heavens with their praise of the glory and holiness of God.

Serve:

They exist to do the will of God especially as it concerns the people of God.

Minister to the needs of the faithful:

Hebrews 1:13-14

*13 But to which of the angels has He ever said:
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?
14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to
minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

NKJV

When Elijah needed food and water when running from Jezebel, an angel brought him what he needed. Angels ministered to Jesus in the Garden before His arrest and crucifixion.

Guard saints:

Psalms 91:11

*11 For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways. NKJV*

Psalms 34:7

7 The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him,

And delivers them.

NKJV

2 Kings 6:16-17

16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

NKJV

Angels announced the will of God: Abraham = Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses = Law, Daniel = prophetic time table, Jesus' birth, Paul = his survival of a storm.

They influence the affairs of human history to execute the will of God: In the book of Daniel the outcome of many battles between nations are revealed to be influenced by the ministry of angels on behalf of God's people.

Not to be worshipped:

As glorious as angels are and as much as they are the instruments of blessing to God's people, we are strictly commanded not to worship angels.

Colossians 2:18-19

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

NKJV

Some of the reasons why believers should not worship angels:

They are spectators of the work of redemption:

1 Peter 1:12

12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the

Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into.

NKJV

Angels are fascinated with God's plan of redemption of humans. They are in awe of what God has done for us.

They rejoice when one human is saved:

Luke 15:10

10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

NKJV

Judged by Believers:

1 Corinthians 6:3

3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

NKJV

Though man was created a little less glorious than the angels and though we are presently limited by these bodies of clay, one day, because of the grace of God that redeemed us from sin, the believer will be exalted above the angels and will even become their judge to execute the will of God on those angels that have fallen from faithfulness to their Creator.

One day the believer will be exalted to a place above the angels in power and glory. In John's revelation we see redeemed saints occupying the closest places around the throne of Jesus Christ. These places have been occupied by Seraphim and Cherubim from past eternity as witnessed by Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. In Heaven the angels surround the faithful believers of this Church Age.

The faithful of this Church Age are promised joint-equal heirship with Jesus Christ. This is a place that angels have never occupied. It is a place reserved for men and women redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:10

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

NKJV

There is no need to worship angels. They serve us and we will judge them and be exalted above them. That is not a boast in

ourselves, but in the grace of God that has delivered us from the pit of hell and exalted us to glory.

Demons

Fallen angels:

Demons are nothing more than angels that have rebelled against their Creator. We are not told when this rebellion took place, but we know that it happened sometime before the creation of the world and that they were influenced by the pride and fall of an angel named Lucifer. Lucifer may have been the most glorious of all angels and the closest to the throne of God. Satan's sin was pride and he chose to rule over a temporary realm of darkness and death over an eternity of serving his Creator.

Isaiah 14:12-15

12 "How you are fallen from heaven,

O Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground,

You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart:

'I will ascend into heaven,

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation

On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,

I will be like the Most High.'

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,

To the lowest depths of the Pit.

NKJV

Lucifer, who was transformed into Satan which means “adversary” and Devil which means “accuser” deceived many of his fellow and subordinate angels to follow him in his rebellion against God.

Some are bound:

2 Peter 2:4

4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

NKJV

Some are free:

They tempt the faithless to sin and possess and torment the unbelieving.

Matthew 12:43-45

43 *"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.*

44 *Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order.*

45 *Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."*

NKJV

They have all the original power of angels:

So demons are powerful and are able to empower evil men to do evil things.

They oppose God and therefore oppose God's people:

Ephesians 6:11-12

11 *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12 *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

NKJV

Satan is powerful, but he is not omnipresent or omniscient. He is not God. His demons operate in his name and under his direction and influence the affairs of man by tempting man to sin and giving man opportunities to sin and empowering them to sin. Nevertheless, the believer in Jesus Christ is not to fear Satan or his demons.

He is to be resisted:

1 Peter 5:8-9

8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

9 *Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

NKJV

We are not to be ignorant of his devices:

2 Corinthians 2:11

11 *lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.* NKJV

We are to be educated as to Satan's tactics so that we are not deceived by them. One of Satan's most successful tactics to keep God's people from God's best is the dissemination of false doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

NKJV

He is to be fought against

We are to engage the enemy in spiritual warfare by putting on the whole armor of God. (*Ephesians 6*) We are to pray. We are to know God's word and heed it and then we are to proclaim it to others. In doing so we defeat Satan's purposes against us and against others.

Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world:

1 John 4:4

4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

NKJV

If God be for me who can be against me:

Romans 8:31

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

NKJV

Nothing can separate me from the love of God:

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NKJV

When I need help or protection, I don't ask God to send an angel, I simply make my petition known to my Father in Jesus' name and I know that He will do whatever and send whomever is

necessary for His will to be accomplished in my life. I will not be surprised if in Heaven we learn how many times angels were sent by God to protect us and provide for our needs. The important thing is that we give glory to God and worship and serve Him and not get inordinately focused on angels. We acknowledge their existence and thank God for them, but we look to God as our Provider and Protector. In my troubles and trials I do not become preoccupied with Satan or his demons. I understand their ways and their influence on the world around me, and I know their evil intentions to keep me from God's best, but I know my victory is found in doing the will of God and that nothing and no one can keep me from doing the will of God when I yield myself to the power of the Holy Spirit and put on the whole armor of God.

Satan's rule is temporary.

Revelation 12:7-9

7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,

8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

NKJV

Revelation 20:10

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

NKJV

The believer in Jesus Christ will rule and reign with Christ for eternity:

2 Peter 1:2-4

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the

divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

NKJV

I don't stand in awe of angels. I stand in awe of the God and His grace that has called me to such an exalted place of eternal glory. I don't tremble at the presence of demons. I tremble in reverence and humility at the love of God that has saved me and sealed me for the eternal glories of heaven. I tremble at His Word that enlightens and empowers me to live in the joy, protection and provision of godliness as I await the coming of my Lord and my eternal inheritance as a child of God.

Revelation 4:8-11

8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

*"Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!"*

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

*11 "You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created."
NKJV*

Lesson 5

Man's Spiritual Condition

John 4:24

24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

NKJV

In this lesson we will consider what the Bible teaches about the spiritual condition of man. To understand man's

spiritual condition it is important to define what we mean by spiritual condition.

Every human being is made up of body, soul and spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NKJV

The body is the easiest for us to understand because it is visible and it is what we use to maneuver through our day to day activities. It is the tent or shell that contains our inner self, our soul and spirit. The soul of man involves our feelings, emotions, desires and impulses, our likes, dislikes, our preferences and our will. The third part of man is his spirit. The spirit of man is the seat of his intellect and understanding and is the innermost part of man with which we are able to perceive God who is spirit. The spirit is the seat of our conscience of right and wrong.

Isaiah 26:9

*9 With my soul I have desired You in the night,
Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early;
For when Your judgments are in the earth,
The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

NKJV

The spirit and soul of man are eternal. Only the body is mortal and temporal.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

*7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.*

NKJV

Throughout the Old and New Testament the distinction between soul and spirit is not always clear. Terms like heart, mind, spirit and soul are often used interchangeably making it difficult at times to distinguish where the spirit ends and where the soul begins. Nevertheless, God does make a distinction.

Hebrews 4:12

12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

NKJV

Man's spiritual condition refers to the standing of one's spirit in relationship to God our Creator. The standing of our spirit, our relationship with our Creator, affects our soul and impacts how we use our bodies in this life. Most importantly our spiritual condition determines our eternal destiny.

When we die our spirit returns to God our Maker. The condition of our spirit at the time of our death will determine where we spend eternity in relationship to God. The spirit of man will continue on in eternity either in the presence of God or forever cast from the presence of God.

The revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is very clear on the condition of the spirit of every human being upon being born into this life. It is equally clear about the only way the condition of one's spirit can be changed.

Man's Condition At Birth:

Dead

Genesis 2:17

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

NKJV

Since Adam did not die physically on the day that he sinned, we must either conclude that God lied or that He was speaking of Adam's spiritual condition. The rest of the Bible explains to us clearly that Adam died spiritually on the day that he sinned and that with him all of humanity died to God.

Romans 5:12

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned — *NKJV*

Romans 5:14-15

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

NKJV

Romans 5:17

17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of

the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

NKJV

Ephesians 2:1

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

NKJV

Ephesians 2:5

5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

NKJV

How can man be alive physically and yet be spiritually dead? What is spiritual death? Death in the Bible is never defined as annihilation or the ceasing to exist. Spiritual death is separation or alienation from the power of God's life.

Ephesians 4:17-19

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

NKJV

Paul describes spiritual death as a power and a realm that actively reigns and keeps man from God, His ways and His blessings. Spiritual death, rather than being a state of inactivity, it is a state of constant rebellion against God and His ways. Spiritual death blinds us to God's purposes so that our understanding of what life is all about is dark and distorted. We are ignorant of God and His ways. Man is as incapable of escaping the grip of spiritual death as he is of escaping physical death once he has died. Do you know of anyone that has died physically and then by self-effort a week later or a year later come back from the dead? The destiny of those who are spiritually dead is eternal death, known as the second death.

Revelation 20:13-15

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

NKJV

Apart from God's intervention this is the destiny of every one born to Adam's race. Man is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

Sinner

Romans 5:19

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

NKJV

When Adam sinned, his inner self, his spirit, died and his nature, his soul, was forever contaminated with the seed of unbelief and disobedience to the will of God. Adam passed that sinful nature on to his descendants making us all sinners by nature.

Romans 5:21

21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NKJV

Sin and death are co-regents that reign over a realm that rules over man and controls our every thought and action to be contrary to the will of God. The evidence of the total depravity of man's nature is that as soon as a child begins to become aware of his choices he demonstrates a propensity to choose what God has revealed to be evil and harmful. You don't have to try to teach a child to lie, be selfish or hurt others. Their nature compels them to sinful behavior because they are sinners. A sinner by nature will be a sinner by practice.

Romans 3:9-19

9 *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.*

10 *As it is written:*

"There is none righteous, no, not one;

11 There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

12 They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

13 "Their throat is an open tomb;

With their tongues they have practiced deceit";

"The poison of asps is under their lips";

14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways;

17 And the way of peace they have not known."

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

NKJV

Deserving of Wrath

Because we are sinners by nature and by practice we are deserving of the wrath of God.

Ephesians 2:3

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

NKJV

The wrath of God is the second death. It is eternal condemnation.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-10

8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

NKJV

This is the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ concerning the spiritual condition of man before God. Man is dead. He is a sinner. He is condemned. These clear revelations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the Church is to proclaim to others are being watered down, ignored and even denied by many who claim to be preaching the Gospel. Two of the most popular teachings in some of the largest Churches and denominations in America and around the world are doctrines that are in direct contradiction to the essential, Biblical doctrine of the spiritual condition of man before God.

The first erroneous teaching is that of the seeker friendly approach to bringing people to Church and to God. The concept behind the seeker friendly approach to bringing Man to God is “let’s just love people into heaven.” “Let’s not use words like sin or condemnation.” “Let’s tell people that because God is love He simply overlooks your faults and will promise you heaven and help you improve yourself.”

Dead people don’t get better because they are dead. Sinners cannot quit sinning because they are sinners. Telling people that there is hope without acknowledging and addressing their spiritual condition is like telling a person with a visible, raging, terminal skin cancer that everything is going to be alright because we’re just not going to look at or talk about your cancer. That approach may ease their conscience and make them feel warm and fuzzy, but it does not change their real condition or the outcome of the disease.

The other common error taught in many religions and denominations is that a person can change their spiritual condition and earn a relationship with God by doing good and religious works. Works done by a dead person are dead works, not works that produce life. Anything done by a sinner will be contaminated by sin and cannot blot out past sins. Any doctrine that teaches that you can be saved by trying to be good is like telling the same man covered in cancers that if he will put a bandaid on the sores, eat right and take some good vitamins,

everything will be alright. Such activity is futile and again will not change the outcome of the disease.

Man born in sin is without God and without hope:

Ephesians 2:12

12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

NKJV

However, God does offer man one real hope to change their hopeless condition. In our future lessons on the essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we are going to discover just how full and complete God's remedy for man's hopeless condition really is.

To end this lesson on a positive note let's just read a few passages that clearly state that God has a remedy for man's spiritual condition. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only remedy to man's sinful, dead spiritual condition.

God's Remedy:

Alive

John 10:10

10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

NKJV

John 14:6

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

NKJV

Romans 6:4

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

NKJV

Colossians 3:4

4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

NKJV

1 John 3:14

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. NKJV

1 John 5:12

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. NKJV

Romans 8:10

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

NKJV

Ephesians 2:1

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

NKJV

Saint

When we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior our condition and identity is no longer as a sinner, but as a saint, one who instead of being separated from God is made to draw near to God in fellowship.

Romans 1:7

7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NKJV

Ephesians 1:18

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

NKJV

Righteous

Instead of being identified as unrighteous sinners, those who put their faith in Jesus Christ are declared by God to be righteous. We are forever right with God because He sees us in the merit of the life of His Son.

Romans 8:10

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

NKJV

1 Corinthians 1:30

30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

NKJV

2 Corinthians 5:21

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

NKJV

Saved from Wrath

John 5:24

24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

NKJV

Romans 5:9

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

NKJV

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

NKJV

This is the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the message and doctrine given to the Church to proclaim. Man is born with a spiritual condition that makes him dead toward God as a sinner worthy of eternal separation from his Creator. Because God loves His Creation He has provided by His grace a remedy, but there is only one.

John 3:16-18

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

NKJV

The world and much of Christendom will try to shame us into changing that simple message because they feel it to be too harsh and too narrow. Like Paul, I'm not ashamed:

Romans 1:16

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

NKJV

Lesson 6 Hell And Heaven

Let's now consider the Biblical doctrines of heaven and hell, one of which will be the final and eternal destiny of every human being.

To begin I want to read a quote from The Dictionary of Christianity in America:

"The traditional Christian doctrines of heaven and hell, while formally accepted by most North American believers, are increasingly slighted or reinterpreted, or both, except among fundamentalists and other conservatives.

Contemporary Christian scholars often stress as a substitute for the old hope of heaven (and fear of hell), the biblical promise of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1), sometimes linked with a horizontal gospel focusing on this-earthly prosperity or woe (i.e., heaven and hell here and now). Even many evangelicals are preoccupied with contemporary themes such as ecology, bodily healing, human potential, liberation of the poor and the oppressed, and the whole social, political and economic domain."

I believe that to be an accurate description of the vast majority of the teaching of most Christian Churches in America today. The focus of their teaching is only on this life.

I'm not going to consider everything the Bible teaches about heaven and hell in this lesson. I want us to look at only a very few Scriptures from the New Testament that clearly state the following truths:

1) There is a place called hell and a place called heaven.

2) Who is going to hell and who is going to heaven and why.

3) How these doctrines should impact our thoughts and actions now.

Hell:

1) There is a place called hell.

Matthew 10:28

28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

NKJV

The inference of this verse is that God is the One who is able to send individuals to a place called hell. Throughout the Scriptures hell is described as the place where God's eternal punishment is carried out. We are given various descriptions of hell as being a place of fire, torment, sorrow and pain. It is not a pleasant place. Words associated with hell and its suffering are words like perish, destroy or destruction and condemn. None of which ever speak of annihilation or of a ceasing to exist. The sentence of God's wrath is an eternal sentence. Hell is God's eternal prison where the sentence of His wrath is carried out on His enemies.

2 Peter 2:4

4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

NKJV

Some fallen angels are already imprisoned in hell. It is a very real place for very real prisoners.

2) Who is going to hell and why.

Besides the fallen angels already imprisoned there, many human beings will also spend eternity in God's eternal prison of punishment. It's important to understand that God does not will that any human being be sent to hell.

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

NKJV

1 Timothy 2:3-4

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

NKJV

Those who teach that God has by His sovereignty willed some to heaven and some to hell ignore passages like the ones above that tell us that God has made provisions that no individual need to be cast into hell.

Then who will be cast into hell?

Revelation 20:13-15

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (hell)

NKJV

Hades or Sheol is the place where the soul and spirit of those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life go. All whose names are not written in that book will be resurrected, judged, condemned and cast into the lake of fire, probably with bodies that are appropriate for their eternal prison. Why weren't their names written in the Book of Life?

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

NKJV

Those who will spend eternity in hell will be those who did not obey the simple command of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to acknowledge and repent of their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. God so loved the world that He sent His Son to save the world from hell. Anyone who rejects the gracious, loving invitation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ seals their own eternal destiny of condemnation.

3) How these doctrines should impact our thoughts and actions now.

If we know hell is a very real and horrible place, how should that impact our lives? The reality of hell should first of all cause us to worship the One who graciously provided us the righteousness of His Son to be delivered from the wrath to come. We didn't deserve to be saved from wrath, but because God loved us, He saved us. But the reality of hell should also compel us to share His message of love, grace and reconciliation with others. Did we deserve to escape hell more than someone else?

Romans 1:14-15

14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

NKJV

Romans 10:1

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

NKJV

Romans 10:11-15

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,

Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

NKJV

The reality of hell should stir us to the urgency of our message and compel us to proclaim it directly or indirectly to as many individuals as we possibly can in our lifetime. This is our vocation as believers in Jesus Christ. When we get so caught up in all of the activities and cares of life that we lose sight of our responsibilities as the ambassadors of Christ, we dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ who died to save us from the wrath to come.

1 Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

NKJV

Our steadfast work in the Lord will result in souls and spiritual fruit that will abound to the eternal glory of Jesus Christ and His grace.

Heaven:

1) There is a place called Heaven.

John 14:1-3

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

NKJV

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Hell is God's prison. Heaven is the Father's house, prepared for His children as a part of their inheritance and reward.

Revelation 21:1-8

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

NKJV

Heaven is a place of eternal joy, peace and rest in the presence of God. It is a place where there will be no more sin or death.

2) Who is going to Heaven and why.

John 17:20-26

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

23 *I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

24 *"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

25 *O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.*

26 *And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

NKJV

All who believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior sent from God to die for the sins of the world are assured of a home in heaven. How are we going to get there?

2 Corinthians 5:8

8 *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

NKJV

When the believer dies his spirit and soul go immediately to heaven into the presence of the Lord. But the fullness of the joys of heaven is reserved until the day of resurrection when the soul and spirit will be clothed with a glorified body fit for heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13 *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

15 *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*

16 *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

17 *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

18 *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*
NKJV

3) How these doctrines should impact our thoughts and actions now.

The reality of heaven should impact everything about our life as Christians. Our every thought, action, word and deed should be impacted by our anticipation of going to heaven. The more heavenly minded you are the more earthly good you will be. Life on this earth is only a preparation for heaven.

Matthew 6:19-21

19 *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;*

20 *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

NKJV

The truth of heaven as our home should affect our conduct and how and why we do what we do.

1 Peter 2:11-12

11 *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,*

12 *having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

NKJV

We are not of this world and we are not staying here. While we are here we want to faithfully represent the values and standards of our eternal home and of our loving Father.

Colossians 3:1-17

1 *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*

2 *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

3 *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

4 *When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

NKJV

The reality of heaven will give you strength and encouragement in the difficult times in this life.

Romans 8:18

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

NKJV

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man *is being renewed day by day*.

17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*

18 *while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

NKJV

Our position and reward in heaven will be determined by our faithfulness in this life to live as citizens of heaven, the children of God.

To deny the existence of a place called hell and a place called heaven is to strip the Gospel of Jesus Christ of its meaning and purpose. It is to deny the clear teaching of the Word of God. I'm glad to proclaim that I have been saved from hell. I worship and glorify the grace of God that has prepared a place for me in heaven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I've been born from above, I'm a citizen of heaven and I want the world to know it by how I talk, how I conduct myself in this life and by how I occupy my time and spend my resources. But most of all I'm glad to know that one day soon Jesus is coming to take me home.

Lesson 7

Grace & The Security of the Believer

One of the essential doctrines that have been entrusted to the Church that builds us up and that we are responsible to share with others is the doctrine of the Grace of God that saves us, keeps us, teaches us and prepares us to rule and reign with Christ. The word in the Greek that is most often translated "grace" is used over 150 times in the New Testament. Not all of those references are speaking of God's grace, but most of them are.

Grace – The stock definition, and I believe it is a good one, is "unmerited favor, despite merited judgment." Almost every group in Christendom believes that grace is an important

word or concept, but relatively few understand or accept the Biblical revelation of God's grace.

What the Bible Says

Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

NKJV

The Bible teaches that Salvation, forgiveness of sins, the assurance of eternal life and a home in heaven, are not by man's works, but by faith in God's work of grace. What work? His work of redemption accomplished on the cross of Jesus Christ. We are His workmanship. He made us His children. Salvation is God's work from beginning to end. God, the One who was sinned against, mocked and despised, is the One who graciously came looking for us to bring us back to Himself. He gave us His favor when we deserved His judgment.

John 3:16-18

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

NKJV

It was His love that opened the door for His grace to be poured out on all those who believe. Notice it doesn't say that those who have committed the most sins are condemned. Those who have rejected the gift of His grace are condemned by their rejection of God's provision of the sacrifice for our sins.

Romans 5:6-10

6 For when we were still without strength, (to save ourselves) in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

NKJV

Salvation is not the result of us trying to get closer to God. Salvation is the gracious provision of God for a human race that was hostile against Him. He gave His Son to die to fully pay the debt of sin once and for all. There is nothing that we can add to what Christ did on the cross. Salvation is a finished work.

Ephesians 1:3-14

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him.

11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

NKJV

Salvation is God's work from start to finish. That is the message of Grace that the Bible teaches. Our only obligation in this whole issue of our salvation and reconciliation to God is to receive the finished work and to rest in what God has already accomplished. Faith is the only requirement for salvation.

Acts 16:29-31

29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

NKJV

Belief involves repentance and acceptance of what God says to be true. You are a sinner in need of a Savior and that Jesus is the only One with power to save. Many religions and denominations pretend to preach the Gospel, but the salvation that they present is through a system of works and rituals. Join the Church, be baptized, complete a training program, and countless other things that an individual must do in order to have any hope of going to heaven. God's people are to have no tolerance for such teaching and those who hold to it are not saved. Religion cannot save you.

The apostle Paul was given the fullness of the revelation for this Age of Grace. The greatest opposition that Paul received in his life time was from the religion that boasted in worshipping the One true God. The religion was the Jewish religion. Paul himself was a religious Jew.

Philippians 3:3-6

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

NKJV

The apostle Paul was as religious as they came and yet when he came face to face with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he knew his religion was not enough to make him right with God. The religious Jews of Paul's day made the same mistake that many in Christendom make today concerning the Ten Commandments and some of the other Laws given by God to the nation of Israel. The Jews and Christians today are right in understanding that the Law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments were from God and are holy.

Romans 7:12

12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

NKJV

The Law was given by God and is good and holy. The mistake that the Jews and many religious people today make is that they erroneously think that God gave Israel the Law to save us or justify us or make us right with God. In other words, most religious people today think that if you at least try to keep more of the Ten Commandments than you break, then you will go to heaven when you die because God will consider you a just person. But the Bible does not teach that assumption, but rather rejects it as false.

James 2:10-11

10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

NKJV

In other words, if you break any law, you are a transgressor, a sinner, and a sinner is worthy of the wrath of God. The revelation of the Grace of God that saves us that was given to

the apostle Paul reveals the purpose of God in giving the nation of Israel the Law. The following verses make it clear that God never intended the Ten Commandments or any of the other laws and commandments of the Old Testament to be a means to salvation for those who try to keep them.

Romans 3:19-20

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

NKJV

The Ten Commandments stand as God's standard of righteousness. The standard doesn't help man become righteous, it only points out how far short we fall from God's standard of right and wrong.

Romans 5:20-21

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NKJV

God's purpose in giving the Law was not to save man, but to help man realize that we need salvation from our sinful condition. The Law rather than being an instrument of salvation is declared by God to be an instrument of condemnation and death.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

NKJV

2 Corinthians 3:9

9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

NKJV

Many religions have added to the Ten Commandments many of their own rules, laws and regulations that you must observe if you want to have the assurance of going to heaven. Any religion or Gospel that teaches that you can be saved by doing something to earn or merit that salvation is a false religion and is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:6-9

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

NKJV

The Galatians were being taught that to truly be saved you had to believe in Jesus and keep the Law of Moses which included the Ten Commandments, circumcision and the dietary laws. Such teaching denies the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to save.

Romans 3:21-28

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation (to appease or satisfy the righteous demands of God's wrath) by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.*

28 *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*

NKJV

A companion doctrine of the Grace of God that is every bit as essential is the doctrine of the security of the believer. Our salvation is not a mixture, partly by works or good behavior, partly by God's work.

Romans 11:6

6 *And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.*

NKJV

After a genuine salvation by faith in the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, many teach that you must maintain your free gift by doing good works or you will lose your free gift. In other words, if you mess up after you're saved, you can still wind up in the lake of fire. This is where we differ from many Pentecostal groups and so does the Word of God.

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

4 *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*

5 *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

NKJV

I am kept by the power of God, not by my power to be good or do good.

John 5:24

24 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

NKJV

A gift is a gift. Eternal is eternal. No condemnation means no condemnation. I have passed from death to life. It's a one-way ticket. We never read in the Bible of anyone passing

from life to death or even of the possibility of such a passing. That is God's grace.

John 10:27-30

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

30 I and My Father are one."

NKJV

A child of God who is found to be not pleasing to His Heavenly Father will suffer the loss of many things in this life and even in the life to come, but eternal life and a home in heaven will never be one of those things lost. We are eternally secure in Christ when we accept the grace of God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ for the guilt of our sin. Any teacher or teaching that declares otherwise is dangerous and destructive to the believer in Jesus Christ.

In future lessons we will deal with the reality of the sin and rebellion of Christians who are saved eternally and how God sees them and deals with them. The Bible teaches that faith in God's grace and in the security of the believer is not a license to sin, but rather is the only solid foundation on which to build a life of practical righteousness that is free from the practice of sin. The following is Paul's balanced summary of the message of God's Grace.

Titus 2:11-13

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

NKJV

Knowing that we are firmly set on the foundation of His grace that made us eternally His, we can now learn to live in a new way. We can build a life that is pleasing to God in every area of our life. I'm glad God revealed this message of His grace

to my heart. I believe it's a message worth standing for, worth sacrificing for. When Jesus comes, I want to be found faithfully proclaiming the Word of His Grace and living a life that magnifies the grace of God. I want to be able to say like Paul:

Acts 20:24

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Lesson 8

Eternal Security

Let's consider the doctrine of Eternal Security in a little more detail. Just so everyone knows exactly what I'm talking about I'll use all the buzz words that will elicit an amen from those who believe the doctrine and that will set off alarm bells for those who have been taught to reject and resist the doctrine with all their might as a blasphemous doctrine. This doctrine has been referred to as "Eternal Security" or "Once Saved Always Saved." In other words, once you accept Jesus as your Savior by a genuine heart confession and faith in Jesus Christ you can never lose that Salvation and be in danger again of eternal condemnation no matter how you live your life after being saved.

Why is it important to understand that once you are born again into the family of God as a child of God that you can never lose your salvation, you can never be unborn? Because without this assurance you will never be able to grow spiritually. You'll never bear spiritual fruit if you are constantly unsure about your eternal life. What is spiritual fruit? Fruit in the natural is the product of the life of the plant. If the plant is an apple tree, the fruit that the life of the tree will produce will be apples. It is possible for an apple tree to be alive and yet not bear apples if the conditions are not conducive to the production of fruit. Spiritual fruit is the product of the life of Christ in you. Paul lists some of the spiritual fruit in **Galatians 5:22, 23** (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-

control.) In short spiritual fruit is the life and character of Jesus Christ being seen in your everyday choices, actions, attitudes, words and conduct.

John 15:8

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

NKJV

John 15:16

16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

NKJV

It is the will of your Father that you bear spiritual fruit. Like a good, loving Father He desires you to grow up to maturity and to prosper to the fullest degree in your spiritual life. You cannot do that without resting in the fact that you are eternally a child of God.

Example: My wife has a very large garden of rose bushes. What would happen if my wife planted a rose bush in her garden today and tomorrow digs it up and throws it to the side for a day or two and then decides to plant it in her garden again and then in a couple of days tears it out of the ground and throws it to the side again. Is that plant going to thrive and produce roses? No! It is possible to keep it alive, but it will not grow and mature and produce beautiful roses.

The same principle applies to spiritual fruit bearing. You can't bear spiritual fruit for the glory of God if you believe that every so often God uproots you from His love and care and throws you out to fend for yourself.

Hebrews 13:9

9 Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

NKJV

2 Peter 3:17-18

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

NKJV

We must be established in the grace of God that saves, keeps, teaches us and prepares us to rule and reign with Christ. You asked some people if they are saved and you can get a lot of interesting responses. "I think so." "I hope so." "I used to be." "I'm trying to be the best person I can be so I can go to heaven." The Bible teaches us that we can and should know that we are saved.

1 John 5:13

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

NKJV

We don't have to wait until we get to the gates of heaven and see if we have lived a good enough life to be let in. We can and should possess the assurance of eternal life right now. The error of thinking that a true believer can lose their salvation comes from the failure to understand the two aspects of our salvation, Standing and State.

Our standing is God's side of our salvation. Our state is man's side of salvation.

2 Timothy 2:19

19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

NKJV

Our security or assurance of eternal life rests entirely in God's side of our redemption. The degree to which we enjoy the full benefits of eternal life depends on man's side. It depends on our daily yieldedness and obedience to our Father's will. Those who doubt the security of the believer erroneously base their doctrine on Man's side of salvation, on man's daily obedience, rather than on God's eternal faithfulness. Even the initial act of being saved is a two sided coin, God's side and man's side. When an individual is saved it is the result of the expression of the will of God and the will of the individual. My great

grandfather, C. E. Foster, desired to graphically illustrate this two sided coin of salvation by having a paraphrase of **Revelation 22:17** painted on the front wall of the Church, above the pulpit that illustrated Man's side of salvation: "*Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.*" After an individual would come, accept the invitation of salvation and then turn to leave he would see painted on the back wall a paraphrase of **Ephesians 1:4**: "*Chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world.*" These two sides of salvation, God's side and Man's side do not contradict one another. They go hand in hand. Nevertheless, we must understand the parts of our salvation that pertain to God and the parts that pertain to man. The assurance of our Eternal life rests solely and wholly on God's side and not ours. The degree to which we benefit from the fullness of the benefits of that eternal life, both now and in eternity depends on our willingness to daily choose to do the will of God.

The fact that we have eternal life comes from God by His grace imparting to us His divine life within us. Whether or not we produce spiritual fruit and how much fruit we produce depends on our faithfulness to yield to the divine life within us.

After a genuine salvation by faith in the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, many teach that you must maintain your free gift by doing good works or you will lose your free gift. In other words, if you mess up after you're saved and do the things that are not pleasing to God, you can still wind up in the lake of fire. Our salvation is not a mixture, partly by works or good behavior, partly by God's work.

Romans 11:6

6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

NKJV

In our previous lesson we considered the clear teaching of Scripture that there is nothing that we can do to earn or deserve a home in heaven. If we were unable to earn it, what makes us think we can keep it?

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a

living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

NKJV

Example: If you tell me that you are going to give me a \$2 million mansion in the mountains, but if I want to keep it I have to pay the property tax on it every year, I will have to tell you, “no thank you, I can’t afford your gift.”

When Jesus paid the debt of my sin, He paid it in full, once and for all. He didn’t just pay for the sins that I had committed before I was saved. He died for every sin that I would ever commit in my life.

Romans 6:10

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

NKJV

The righteous demands of God for my sins were fully satisfied on the cross. Even in our own system of justice we do not allow a man to be judged guilty for a crime that he has already been acquitted of. That’s double jeopardy.

John 5:24

24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

NKJV

I do not fear being ultimately found guilty of my sins. God’s Grace does not allow double jeopardy.

Romans 8:31-34

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

NKJV

God will never deal with me as an offended Judge. The consequences of my daily conduct are no longer an issue to be dealt with in the courtroom of the righteous Judge, but rather my loving Father will deal with me as a beloved member of His household. I do not fear Jesus returning to execute righteous judgment on me because He has revealed Himself to be my Shepherd who has committed Himself to protect me and provide for me.

John 10:27-30

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

30 I and My Father are one."

NKJV

A child of God who is found to be not pleasing to His Heavenly Father will suffer the loss of many things in this life and even in the life to come, but eternal life and a home in heaven will never be one of those things lost. We are eternally secure in Christ when we accept the grace of God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ for the guilt of our sin. On this solid foundation we can now grow to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness.

Lesson 9

The Two Natures Of The Believer

2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; (the time of their influence and dominance has past) behold, all things have become new. (something new and different has appeared on the scene.)

NKJV

We have already established in our series of lessons on essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that man consists of three distinct parts; body, soul and spirit. So what is new when we get saved? Do we receive a new body, soul or spirit? We will eventually receive a new body, but this verse teaches us that we are already a new creation and that old things have already passed away. That is clearly not the case with our bodies. Our spirit was dead but is now made alive by the life of Christ, but we do not receive a different spirit than the one with which we were born. Nor do we read where we receive a new soul when we are saved.

Ezekiel speaks of a time when God would give Israel a new heart and a new spirit, but in Ezekiel the use of the words heart and spirit are not referring to the soul and spirit with which every individual is born. They are referring rather to the nature that believers in Jesus Christ receive when they are born again spiritually. The new thing that we possess by way of the divine life of Christ being placed within us and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a new nature. It is something we did not have before. However, from the revelation given to the apostle Paul, we understand that the believer in Jesus Christ still possesses the original nature with which we were born. Both natures are received by birth. Since the believer is born twice, a natural birth and a spiritual birth, we possess two natures. The unsaved person has experienced only a natural birth and therefore possesses only one nature. This is known as the doctrine of the Two Natures of the Believer.

Definition of Nature:

The nature of man refers to the energy, power, principle or law that governs and influences the individual's thoughts, attitudes and actions. It is the inherent tendencies that direct the conduct of the individual and that dictate the activities of the body, soul and spirit of man.

With that understanding of nature, let's read Paul's statement to the Corinthians again.

2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, (saved) he is a new creation; (a different kind of being) old things have passed away; (the time of the influence and dominance of the old nature has past) behold, all things have become new. (something new and different has appeared on the scene. It is the new nature with new

tendencies that seals your destiny and will dictate the course of your life.)

NKJV

The source of the the Two Natures:

The Old Man -

Romans 6:5-6

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

NKJV

All that we were in Adam through the natural birth falls under the designation our Old Man. From Adam, through the natural birth, we received our spiritual condition of death and condemnation. We received from him a nature with tendencies that cause us to conduct ourselves contrary to the will of God. This is the Old Creation, the old things whose time of dominance in the life of the believer has passed.

The New Man -

Colossians 3:9-11

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

NKJV

All that we are in Christ through the new birth falls under the heading of the New Man. By the miracle of the new birth we have been given the very life of Christ within us. We are made the temple of the Holy Spirit. The very presence of the divine life within us imparts to us a new nature with new tendencies and influences that direct us into the will of God. This is the New Creation, the new things Paul told the Corinthians about.

Paul's terms:

Paul's two favorite terms that he uses throughout his writings to refer to these two natures of the believer is Flesh and

Spirit. Jesus Himself used these terms when speaking to Nicodemus about salvation.

John 3:6-7

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

NKJV

Flesh:

Sometimes “flesh” refers to the physical body, but often it refers to the nature we received from Adam by our natural, flesh birth.

Spirit:

Not the spirit of man, but the spiritual nature of Christ received through regeneration, our spiritual birth.

Paul also uses the term carnal, which also means flesh, to describe those who are characterized by the dominance of the flesh nature. He describes those who are characterized by the traits of the new nature as being spiritual. The Christian can either be carnal or spiritual depending on which of the two natures he or she allows to dominate their heart and mind.

The Battle:

Galatians 5:17

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

NKJV

Paul knew about this battle of the believer first hand. In **Romans 7** Paul uses different terms for the two natures, but is referring to the same truths represented by the terms “flesh” and “spirit.” In **Romans 7** he uses the term “law” to describe the two natures along with “mind,” “inner man” and “flesh.” As you read **Romans 7:14 - 25** notice the struggle between two different influences on the heart of Paul as manifested in his life shortly after his conversion.

Romans 7:14-25

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

25 I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

NKJV

The believer in Christ Jesus has a battle raging within them that the unbeliever does not have. That is not to say that the unbeliever does not experience inner battles about the decisions he or she makes. I like the clarification in a commentary I read:

“When we say there is no battle in the heart of the unsaved person, we are referring to the battle between the old nature and the new nature. This does not mean that the unsaved person has no battles between right and wrong.

First of all, the unsaved person has a **conscience** which condemns him if he does something which he knows to be wrong. This kind of inner battle does exist.

Also there are certain **restraints** put upon the unsaved person. He may want to do certain things but his parents may have other ideas. He may want to speed on the highway but he fears the police and the penalties that are involved should he get

caught. He may want to train for the Olympics for self-centered reasons (fame, acclaim, etc.) but he may lack the self control that is needed for such training. He may want to lose weight for selfish reasons (to attract the opposite sex, etc.), but may battle with his cravings to eat more than he should. So the unsaved may have all kinds of battles, but one thing they do not have: the battle between the old and new nature.”

The flesh nature, which is the only nature that the unsaved possesses, can never do the will of God and can never please God. (**Rom. 8:8**) However, the believer possesses two opposing natures. Many new Christians, like the apostle Paul early in his Christian walk, are overwhelmed in this inner battle. As a Christian grateful for their salvation they want to please their Lord and Savior by doing what is right in His eyes, but more often than not they seem to wind up doing the things that they know displease the Lord. Their sin, their failure to do and say the things they should and their on-going practice of the things they know to be sin that they did before they were saved, grieve them and convict them, but they don’t seem to know how to stop. The old nature always seems to win over the new.

Description:

The first step in learning to overcome your sinful flesh nature is to learn to distinguish the difference between the tendencies of the old nature and the tendencies of the new nature.

1 Corinthians 11:31

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

NKJV

Let’s consider how the Bible describes the characteristics or tendencies of each of these two natures so that we can identify the thoughts and actions that are carnal and those that are spiritual.

Flesh:

As we consider several descriptions of the Old Nature it becomes clear that all of them can fall under the heading of selfishness. The flesh always has self at heart. We will read about some of the very ugly and vile manifestations of the flesh, but the flesh can also present itself in some very noble and religious ways. Nevertheless, even in these refined

manifestations of the flesh the end result is arrogance and selfishness.

Galatians 5:19-21

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

NKJV

Romans 7:18

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;...

Paul elsewhere in his writings describes the flesh as corrupt, deceitful and incapable of pleasing God or understanding the will of God. Any attitude, actions, activity or association that indulges your selfish desires and ignores the clear revelation of the will of God is of the flesh.

Spirit:

The new nature will always manifest itself as selfless. It always seeks to do the will of God and love others.

Ephesians 4:24

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

NKJV

1 John 3:9

9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

NKJV

John refers to the new nature as God's seed. It is that new nature in the believer that cannot sin and when yielded to, causes the child of God not to practice sin.

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

NKJV

Two extreme errors concerning the Two Natures of the Believer:

1) *The error of SINLESS PERFECTION.* This is the false doctrine that some teach that the believer no longer possesses a sinful nature and is incapable of sinning. They believe the sin nature has been completely eradicated from one who is born again. If the Christian sins after salvation, they either were never really saved or lost their salvation is the false conclusion of those who hold to this error. The Bible does not teach sinless perfection in this life.

2) *The error of SINFUL IMPERFECTION.* This is a more common error among Christians. A person might say, "Even though I'm saved, I still have my old sinful nature, and I can't help but sin. I'm a slave to sin, and no matter how hard I try, I continue to fail and fall!" We are destined to sin a little everyday is the false conclusion of this kind of erroneous thinking. The Bible does not teach sinful imperfection.

The Bible teaches that because we are new creation in Christ, with a new nature, we have been given everything we need to live a life free from the dominance of our sinful, flesh nature. The provision is sufficient to give us the victory over the temptation to sin in every case. If the Christian sins, it is not because it was inevitable, but because he or she failed to avail themselves to the victory that God has provided. The reality of our experience is that all of us from time to time have and will fail to judge our flesh and yield to the Christ within. Sin in the life of the believer does not affect his or her relationship with God. They are forever His child. Sin in a Christian's life does, however, hinder the fellowship between them and their Father. The carnal Christian does not enjoy the fullness of the benefits of being God's child in this life when they choose to live in sin. In eternity, sin that has not been repented of, leads to a loss of reward in heaven. For those times when we do fail to walk in the spirit there is the remedy of repentance that leads to restoration of fellowship. We need not despair when we find ourselves fallen in the snare of sin because we followed the lust of our flesh. We need only to repent and return to obedience. We'll consider that truth in another lesson.

The Bible teaches that the believer in Jesus Christ can choose to be dominated by the new nature and be a spiritual

Christian or he can choose to be dominated by the flesh and be a carnal Christian.

Victory:

Reckoning:

Romans 6:6-12

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

NKJV

The word “reckon” means to count it as so. Say what God says about you and sin. Stop making excuses for your sin and carnality. Understand that because Christ died and rose again you have been given a new life and a new nature that can do nothing but the will of God. Before you were saved you could not help but sin, but now that you are a child of God things are different and you do not have to give in to your sinful nature that seeks only to live for self. Most carnal Christians tell themselves that they cannot help themselves it is just who they are. They are not reckoning with God that they are a new creature in Christ. Start agreeing with God about who you are.

Yielding:

Romans 6:12-13

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

NKJV

The word “present” means to yield or to make yourself available. Being a spiritual Christian is an issue of being willing to surrender your will to God’s will.

Obeying:

Romans 6:16

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

NKJV

Because you are a child of God sin no longer has the authority to dominate your life. Once you learn what the will of God is and you become willing to surrender your will to God’s, then you can simply do what you know to be the will of God. As a child of God with His divine nature within you, you have the power to make the right choice.

Putting On:

Ephesians 4:20-32

20 But you have not so learned Christ,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

27 nor give place to the devil.

28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

NKJV

Choosing to allow the new nature to dominate you and characterize your thoughts, attitudes and actions is as simple as choosing what clothes you are going to put on in the morning. You can choose to put on the old, tattered, smelly clothes or conduct of the flesh or you can chose to put on the new and attractive conducts of the new creation. You can choose to lie or you can choose to tell the truth. You can choose to do your own will or the will of God.

Feeding:

If your new nature is going to be stronger than your old nature, you need to learn to feed the new man.

Hebrews 5:12-14

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

NKJV

The Bible reveals to us the will of God. The more of the will of God you understand, the more you can choose to walk in that will and the more spiritual you become. Carnal Christians are for the most part, ignorant Christians.

Power of the Holy Spirit:

Lastly, the strength of the new nature is the person of the Holy Spirit. If you are going to be a spiritual Christian and not carnal, you must learn to surrender to the person and work of the third member of the Trinity.

Galatians 5:16

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

NKJV

Lesson 10 Receiving The Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:16

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

NKJV

We ended our previous lesson with this verse and we begin our current lesson with the same verse. In our last lesson we considered the essential doctrine of the two natures of the believer and the way of victory for the believer to live a life of godliness. As we learn to judge our sinful, flesh nature and as we learn to yield to our new, spirit nature that we received by our spiritual birth we begin to live lives free from the chains of the dominance of sin in our daily lives.

When Paul tells us to walk in the Spirit, it has a two-fold meaning. First, he is speaking of yielding to the new nature, the spirit life that we received at our spiritual birth. However, he also is pointing us to the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the strength and energy of the believer's new nature.

Romans 8:14

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

NKJV

The Greek word translated "sons" means "full grown, mature sons." You cannot reach your fullest potential in this life or in eternity as a child of God apart from a full surrender to the working of the Holy Spirit in your life. If you do not learn how to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Holy Spirit, you will be characterized by sin and carnality and be a defeated Christian who does not experience the blessings of joy, peace and contentment that come from godly living.

That brings us to our next essential doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of the miracle of speaking in an unknown tongue. This should be an experience that every Christian seeks after being saved. I want to emphasize the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in an unknown tongue, but I want to

consider it in the context of the whole of the teaching of Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit. So we are going to have several lessons on the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We won't get much further in this lesson than an introduction of the subject and the proper attitude with which the believer should approach this doctrine.

There are those who have embraced the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues all of their life. Some from that group have gone on to reap the benefits of being continually filled and led by the Spirit and are examples for others to follow. Others, who have embraced this teaching all their life and spoken in tongues, have never fully entered into the power and privilege of their experience or of what they say they believe and they are a reproach to the Gospel and grieve the Holy Spirit.

There are also those who have rejected this truth as not being something the Bible teaches. There are still others who just haven't made up their mind on the subject.

My responsibility as a pastor and a minister of the Gospel is not to try to make those who agree with me happy. It is not to try to make those who disagree with me to feel bad or inferior. It is not even to try to pressure and convince the undecided to make a decision that favors my doctrinal position. A good pastor, a good shepherd, is one who makes sure that the flock has pure, life giving, life sustaining water to drink. A pastor is a well digger and one who maintains the wells of sound doctrine open and pure so that he can invite the thirsty to come and drink. There's a saying: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." The same is true of sheep. My responsibility as the under shepherd of the Lord is not to make you drink, but to maintain the wells of truth open and pure and invite and encourage whosoever will to come and drink.

One of the complaints I get most often from Christians that have not yet been filled is that they feel pressured by others who have been filled and that they believe that others intentionally try to make them feel inferior because they have not spoken in tongues. Sadly, sometimes that is the case. Self-righteous, obnoxious Christians do exist and do intentionally intimidate others. Often, though, it is simply that a grateful believer wants others to experience the same glorious experience

of the gift and power of God that God in His grace gave them and offers to all of His children.

As a pastor I make it a point to preach and teach God's Word clearly and passionately from the pulpit with no apologies or excuses for what the Bible reveals to be the will of God. However, I intentionally try not to put any kind of one on one pressure on individuals by asking them if they are filled and if not why not, unless specifically led of the Lord to do so. If you are one of the many that have felt pressured to be filled and resent it, I would simply like to encourage you to consider this. Being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in an unknown tongue is not a matter of giving in to peer pressure. If you have sought to be filled in response to the pressure of others, then it might explain your frustration. Being filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues is a matter of spiritual hunger and thirst. Hunger and thirst come from within, not from outside influence.

Matthew 5:6

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

NKJV

We are to hunger and thirst for what is right. That is true of everything offered to us in the will of God including the gift of receiving the infilling of the Holy Spirit. You have to make it a priority to determine if this experience is the will of God for you or not. If it is, it is right, it is righteousness. Then you must hunger and thirst after the experience with the same determination and intensity with which a hungry person in the natural would seek food for their natural hunger. Until there is this personal, intense hunger for the will of God, it is pointless for the pastor or anyone else to tell you, you need to pray to be filled. If the hunger is real, no one will be able to keep you from taking advantage of every opportunity, both privately and publicly, to be filled.

With this understanding I want us to consider the deep well of the Scriptural teaching about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

I believe that much of the misunderstanding and corruption associated with the doctrine of the infilling of the Holy Spirit has come because it is taken out of the context of the whole

teaching of the Scriptures on the Holy Spirit. The fundamentalist focuses in on the miracle of speaking in tongues and with that narrow, biased vision reject the doctrine of a separate, individual experience that is separate from salvation. “It’s too strange.” “It’s too supernatural.” Some have asked me, “What’s the point of tongues?” “Why would God do things that way?” Just because you don’t like how God does things or don’t understand why He does things a certain way, is that a legitimate reason to reject it as being the will of God?

Many pentecostals and charismatics become obsessed with speaking in tongues to the point that they completely neglect the purpose and power of receiving the Holy Spirit in the first place. Tongues become a badge of honor and pride rather than a humble submission to the will of God. Spiritual things become carnal toys and lose their intended power and purpose.

Without an understanding of and a submission to the person and work of the Holy Spirit the Church as a whole and individual believers are unable to function in the way God has intended for us to function. This is why the study and preaching of the Holy Spirit is vital if we are going to glorify God and enjoy the fullness of His blessing in our life.

God is Almighty. He is able to “do” anything. “With God, nothing is impossible.” He purposes and nothing and no one can hinder Him from “doing” what He said He would do. The Bible teaches us that the believer in Jesus Christ has been given access to the power of God in order that we may allow Him to “do” His will for us, in us and through us. Though every believer has been given access to the power of God, not every believer has learned how to tap into that power and therefore not all believers personally experience the fullness of the blessings that results from allowing God to “work” in us His glorious transforming work.

When I refer to the “power of God” most Christians immediately think of the miraculous, emotional and spectacular manifestations of power. We should not deny nor cease to expect such demonstrations of God’s power, but more often than not, the power of God is manifested in the ordinary and mundane aspects of life. The end result of the power of God is the accomplishment of the will of God. The Bible reveals to us that the Holy Spirit is the Distributor of the power of God to give us

power, ability and authority to benefit from the will of God being done for us, in us and through us. The Holy Spirit is our direct line to the power of the Almighty God. Not to personally understand that truth and apply it is to fail to flip the switch to let the power flow and it is to be left in the dark, powerless to benefit from the fullness of the will of God being done for you, in you and through you. There is no aspect of our relationship, fellowship, walk with or service to the Lord that is done or accomplished apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 4:6-7

6 So he answered and said to me:

"This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel:

'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'

Says the Lord of hosts.

7 'Who are you, O great mountain?

Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!

And he shall bring forth the capstone

With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'"

NKJV

Might – military force. **Power** – human vigor, strength or wealth. Man's might and power cannot accomplish the will of God. They cannot enable us to benefit from the purposes of God. The will of God is accomplished only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Saints, we need a revelation of the exceeding greatness of God's power for us, in us and through us by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The more we understand the Holy Spirit as the Distributor of the Power of God, the more we'll rest in His faithfulness and the more we'll desire to seek and surrender to His guidance and influence in our lives.

Where does one begin to understand and experience this power? After salvation, you need to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38-39

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

NKJV

From this passage we can understand that the gift or promise of receiving the Holy Spirit is given only to those who are saved or called, God's elect. We also understand from this passage that this gift is for all of God's people. Though it is not clear from this passage alone, we will soon discover that it is not an experience that the believer automatically receives at regeneration. Regeneration simply makes us eligible for the gift. Receiving Jesus as your Savior and receiving the Holy Spirit are two different things. Some are not comfortable with the idea of two separate experiences. "Why would God not give everything He has in one experience?"

Salvation and water baptism are two different experiences. Sanctification is an ongoing work that transforms us from glory to glory. Spiritual maturity is a process. There is nothing unusual or inconsistent with the whole of God's plans and purposes in understanding that receiving the Holy Spirit is a separate experience from regeneration.

John 14:16-17

16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever —

17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

NKJV

We will find that to receive the Holy Spirit is to personally acknowledge the person and work of the Holy Spirit in your life. The evidence of having personally accepted the gift is to speak in an unknown tongue as the Spirit prompts and enables. This experience is individual and personal, not corporate. Two things happened on the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts. 1) The Body of Christ was baptized, which was a corporate experience that took place one time for all and 2) the 120 individuals present received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Two sets of signs were given. One set was never repeated, the mighty wind, and tongues of fire. There is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit, not many. The other sign or miracle was repeated on many occasions, the speaking in an unknown tongue.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit, though it is the same Spirit that baptized the Body on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 11:16-17

16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?

NKJV

Peter is saying that the same Spirit that baptized the Body of Christ and filled them on the day of Pentecost is the same Spirit that was given as a gift to those of Cornelius's house.

The Baptism, Anointing, Seal and Gift are all by the same Holy Spirit, but describe different aspects of His ministry.

How Does One Receive The Gift?

Luke 11:5-13

5 And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him';

7 and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'?

8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

NKJV

Jesus never spoke of the baptism with the Holy Spirit in terms of something given to those of His children that persistently

ask. He simply said you will be baptized. Here He speaks of the Holy Spirit as a gift given to those of God's children who earnestly ask Him. This experience is the receiving of the Holy Spirit in a very personal way. Why would we need to ask for the Holy Spirit if we receive the Spirit in this way when we become His child as some teach? Every child of God possesses a measure of the Holy Spirit upon being born again, but not in the sense or measure that Jesus refers to in Luke.

Luke 24:49

49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

NKJV

After salvation there is nothing more important than to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How to receive

Ask! We don't need to beg and plead, but it's important to come to the Father and acknowledge that you understand your need of the fullness of the Holy Spirit and to persistently ask for your portion. You must hunger after your portion. Everyone's experience is different. Some immediately receive. Some tarry for a period of time. Some receive in a church service, some at home, some with others, some by themselves. Your Father has what you need. How hungry are you?

Scriptural examples:

Acts 1:14

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

NKJV

God's people worshipping and praying in one accord seems to be the most common experience today. Such an atmosphere of unity and praise tends to lead to liberty to receive the Holy Spirit. Emotions are certainly a part of this experience, but if it is merely emotional, it is not of the Spirit. It must be spiritual worship according to truth. Such worship can certainly be emotional, but it is born of revelation and springs from within the spirit.

Acts 8:14-20

14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,

15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16 For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!"

NKJV

It can't be bought, but some have the gift of laying on of hands and believers receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice these individuals had already received the word, been saved and baptized in Jesus' name. Notice the apostles came down that they might receive the Holy Spirit, not be baptized by the Holy Spirit. The fundamentalists argue that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this second group was necessary because it was the first time that this group was introduced to the Gospel. These are the Samaritans. If the Church was baptized on the day of Pentecost it had to include the whole Church, every tongue people and nation. Otherwise there would be a Jewish Church, a Samaritan Church and a Gentile Church. What's more God only acknowledges two races of people, Jew and Gentile. He didn't acknowledge the Samaritans as a special group.

Also notice that Simon observed some external evidence that these individuals received the Holy Spirit. If you are going to market something, it must have some kind of appeal to the human senses. He saw and heard the miracle of individuals speaking in an unknown tongue.

Acts 10:44-48

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

45 *And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*

46 *For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*

Then Peter answered,

47 *"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"*

48 *And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.*

NKJV

These individuals received the Holy Spirit while the Word was being spoken. Here the evidence is clearly stated. They heard them speak with tongues. Again the fundamentalists argue that such a manifestation was necessary only to initiate the Gentiles into the Church. Again I would have to say that there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ. The Church was baptized on the day of Pentecost. The evidence that these Gentiles were accepted into the Church is evidenced by them receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit which is reserved only for God's chosen, redeemed people.

Acts 19:1-7

1 *And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples*

2 *he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"*

So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

3 *And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?"*

So they said, "Into John's baptism."

4 *Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."*

5 *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

6 *And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*

7 *Now the men were about twelve in all. NKJV*

This passage defies all the explanations of the fundamentalists. It is after Pentecost, after the Samaritans, after the Gentiles and yet Paul asks them if they have received the Holy Spirit since they believed. They had been converted under John the Baptist's ministry and by their faith in the coming Messiah. They had not yet heard the fullness of the message of the resurrected Lord. If everyone receives the Holy Spirit in this personal way when they are saved, Paul's question makes no sense. If he simply wanted to know if they were saved, he would have asked them if they believed on the Lord Jesus. Some say they were not saved when Paul met them. Even if that were the case, by verse 5 they are definitely saved and not until vs. 6 did they receive the Holy Spirit.

Tongues

For the fundamentalists tongues are a stumbling block, because they are so supernatural and foolish sounding. Why is it necessary to speak in tongues? What's the point? Well, do you believe the accounts in the book of Acts where it clearly states that the miracle of speaking in tongues was the will of God for the early Church experience? If God used them then, why can't He use them now unless He specifically says that He's not going to use them now?

For charismatics tongues become a preoccupation, a goal and a badge of spirituality rather than a sign of a deeper, ongoing working of the Holy Spirit and a humble submitting to that work.

There are a total of five accounts in the book of Acts where believers are filled with the Holy Spirit. In three of those accounts tongues are clearly stated as being the evidence of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the other two some external evidence is implied. Tongues are a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. They are not mere emotional outbursts, but Spirit inspired languages that declare the praises of God.

Acts 2:12-17

12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,

That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

Your young men shall see visions,

Your old men shall dream dreams.'"

NKJV

What could this speaking in tongues mean? It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit promised by Joel. Some mock, others receive. Tongues can be either a language known by others, but not by the speaker or they can also be a language unknown to any man, anywhere.

1 Corinthians 14:2

2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

NKJV

Receive the gift of the Spirit. Don't be hindered or intimidated by the miracle of tongues. Don't be preoccupied and seek to speak in tongues. Simply ask the Father for your portion of the promise of the Spirit and yield to Him in praise and worship. Don't be afraid He'll give you something harmful when you ask Him for something good. Don't fall into the trap of feeling inferior if you have not yet received the gift of the Holy Spirit. You are not responsible to produce the miracle, you are only responsible to value the gift and to seek it with all your heart. God does a work not only in giving the gift, but in the seeking. It's not an end or a climax, but the first step in a whole new aspect of your fellowship with and service to the Lord.

Why is this experience necessary if, as a believer, I already benefit from the Baptizing, Anointing and Sealing work of the Holy Spirit in my life? Because God's Word teaches us that it's important and necessary in order to benefit to the fullest degree from the power of God distributed to us through the Spirit to accomplish the will of God for us, in us and through us. We limit the ministry of the Holy Spirit when we don't receive Him by faith into our lives in this full measure.

Example

A farmer may have a huge reservoir of water to irrigate his crops so they can grow, but if he only opens up the faucet every now and then to let out a few drops of water, his crops may survive, but they won't thrive. Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is like opening up the water valve to the max.

John 7:37-39

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

NKJV

Why settle for just a drip of power, when you can have the river.

Isaiah 40:28-31

28 Have you not known?

Have you not heard?

The everlasting God, the Lord,

The Creator of the ends of the earth,

Neither faints nor is weary.

His understanding is unsearchable.

29 He gives power to the weak,

And to those who have no might He increases strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,

And the young men shall utterly fall,

31 But those who wait on the Lord

Shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint.

NKJV

Lesson 11 Filled With The Spirit

In our last lesson we looked at receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. In this lesson we will consider the importance of the believer being filled or continually full of the Holy Spirit.

Being Filled With The Spirit – this term is used in several different ways and it's exact meaning has to be determined by the context in which it is used. Sometimes it is synonymous with receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is used to speak of a special and a fresh blessing or enabling to do the will of God. Sometimes it refers to the fullness of the Holy Spirit or being led by the Spirit.

Let's look at some of the places in the book of Acts where this phrase is used and see if we can't get a better idea of just how important it is for us as the followers of Christ to be filled with the Spirit in every sense of the phrase.

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

NKJV

In this passage, being filled with the Holy Spirit is the same as receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is proper to use this phrase when referring to the initial experience of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. I was filled with the Holy Spirit when I was nine years old.

Acts 9:17

17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus,

who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

NKJV

Paul was saved on the road to Damascus. Then he had the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid hands on him. The phrase here is referring to a very specific event and experience, the experience of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he was baptized in water.

Acts 4:7-13

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

NKJV

Here being filled with the Spirit meant Peter was fully surrendered to the Spirit's direction and enabling to speak the will of God in that situation. He was anointed. It doesn't mean that he started speaking in tongues. Nor is it a reference to a past experience. In that moment he was filled with the Spirit's power to say and do what needed to be said and done. In our next lesson we are going to consider in detail this aspect of the Spirit's ministry in our lives. It is the equivalent of being led by the Spirit or walking in the Spirit.

Acts 13:9-11

9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

10 and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?"

11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time."

And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

NKJV

Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke a curse on the sorcerer, Elymas, when he tried to hinder their ministry in Cyprus. This account speaks of Paul's being led and enabled by the Holy Spirit to do and say what needed to be done and said for the glory of Jesus Christ and the furtherance of the Gospel. How often have Christians tried to substitute their own planning and energy and resources for the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ? We are called to do the work of God and proclaim the Word of Reconciliation. We cannot be completely successful in that work without being filled with the Holy Spirit.

There is no substitute for the Holy Spirit.

Downer:

"The results of deficient attention to the study and preaching of the Third Person have appeared in dryness of spiritual experience, a low level of Christian life, formalism in worship, want of discipline in the Church, want of zeal in missionary enterprise."

If someone was making a record of your life and witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, would they use this phrase to describe your words and your actions? "And Doug, being filled with the Holy Spirit, said this or did that."

I want that to be said of me, not necessarily by men, but by God. But if I'm going to be filled with the Spirit, I must understand that I can and should be filled in every aspect of the phrase and then I must understand how to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Many fundamentalists reject any real and personal enabling and leading of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people today and the result is cold formalism. On the opposite extreme are many Pentecostals and Charismatics who try to

fabricate and reproduce the power of the Holy Spirit through their own carnal efforts. The result of those efforts is a powerless carnival of external demonstration that does not bring about the eternal purposes of God.

"We say we depend on the Holy Spirit," wrote **Vance Havner**, "but actually we are so wired up with our own devices that if the fire does not fall from heaven, we can turn on a switch and produce false fire of our own. If there is no sound of a rushing mighty wind, we have the furnace all set to blow hot air instead. God save us from a synthetic Pentecost!"

We need to understand what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit in every aspect of the Biblical use of the phrase.

Acts 4:24-31

24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

'Why did the nations rage,

And the people plot vain things?

26 The kings of the earth took their stand,

And the rulers were gathered together

Against the Lord and against His Christ.'

27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

NKJV

In this verse being filled refers to a special blessing and enabling in answer to prayer. To me it is clear that they had a specific experience when the place was shaken. Being filled was

a description of that experience. It was not the same initial experience that they had on the day of Pentecost when they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but it was the same Holy Spirit that fell on them for a special anointing to continue to do the will of God in the face of their present, pressing circumstances.

Acts 13:49-52

49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

NKJV

It is possible that being filled with the Holy Spirit in this passage refers to their being characterized by walking in the Spirit, but I believe that it also refers to the fact that in the face of great danger they experienced new and fresh blessings of joy and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. I believe that they were filled with the Holy Spirit in both of those aspects of its meaning.

This emphasizes to me the constant need for a freshness in our fellowship in and with the Holy Spirit. We need a fresh experience of the power of the Holy Spirit to stir us up and refresh us. Our communion is with the living God. Our fellowship, walk and service need to be real, vibrant and fresh. That is only possible by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us with Himself in all of the meanings of that phrase.

Peter had already received power to be a witness on the day of Pentecost when he received the Holy Spirit. Why did he even need to pray for boldness? Was he out of line when He asked for what God had already promised and given? God didn't seem to think so. The threat was new and fresh, the anointing also needed to be new and fresh. Peter didn't need something new in the sense of something different than what he already had or knew, but new in the sense of fresh and current.

We don't need to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit again, but we do need to constantly seek the manifestation and

application of the power of His presence in our life. In this sense, we need many fillings and fresh anointings.

2 Timothy 1:6

6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

NKJV

2 Timothy 1:13-14

13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

NKJV

Paul exhorted Timothy to stir up the gift within him. Timothy was called to fill Paul's place in the early Church. Whatever place God has called you to in the body of Christ He will enable you to be successful in it, but you will need to constantly seek the freshness of the filling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 6:7-9

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

NKJV

We are not to grow weary in doing what God has called us to do. But there are times when we do get weary. What do we need to do in such times of weariness? We need to do what Peter and John did in Acts 4.

Isaiah 40:29-31

29 He gives power to the weak,

And to those who have no might He increases strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,

And the young men shall utterly fall,

31 But those who wait on the Lord

Shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint.

NKJV

We need to learn to wait upon the Lord and expect the anointing, filling power of the Holy Spirit to refresh and strengthen us. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in every sense of the Biblical use of the word. We need to have the initial experience of receiving Him into our lives in His fullest most personal capacity. We need to be characterized by His influence and direction in our lives. We also need to seek the renewing, refreshing work of the Spirit that we might not grow weary in our race and service for the Lord.

Lesson 12

Walk In The Spirit

Romans 8:12-14

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

NKJV

The believer's thoughts, attitude and actions can be controlled or influenced by one of two mind sets. We can be controlled by the thinking of the sinful flesh nature or by the thinking of the spirit nature empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In this lesson we will look at what it means to walk in the Spirit or to be led by the Spirit. The simple definition to walking in the Spirit is that it means to be characterized by spirituality, to be under the influence and dominance of the Spirit's direction.

Sometimes we refer to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit as receiving the fullness of the Spirit. I don't think that's necessarily incorrect, but I think it would be more accurate to say that upon receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, one now possesses the potential to enjoy the fullness of God. I don't believe it is possible for the believer to enjoy the full measure of the provision of God's grace without

first receiving and acknowledging the person of the Holy Spirit. But receiving Him is only the first necessary step. Now we must daily yield to Him.

The Christian life is a journey. We are headed to our heavenly home, but our journey home is not one of aimless wandering in this life. We are not to live and act in just any ole' way. The Christian's life is a race course that has been set and marked out by God. He has specific works and activities that He has ordained for us to walk in. Some of the preordained works are ordained for all Christians: studying your Bible, prayer, gathering together, integrity, morality... Other works and callings are unique to specific individuals. All are members of the Body of Christ, but not all have the same place and function. It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to reveal to us the steps we are to take each day, and then to enable us to take those steps and accomplish the will of God. This is what it means to be led by the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit.

Is it possible to be a Christian and not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and still have a measure of success in doing the will of God and be led by the Spirit? Yes. However, the question that we should be asking ourselves is, do I want a measure of God's will for my life or do I want the fullness of all that God's grace has provided?

Example:

Being saved is like owning a car that has a GPS in it. The voice on the GPS is like the voice of the Holy Spirit. Every believer possesses a measure of the Holy Spirit. You can travel in that car to a place that is unfamiliar to you and there are several options available to you to do that. You can choose never to consult the GPS and go your own way. You can consult the GPS and then ignore its instruction. Or you can consult the GPS and obey its instructions. The third choice will lead to the greater measure of success.

Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues is like inviting a person who actually knows the way to be in the car with you. Now instead of having just an impersonal voice give you instruction there is the potential for a personal interaction with a close friend. However, just inviting such a person into your car who knows the way is still not the goal of that relationship. It is to arrive at your destination in a

safe and efficient manner. Just having an experience where you speak in tongues is not the end goal. The purpose is to have a living relationship with the Holy Spirit who will guide you each day in every situation to do the will of God.

You can invite someone in your car who knows the way and still not consult them or you can consult them and then ignore them. Some Christians that have been filled have locked the Holy Spirit in the trunk of their heart. That is why some who have never been filled are more spiritual than some who have spoken in tongues. At least those non-spirit filled believers consult the measure of Holy Spirit that they do possess.

Saints, being led of the Spirit, walking in the Spirit goes beyond all of those comparisons. I don't want to experience just some of God's grace. I want the fullness of all that His grace affords. I don't want to wander through life and occasionally make the correct turns and occasionally be going in the direction God wants me to go. I want the will of God for my life everyday in every situation and in every relationship. If that is going to be my experience, I need to do more than just invite the Holy Spirit to be my GPS or my traveling companion. I need to give Him the keys to my life and let Him drive. That's what it means to be full of the Holy Spirit. That's what it means to be led of the Spirit. That's what it means to walk in the Spirit.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we have the privilege to have the will of God worked in us and through us. God's grace has provided for us infinite blessings in this life and the life to come, but many will know only a small portion of those blessings. Some will experience the fullness of God's grace. If we try to serve God and do His will without receiving the Holy Spirit, it would be like having a car with a GPS, but never consulting it or ignoring it altogether. In your natural talents and abilities, you may get some things accomplished and know a measure of success, but you'll never know the fullness of God. If you receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, you now have the potential to know the fullness of God, but if you do not daily apply the Spirit's power and wisdom in your daily walk with the Lord, you are like the one who invites the knowledgeable companion into your car and then locks him in the trunk. Such a "spirit filled" Christian will not know God's fullness either. But if you daily seek the direction of

the Holy Spirit and are obedient to His leading, you will enjoy the blessing of the highest success in doing the will of God and in having His purposes accomplished in you and through you.

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height —

19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

NKJV

Paul prayed that the Ephesians may experience the full measure of God's love for them and to be filled with all the fullness of God. If every believer automatically experiences the full measure of God's love and is filled with the fullness of God, Paul's petition would have been unnecessary. Not all believers will know the love of God to its fullest degree. God is able to do the work in us according the power, the Holy Spirit that works in us.

Ephesians 5:15-21

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

NKJV

I believe that Paul is talking about the same thing that he writes about in **Ephesians chapter 3**. He uses the same Greek word: “may be filled,” “be filled,” with the fullness of God, the Holy Spirit. Don’t be drunk or under the influence of natural wine, but be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Giving in to the lust and desires of the flesh always leads to the foolishness of sin and the destruction and loss it brings. Yielding to the Holy Spirit’s direction leads to the wise choice of doing the will of God with its eternal rewards.

The evidence that you are “full of the Holy Spirit”

The evidence that one has received the gift of the Holy Spirit is that they have spoken in an unknown tongue. Paul lists some of the evidence that one is “full of the Holy Spirit” in **Ephesians 5:19 – 33**. You can tell someone is drunk by the way they act and talk. The same is true about someone who is full of the Holy Spirit. The influence of the Spirit in their life affects how they conduct themselves and the things they say. In this passage Paul lists some symptoms or evidence of being drunk on the new wine of the Spirit – joy, praise, thanksgiving and humble submission to God’s divine order for the Church and the family. If your life is not characterized by these things, even if you received the gift of the Holy Spirit, you are not full of the Holy Spirit and you are not benefiting from the fullness of God in your life. I believe that it is so important for the believer to constantly be full of the Holy Spirit, that if we are not, we will be characterized with carnality. I believe this to be Paul’s point in:

Galatians 5:16-26

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*

20 *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,*

21 *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

23 *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

24 *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

25 *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

26 *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

NKJV

Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. I believe we can also conclude from the statement that if we do not walk in the Spirit or are not led of the Spirit we will fulfill the lust of the flesh. True believers can practice the works for the flesh. There are eternal losses and consequences for such carnality such as the loss of reward and of a full inheritance, but their eternal life and home in heaven are secure based on their justification by faith in the redeeming blood of Christ. For those believers who are characterized by walking in the Spirit, there is the promise of a full reward, a full inheritance. If we do not walk in the Spirit, we will walk like the world and be characterized by the works of the flesh. If we walk in the Spirit, we will have the evidence of His presence and working in our life. I want to live like who I am. I am a child of God. I want to bring glory to the Christ who died for me. I need to be daily full of the Holy Spirit and be led by His direction.

Being led by the Spirit always involves obedience to the Word that He inspired

Psalms 119:105

105 n NUN

Your word is a lamp to my feet

And a light to my path.

NKJV

Psalms 43:3

3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!

Let them lead me;

Let them bring me to Your holy hill

And to Your tabernacle.

NKJV

Walking in the Spirit is not walking in a trance. It is to walk in obedience to God's Word by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is to seek and follow God's revealed will for every part of your life. There is also a personal leading of the Spirit that leads us in our specific choices and course of life. We need to learn to hear the voice of the Spirit in our inner man. I've never heard an audible voice, but I have learned to recognize the strong yearnings in my heart and mind that are put there by the Spirit, that are in accordance with God's Word and that prove with time and circumstances to be the will of God.

Acts 16:6-10

6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

NKJV

The Spirit directed Paul by several different methods on this occasion. We are not told the specifics of all of them. One of them was a vision of a Macedonian calling for help. By prayerfully considering all of the events and leadings Paul concluded that he was to preach the Gospel to the Macedonians.

The Fruit Of The Spirit

You will be able to know if you are being led of the Spirit or not by whether or not the fruit of the Spirit characterizes your life.

Love – your motivation for all you do is to seek what’s best for God’s glory and the good of God’s people.

Joy – calm delight knowing that in the will of God you are always well off.

Peace – rest and security knowing that you are one with God and His will.

Longsuffering – willingness and power to endure hardship in the will of God, knowing that by the power of the Spirit you will never fail.

Kindness – usefulness even to those who may not deserve it.

Goodness – the zeal and purpose to dedicate oneself to good works, or the will of God.

Faithfulness – full of faith which in turn makes you trustworthy.

Gentleness – Meekness, Humility.

Self-control – Disciplined life, governed by the Word of God.

These virtues will characterize your life if you are being led of the Spirit.

Romans 8:12-18

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

NKJV

The final reward for those who are truly led by the Spirit will be to rule and reign with Jesus Christ as a joint, equal heir. I want to be a joint, equal heir with Christ. That is my intense desire. Because I love the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to be led by the Spirit. I want the fullness of God. May we truly desire to hand over the keys of our heart to the Holy Spirit that He may reveal to us the will of God and then enable us to travel in the paths of righteousness.

Lesson 13

Learning To Hear The Spirit's Voice

In this lesson we will consider the practical steps in learning to hear and surrender to the “voice” of the Holy Spirit. In our last lesson we read about being led by the Holy Spirit. If someone is going to lead you somewhere, you must be able to receive some kind of communication from him. In the natural, the communication from someone leading you to a place you have never been can take the form of a map or a phone call or simply following them as they physically lead the way. Where or into what is the Holy Spirit leading us and how does the Holy Spirit communicate with God's people today?

The Holy Spirit leads us to do the will of God. If we are going to be successful in doing the will of God, we must learn to “hear” the voice of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever heard someone say, “I felt led to do this or that” or “The Lord spoke to me.” What does that mean? Does God do that? Is it necessary for us to hear from God? Let's let God's word answer these questions.

John 16:7-16

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

12 I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

16 A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.

NKJV

Jesus says the Spirit was sent to help us understand and obey the will of God. Jesus told His disciples that it was advantageous for them that He go away. How? In what way was it advantageous for the disciples that Jesus leave them? Well, first, it was necessary that He die for their sins on the cross and then to ascend to the right hand of the Father to make intercession for them and us there. But it was also advantageous to have the Spirit of God in every believer everywhere at the same time. Jesus in His earthly body was limited to one place at any given time. As a Spirit, the Holy Spirit is with all believers at all times. No one is ever left without a very present, capable Helper.

The Spirit's coming to the world is twofold. He comes to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment and comes to be the believer's Helper. **Convict of Sin** – you are a sinner, worthy of the wrath of God. **Of Righteousness** – Jesus is the only way to be declared right with God. You must believe that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. **Of Judgment** – those who trample underfoot the grace of God will suffer the righteous judgment of the wrath of God.

To all who have responded in faith to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, He becomes a Helper. **Helper** – the title given the

Holy Spirit by Christ in this passage has been translated in several different ways, because one word doesn't seem to do justice to the multifaceted ministry of the Holy Spirit. He is our Comforter, Advocate, One sent along side to Help or Assist.

The disciples had a measure of success in doing the Lord's will while Christ was with them. He was constantly there to instruct, correct and encourage them. He was their Master, the One who helped them in knowing and doing the will of God. As we read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry to His disciples it is easy for us to understand how He communicated with them. When they needed correction, He rebuked them. When they needed comforting, He spoke words of love. When they needed instruction, He exhorted them. Now that He was leaving, if they were going to continue to be successful in knowing and obeying the will of God, they would need another Helper. The Holy Spirit indwelling them would be their "other" Comforter.

How Does He Communicate That Help or Comfort?

There are several ways in which the Spirit communicates to us today.

The Spirit of Truth will Guide Us Into Truth

John 16:13

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

NKJV

Teaches & Reveals the will of God -

1 Corinthians 2:1 - 16

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

6 *However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.*

7 *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*

8 *which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

9 *But as it is written:*

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

Nor have entered into the heart of man

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

10 *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

11 *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.*

12 *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

13 *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

14 *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

15 *But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.*

16 *For "who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

NKJV

The first thing, after Salvation, that the Spirit must communicate to us is our privilege and responsibility as a child of God and ambassador of Christ. He needs to reveal to us why Christ saved us. You can't be successful in doing the will of God if you don't know what that will is. You won't be confident in doing the will of God if you are not assured of your position, privilege and power as a child of God. It's the Spirit's responsibility to reveal to us what God has prepared and ordained

for us. It's our responsibility to listen to the Teacher. The very first place to begin to hear and recognize the voice of the leading of the Holy Spirit is with the book that the Holy Spirit inspired, the Bible.

2 Peter 1:21

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

NKJV

You cannot be led of the Spirit if you do not have an understanding of the Word of God. I mentioned that one form of communication from someone leading you may be a map. The Bible is the believer's doctrinal and behavioral map. The Holy Spirit leads in the will of God when we heed, obey and follow the Word that He has inspired. When we read something in the Bible or hear it taught by gifted men and women, it is as if God were standing in front of us speaking those words. Some Christians say that if God would only speak to me audibly, then I would obey. We need to esteem the Bible as having all the authority of God as if He were standing here speaking Himself. If you truly esteem God's Word as the authority of God, then you will diligently study the Bible to know God's will.

2 Timothy 2:14-16

14 Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

NKJV

As you diligently study God's Word, the Holy Spirit will "speak" to you. The clarity, understanding, comfort, correction and instruction you receive as you study God's Word is the "voice" of the Holy Spirit. When a passage you are reading suddenly has clear relevance to your present circumstance and situation, that's the "leading" of the Holy Spirit. Too many Pentecostals and Charismatics try to "hear" the "voice" of the Spirit primarily through the gifts of the Holy Spirit and through experiences, feelings and emotions without ever having been

rooted and grounded in the Word of God first. The result has been gross doctrinal error and destructive, harmful behavior. You must first learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit in God's Word or you will never recognize it in any other form. However, as you are faithful to study God's Word and to let the Spirit minister to you through that Word, you will also begin to "hear" the "voice" of the Holy Spirit in a very personal way for direction in the decisions of life that set the direction and course of your life and ministry as a servant of God.

Romans 8:26-27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

NKJV

The context of this passage is the suffering of believers in this life as they await the coming of the Lord. If we are going to remain faithful till Jesus comes, we need to know and obey the will of God in every situation and circumstance. The Bible reveals much of the will of God on many subjects and for many situations, but there are many specific decisions and choices and needs that are not specifically spelled out in the Bible. How do we find God's will in those things? We have many weaknesses that keep us from knowing and obeying God's will. In fact, by our natural abilities and intellect it is impossible for us to know and obey the will of God. But the Spirit helps our weaknesses. One way He does that is by interceding for us with groaning that cannot be uttered. The meaning becomes more clear in the Greek than it is in the English. Groanings = "to sigh" One of the definitions of the root of this word is "to pray inaudibly." Cannot be uttered = "unspeakable or simply unspoken." God the Father who searches our hearts, knows the Spirit's mind and purpose to "help" us walk in the will of God. The Spirit communicates with the Father in perfect harmony to express what is needed in our behalf even when we don't know what it is we need. I believe Paul is speaking of the faithfulness of the Trinity to constantly be working together on our behalf to provide everything we need to

be successful in doing the will of God. I believe that a part of the intercession of the Holy Spirit on our behalf is not only expressing to God the Father what we need to walk in the will of God with groaning that cannot be uttered, but speaking to our own hearts and minds what we need to do or not do by those same inaudible sighs and expressions of the will of God.

Have you ever been at work or maybe even praying and had a yearning or thought to pray for a certain person that was not previously on your mind? I believe this is the intercession ministry of the Holy Spirit. You may then pray for that individual audibly or silently in words of your own understanding, but you have been directed into the will of God by the Spirit of God. This is what many of us refer to as the leading of the Holy Spirit in a certain matter. They are inaudible, but undeniable and very personal. You can describe them as thoughts, impulses, yearnings, urges, leadings but I believe this is what Paul refers to as groanings which cannot be uttered. They will always be according to God's Word and accompanied with a peace that passes understanding. I believe these groanings or leadings, go beyond just the prayer closet. The Spirit personally speaks to our hearts and minds the will of God, not just so we will pray about it, but do it.

I don't believe we need this kind of leading for every decision we make every day. God gave us a mind with which to think. We should use common sense for most daily choices and decisions that fall within the general guidelines of Scripture. I wasn't led by the Spirit what clothes to wear today. I made that choice all by myself. We need to be careful not to pretend that every decision we make is by the "leading" of the Holy Spirit. I try not to use that phrase very often and only after I have truly sought the direction of the Holy Spirit on a matter. Just because someone tells you they were led by the Spirit to do something, doesn't mean it was the Holy Spirit. I've often been told that someone was led by the Holy Spirit to do something that was contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. The Holy Spirit will never lead you contrary to the Word of God that He inspired. I've often been told by people that the Lord led them to do something and then they do something else that takes them in a different direction that they then say was also by the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit is not fickle. He's not unsettled. His

direction is very clear and precise. Though He does lead us to do different things at different times in different ways in different places it is with a clear purpose to be accomplished for the glory of God. If God is not glorified in that purpose, the Spirit did not lead in that choice or decision.

Nevertheless, for the decisions that set the direction and course of your life and ministry, you need to learn to “hear” the inaudible sighs and expressions of the Holy Spirit that will direct you into the will of God. I have always sought the leading of the Spirit for all the major decisions of my personal life and ministry. Decisions like who I should marry, where I should live and go to Church and where to minister. This is the kind of personal leading all of God’s people need, not just preachers and missionaries. You need to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit for where you live, work and attend Church. You need to learn to recognize the “voice” of the Spirit for who you should marry and for the financial decisions that impact the course and direction of your life. Sadly, few of God’s people truly know what it means to be led by the Spirit. The vast majority of God’s people will never know or hear in their heart the groanings of the Spirit, because they have turned a deaf ear to God’s Word. If you will not hear the clear instruction of God’s Word, you cannot know the personal leading of the Spirit’s voice.

Others may know God’s Word and truly want to be led by Him, but are too distracted by too many other voices in their life. Some are too busy to take time to ask and wait in prayer and meditation of God’s Word to give the Spirit opportunity to speak. They are just too busy to hear. You don’t ask someone for advice and then run off and start talking or doing something else while they are speaking. You’ll never hear what they have to say. Take time to wait in God’s presence.

Examine the thoughts and yearnings that come to you in such quiet times to see if they line up with God’s Word. Continue to pray about them over a period of time. Watch for open doors and confirmation of the things the Spirit has spoken to your heart. This is why many never learn to recognize the Spirit’s voice. We live in an instant society. We want everything big, loud, exciting and now. Learning to recognize the voice of the Spirit takes time in prayer, meditation, study and patience in waiting for God’s way and God’s time.

1 Kings 19:11-13

11 Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;

12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

13 So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

NKJV

I'm always impressed with Elijah's ability to recognize the leading voice of God in the midst of such loud and impressive activities. God was not in the tornado or earthquake or fire, at least not in the sense that His will or leading was to be found in them. But in that still = "quiet or even silent" small – "thin, very little" voice = "sound." The vast majority of Christendom today is seeking the things that appeal to the five senses of man. They are caught up with the tornado, earthquake and fire experiences, some of which are truly God sent, but God's will that leads to His best is found in learning to recognize the still small voice of the Spirit, the unspoken groanings, the inaudible leadings of the Spirit.

Isaiah 30:21

21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,

"This is the way, walk in it,"

Whenever you turn to the right hand

Or whenever you turn to the left.

NKJV

The same Spirit that will one day lead the remnant of Israel back into the will of God is the same Spirit that wants to lead you today. Are we listening? Are we studying and heeding His clear instruction revealed in the Bible? Are we taking time to ask God for this personal leading of the Spirit and then are we getting quiet enough to be able to hear the still small voice? You will never regret being led of the Spirit. He will lead you to victory in Christ and He will enable you to bring glory to God.

Lesson 14

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

No study of the Holy Spirit would be complete without examining Paul's teaching to the Corinthians on the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

NKJV

We are going to consider the specific nine gifts or graces or abilities mentioned in this passage that are given to individual believers for the good of the Body of Christ in our next lesson, but in this lesson I want us to understand the context in which these gifts are mentioned.

In chapters 12, 13 and 14 Paul did not set out to write a treatise or a systematic explanation of nine specific gifts given by the Holy Spirit. He wrote to address and correct the carnal thinking and practice of the Corinthians in the local assembly concerning spiritual gifts and their manifestations. They were

using the gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit to exalt themselves and draw attention to themselves. The result was chaos, confusion, carnality and division. The antidote for such a desperate condition is found in the love chapter of **chapter 13**. When the love of God is what motivates all that we do and say, the result will be unity and edification of the Body of Christ because the love of God is being spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We can learn much about “**how**” the Spirit works among God’s people by studying this portion of Paul’s writing. We will do well to take heed to Paul’s guidelines laid down in **1 Corinthians** for the exercising of these gifts. More importantly than merely knowing “**how**” the Holy Spirit manifests Himself, Paul wanted the Corinthians, and us, to know “**why**” the Holy Spirit bestows certain graces upon certain individuals. That’s what the Corinthians had completely overlooked and what Paul was dealing with in this passage. They were ignorant of the things that pertained to the Spirit and His ministry.

Spiritual Gifts

I Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

In the Greek it does not read “spiritual gifts,” but merely, “spirituals.” The thought is the things that pertain to and emanate from the Spirit. Paul begins his correction of the Corinthians on this subject by reminding them of their former religious practices in their idolatry.

Carried Away – led away. In idolatry they were led by their deceitful lusts and their deceitful, self-promoting priest to worship the creation of evil men’s hands.

In the Body of Christ – Paul teaches that in Christ, things are done differently. We are to be led by the Spirit of God to walk in fellowship with the living God. In the Body of Christ, nothing is done or understood without the direction and enabling of the Holy Spirit and everyone is to be led by the same Holy Spirit. Thus the Body of Christ is to be characterized by unity, not division.

Vs. 4 – 6 –

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

NKJV

Because the Corinthians were boasting in their particular gifts, each one thinking their gift to be superior to someone else's gift and therefore they were made superior to someone who had what they considered to be an inferior gift, there was great division among them. They were using their gifts to promote themselves and their own agendas. Paul exposes the foolishness of such thinking by showing that diversity does not necessarily mean disunity or the need to establish superiority. There is diversity among the Trinity and yet they are one in purpose and nature. Each member carries out their unique responsibilities in ministering to the Church, in a variety of diverse ways, but without any contradiction to their one nature or their one purpose. One of God's ways of working in us is not superior to another. He has no bad ways of working. All lead to His glory and our good.

Vs. 7 –

1 Corinthians 12:7

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

NKJV

Here is the key to Paul's correction of the Corinthians. It is the "why" of "how" the Spirit works and bestows certain graces on certain individuals. It is for the spiritual profit of all the members of the Body of Christ. It is not for the self-exaltation of the gifted individual at all. The result of Spirit-led ministry will always be the edification of others by an understanding of the will of God.

In our last lesson we saw the importance of each believer learning to hear, recognize and obey the "voice" of the Holy Spirit for the direction of their life. I think that it is important for us to understand, before we go any further, that these corporate or Body manifestations of the Spirit are not intended to be a substitute for the individual believer being led by the Spirit on a very personal level. The manifestation of the Body gifts of the Holy Spirit is meant to supplement our personal leading of the Holy Spirit. These manifestations encourage and confirm and

support the Spirit's personal direction for our life, but they are not meant to take the place of the Spirit's personal leading.

Sadly, many Charismatics and Pentecostals look to the Body gifts for their primary and sometimes sole source of direction for their life. If someone doesn't prophecy over them where to go and what to do, they don't have any idea how to discern the will of God for themselves. If someone doesn't pray over them for healing, they have no confidence in calling upon the Lord in prayer for themselves. This is foolish, dangerous and contrary to the teaching of the apostle Paul. This inordinate dependence and obsession with the Body ministry gifts has led to countless abuses in doctrine and practice among the Charismatics and Pentecostals.

To help us understand how the corporate and personal workings of the Godhead function together in a way that honors God and strengthens and edifies His people, we can use the example of my preaching a sermon to the congregation where I pastor. Jesus has given me a gift of preaching, teaching and expounding the word of God. Is my public, corporate preaching and teaching helpful? Necessary? Profitable? Hopefully, you've answered, yes. But my preaching and teaching is never to be a substitute for your own study and understanding of God's Word. If all you know about the Bible is what I tell you, you have placed yourself in a very vulnerable position spiritually. As you learn to study the Word for yourself and hear the voice of the Spirit through the Word that He inspired, my preaching and teaching will be used to confirm, encourage and edify in conjunction with what the Spirit is already doing in your life. Sometimes my teaching and preaching will stir you up to then go and study for yourself a subject and to be open to what the Holy Spirit wants to speak to your heart. The Body ministries are never to be a substitute for the personal leading of the Holy Spirit in your life. The corporate and personal will work together for the glory of God and the edification of God's people for they are both the ministry of the same Holy Spirit.

Vs. 8 – 11

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

NKJV

Paul now lists what have come to be known as the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. Without question there are nine here, but I don't believe that the way in which the Holy Spirit ministers to the Body is limited to just nine. I believe it foolish to think that the infinite Holy Spirit is limited to nine ways of working or manifesting Himself. I believe that Paul is giving a list of examples of how the Spirit works to emphasize his point that the same Spirit works in different ways at different times in different people, but that the Spirit is the source of all of these graces. Therefore, none of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit should be despised or rejected.

Other Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

NKJV

Paul, again to make his point of unity in diversity, lists several other gifts given to God's people for the good of all. The Spirit is not specifically said to be the Giver of these gifts though some are repeated from earlier in the chapter that are specifically attributed to the Spirit.

Romans 12:3-9

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

NKJV

The word “gift” in this passage is the same word in the Greek that is used in **1 Corinthians 12**. Again the subject is unity in diversity. The emphasis is that God is the source of true ministry and therefore He should receive all the glory and we should be open to receive from any and all of His gifted servants. If you or I possess any of these abilities or gifts it is because we have been given them for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in Christ and we can be faithful in them only by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. We are to exercise these gifts to encourage, stir and edify our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have nothing to boast in, but we have great accountability to the One who has so graced us for the good of others.

1 Peter 4:7-11

7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

NKJV

The nine gifts listed in **1 Corinthians 12** are not necessarily better than any other graces bestowed upon individuals for the edification of the Body. I don't want to downgrade these nine, but rather I want us to upgrade how we think about all the other ways that the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in our midst.

Best Gifts

12:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

NKJV

Paul tells us to desire the best gifts. He does specifically highlight prophecy, since it is always appropriate to proclaim the will of God. However, we are not given a priority list. I believe the best gift is the one that's needed at the moment. Only the Holy Spirit knows what we need and when we need it. Someone may need a sermon to understand more about the will of God. Someone else may need a helping hand, a love offering, an exhortation, some mercy. Whatever is needed the Holy Spirit has the tool, the gift to get the job done.

In our next lesson we'll answer the question, "have the corporate, miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit been done away with or are they still part of how the Holy Spirit ministers to the Body of Christ today?" Well, I can go ahead and give the quick answer to that question by saying, no, they have not been done away with and yes, they are still in operation today among God's people. However, we will look at the scriptural evidence of that answer in our next lesson.

I'll close this lesson with the exhortation to learn to be more sensitive to how and why the Holy Spirit ministers to us today. The Holy Spirit uses many different ways and instruments to lead us into the will of God. None of His ways ever contradicts any of His other ways. He is one Spirit with one purpose and that is to lead you into the will of God and equip you to do the will of God. Our part is to understand why He works

and recognize how He works and to accept everything that comes from Him. Whenever we begin to resist and reject any of the ways in which He works, we are limiting God and His work in us and through us. Whenever we begin to corrupt the working of the Holy Spirit, by injecting our own agenda and self-promoting carnal attitudes we grieve the Holy Spirit.

To me it is an overwhelming and humbling thought to think that the Almighty, Infinite, Triune God has bothered to reveal to me His will and actively direct, encourage and equip me to enter into that will.

Psalms 144:1-4

A Psalm of David.

1 Blessed be the Lord my Rock,

Who trains my hands for war,

And my fingers for battle —

2 My lovingkindness and my fortress,

My high tower and my deliverer,

My shield and the One in whom I take refuge,

Who subdues my people under me.

3 Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?

Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?

4 Man is like a breath;

His days are like a passing shadow.

NKJV

If the Almighty God has gone to such lengths to reveal Himself to us and to actively help and enable us to enter into the fullness of His grace, don't you think the least we can do is surrender to the faithful ministry of the Holy Spirit on both the personal and corporate level?

Lesson 15
The Nine Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

NKJV

In our last lesson we began to consider the apostle Paul's teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how and why they manifest themselves among God's people in the local assembly. We discovered that there are many gifts or ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in individuals, but all of them are always for the profit of all and all of them equip us to understand and obey the will of God. These gifts are for the corporate good and are manifested in the local assembly. They are not a substitute for the individual's personal leading of the Holy Spirit, but rather are to confirm, encourage and strengthen that leading. The Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself. The Bible that He inspired, His personal leading and His public manifestations will always be in perfect harmony. If they are not, carnal man has interjected his carnal will into the process. When men try to use these gifts to promote themselves and their own carnal agendas, instead of the will of God, the result is chaos, division and corruption. This is what was happening in the assembly in Corinth and this is what Paul wrote to correct.

1 Corinthians 14:33

33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

NKJV

1 Corinthians 14:40

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

NKJV

Because Paul's tone is clearly one of correction in these chapters many have mistakenly interpreted Paul's teaching on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit to be negative. Nothing could be further from the truth. Paul clearly acknowledges these gifts as emanating from the Holy Spirit. They are from God! How can they be negative?

James 1:17

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

NKJV

Some of the gifts mentioned in *chapters 12, 13 & 14* are miraculous and mysterious in nature and are difficult to explain and understand. Because of that many fundamentalists have taught that these miraculous gifts have been done away with and are no longer in operation in the Church today.

In our study I have honestly and openly exposed the unscriptural and corrupt abuses and practices of many Pentecostals and Charismatics. I consider myself a Pentecostal. Many claiming to believe and promote the Pentecostal doctrine have brought nothing but shame and reproach on the Gospel and have grieved the Holy Spirit.

Now I want us to look at the fundamentalists' teaching with the same honesty and standard of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Done Away With?

All the gifts of the Holy Spirit including the nine mentioned here in **1 Corinthians 12** are to be accepted as for God's people today. The Holy Spirit is still the same and has not retired any of His gifts. Our fundamentalist brethren have singled out speaking in tongues along with healings and miracles as having been done away with after the apostles died. The apostles died, not the Holy Spirit. The only passage they can give to make such a claim is:

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

NKJV

Many claim that the “perfect” thing is the completed Word of God, the New Testament. Once that was complete, speaking in tongues, prophecy and any other supernatural manifestation was done away with. Many have declared that speaking in tongues is “childish.” The only problem with that interpretation of this passage is that it doesn’t hold up in the light of this same passage. Paul is stressing that love is to be an essential and prominent element of the Christian’s experience in this life and in eternity. Some of the gifts of the Spirit that are good and useful in this life will not be needed on the other side. Love, however, transcends this life, so all that we do, including ministering in the gifts of the Spirit, should be motivated by love.

If we are going to interpret the passage to say that tongues ceased with the completion of the New Testament, we will have to also say that knowledge ceased at the same time and that we already have perfect knowledge. That of course is foolish since God wants us to continue to grow in knowledge until Jesus comes.

That which is perfect is a reference to our future state of eternal perfection at the coming of the Lord.

Ephesians 4:13

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

NKJV

Paul uses the analogy of the difference between the knowledge of a child and the knowledge of an adult to stress the vast difference between our present understanding of God and our future one when we reach eternity. Now in this life we see or understand only in a measure. Then, in heaven we shall see clearly. The difference is as vast as the difference in clarity when looking at someone's reflection in a distorted brass mirror, which is the kind of mirror used in Paul's day and the clear, sharp image when looking at that person face to face.

Until Jesus comes we need all the help and encouragement the Holy Spirit offers including the nine gifts that Paul mentions in our opening text. Let's briefly consider each of them and how they are manifested among God's people.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

NKJV

Notice the emphasis of the passage. The Spirit gives a diversity of gifts, but He is the source of all of them. All of these are supernatural and are not natural talents or abilities. There are those who pretend to be able to teach you to prophecy or speak in tongues. These are divinely given gifts and cannot be taught by man or learned from taking a course.

Some things all believers possess in common. Some experiences are held in common by all believers. We are all sealed by the Holy Spirit. We all possess eternal life and an eternal inheritance. We all possess the right to approach God in Jesus name. The provision has been made for all of us to enjoy answered prayer, joy unspeakable and peace that passes understanding. There are other spiritual gifts or graces that are

given to some and not others. Who will possess what gift is completely up to the Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Some have emphatically taught that if you have received the infilling of the Holy Spirit you possess all of these gifts and they can be exercised at any moment. There is no Scriptural support for that teaching. Any child of God is a potential recipient of any of these gifts, but who and when is up to the sovereign choice of the Holy Spirit. These nine gifts of 1 Corinthians are a sampling of such graces given by the Holy Spirit. Every believer does not possess them.

Wisdom

This is a special endowment and ability to give wise instruction concerning a certain course of action, based on an understanding of the will of God. All God's people are to be wise concerning the scriptures. All are to be wise in our daily walk, but to some the Spirit gives special wisdom to give direction to God's people. The word of wisdom can be for an individual or for an assembly. James gave a word of wisdom at the council meeting in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:19-21

19 Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

21 For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

NKJV

Acts 15:28-29

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Farewell.

NKJV

Knowledge

This gift goes beyond a knowledge of Scriptures and doctrine which all Christians should possess and in which we

should all continue to grow. This is a special grace given for special occasions. It is to know something that is beyond our own experience. Not surprisingly we see this gift operating in Jesus' ministry. He knew what was in man. He knew the woman at the well had 5 husbands.

John 2:24-25

24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men,

25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

NKJV

John 4:16-19

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,'

18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

NKJV

But we also see it in operation in Peter's ministry.

Acts 5:1-11

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"

4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

She said, "Yes, for so much."

9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

NKJV

The Spirit made Peter to know what he otherwise could not have known. This knowledge is not used to impress others, but to remind us that God knows us intimately. Being reminded of that we can let go of all our excuses, fears and doubts and fully surrender to His will, unconditionally.

Faith

Every child of God has a measure of faith. All are called on to live by faith. However, this is a special portion of faith for a special working of God.

Acts 23:11

11 But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

NKJV

Acts 27:21-25

21 But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

22 And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,

24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

NKJV

Paul had faith that He was going to Rome. Some have faith for camp meetings, Bible Schools, Printing ect..

Healing

Acts 3:1-11

1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

4 And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

5 So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them — walking, leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

10 Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

11 Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

NKJV

Remember why these gifts are given. They are given for the edification of the Body of Christ. Healing is for the glory of God and to cause men to examine their spiritual condition. Without question the apostles were gifted with this gift, but

obviously others in Corinth were also. I believe the Spirit can and does still give this gift. He gives to whom He will, when He deems it necessary. However, the many self-proclaimed healing ministries of today, like Benny Hinn and many others are a reproach to the Gospel and are nothing but carnival side-shows. They promote themselves and false doctrine that lead people away from the will of God rather than into the will of God.

It is every bit as tragic to reject the genuine power of the Holy Spirit to heal these bodies as it is to use that power or a cheap imitation of that power to promote your own carnal agenda. If we can't have faith that the Holy Spirit still heals today, how can we pretend to have faith that He will one day make alive our mortal bodies when Jesus comes?

Romans 8:11

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

NKJV

Believing that the Holy Spirit still heals today does not mean that we believe that God will heal everyone who calls upon Him for healing. There is no promise for unconditional healing. This manifestation of the Holy Spirit is qualified by the same requirement as all the other gifts. It is for the spiritual edification of the saints and to lead us into the will of God. If a miracle will bring the greatest glory to God, we will have a miracle. If not, He will provide exactly what we need, when we need it to obtain His best for time and eternity.

Miracles

Acts 19:11-12

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul,

12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

NKJV

Acts 13:8-11

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

10 and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?"

11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time."

And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

NKJV

These were very common in the early Church and in every revival since. Why are they not more common today? I don't know, but He's the same Holy Spirit and when God's people need a miracle, He can and will supply what's needed.

Prophecy

Prophecy is the foretelling and forth telling of the will of God. It is an inspired message from God.

Foretelling –

Acts 21:10-11

10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

NKJV

This was not news to Paul. Paul knew what it was to be led by the Spirit individually and knew that he was going to face difficult times in Jerusalem. The prophecy was more for the benefit of the other brothers who loved Paul. They interpreted the information as a warning not to go to Jerusalem. But the Holy Spirit never forbade Paul to go. When Paul would not be talked out of going, they said, "the Lord's will be done," which was the proper conclusion. They needed to pray for Paul's protection. The prophecy served to stir them to faithful prayer on Paul's behalf.

Personal prophecy is not a substitute for being personally led of the Holy Spirit. I don't need to go to a prophet to have my future foretold. If needed, the Holy Spirit can speak for the good

of the Body to confirm, comfort and exhort His personal leading in my life.

Acts 27:9-10

9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

NKJV

Acts 27:24-26

24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."

NKJV

Through the gift of prophecy, Paul foretold of specific details that could not have been known otherwise. This is an example of prophecy.

Forth telling –

Prophecy can also be to simply tell forth or proclaim the will of God. Peter at Pentecost proclaimed the Gospel under the direction of the Holy Spirit. This aspect of prophecy is to receive a revelation of God's will and to make it known for the good of all. That revelation does not necessarily have to be previously unknown. It is simply to tell forth the will of God. The ability and urging to tell forth the will of God in any given situation is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

True Prophecy will never contradict the written will of God. The Vineyard movement is one of the many Charismatic groups that have developed an inordinate preoccupation with prophecy to the point that you cannot know the will of God for your life if you do not come to one of their prophets to be told the will of God. In order to justify their many prophecies that simply were wrong and did not come to pass they say that all the gifts must be cultivated and developed and therefore false prophecies are to be expected as part of the process. A false prophecy is not a sign of a false prophet they claim. It is only an inevitable

symptom of a flawed vessel. That's quite a loop hole to be able to prophecy anything you want! But fortunately it is not a loop hole that the Bible allows.

Deuteronomy 18:20-22

20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.

21 And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'

22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

NKJV

Though that was obviously written under the Law, we can be sure that God's standard has not been lowered in this Age of Grace in which the Holy Spirit is present with every believer to lead us into all truth. The following is only one example of the many abuses among Pentecostals and Charismatics concerning the gift of prophecy. A man whose wife I know is severely incapacitated because of head injuries due to an accident on the job. A friend of his wife goes to a Charismatic church where it was prophesied that if she would bring her husband to be prayed for by a certain man, he would be healed. She brought her husband, they prayed and he is still not healed. That was a false prophecy by a false prophet. In this age of grace we don't stone false prophets, but neither do we tolerate them by giving them a place.

I believe the Holy Spirit can and still does speak through individuals to foretell the will of God when it is necessary for the good of the Body. Such foretelling will always be accurate and every detail will be fulfilled.

Discerning of Spirits –

Acts 16:16-18

16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

18 And this she did for many days.

But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

NKJV

The slave girl was speaking the truth, but Paul had the ability to see the hidden intentions of the heart and the influence on the heart. Some can detect the insincere, carnal and sometimes evil intentions of others when everyone else is singing their praises. Others can discern a heart for God in individuals that have been abandoned by others. This is a much needed gift today.

Tongues, Interpretation

We have already considered the miracle of speaking in tongues as the evidence of having received the infilling of the Holy Spirit. We have stated that the experience is for every believer. Yet, Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 12:30

30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

NKJV

The answer to the rhetorical question is, "no" all do not speak in tongues. At least not in the sense that they are spoken of here. These are all unique gifts used specifically to edify the Body of Christ. Tongues, as the evidence of the infilling, are not for edification, but evidence of an important experience. When an individual receives the infilling of the Holy Spirit and speaks in tongues, he does not necessarily have the gift of tongues any more than a person who is saved by grace through faith automatically has the gift of faith. I spoke in tongues when I was filled, I speak in tongues in my private prayers, but I have never been prompted of the Holy Spirit to give a message in tongues in a public meeting.

1 Corinthians 14:1-28

1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

3 *But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*

4 *He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.*

5 *I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.*

6 *But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?*

7 *Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?*

8 *For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?*

9 *So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.*

10 *There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance.*

11 *Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me.*

12 *Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.*

13 *Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.*

14 *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.*

15 *What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.*

16 *Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?*

17 *For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.*

18 *I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;*

19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

21 In the law it is written:

"With men of other tongues and other lips
I will speak to this people;
And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,"
says the Lord.

22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.

28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

NKJV

1 Corinthians 14:39-40

39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

NKJV

In the public meeting the gift of tongues is always to be accompanied by the gift of interpretation or it is out of order. How foolish to speak in tongues in public if there is no

understanding by others of what is being said. Together, tongues and interpretation are equivalent to prophecy, the foretelling or forth telling of the will of God.

It is not more spiritual or more miraculous to receive a message from God through tongues and interpretation than it is, say, for example, from an inspired Bible lesson or even from your personal Bible reading. Some have asked, “then what’s the point of having messages in tongues?” Sometimes I think it’s important for us to be reminded that the presence of the Holy Spirit is supernatural and beyond our natural abilities.

For unbelievers – this is a reference to Isaiah’s prophecy to apostate Israel in **Isaiah 28:**

Isaiah 28:11

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue

He will speak to this people,

NKJV

God caused Israel to know that it doesn’t pay to ignore the word of God when they found themselves captives in a foreign land surrounded by a strange culture and language.

Tongues scare a lot of people because they are so unnatural. I think the Spirit moves in this way from time to time to remind us of His supernatural presence. If you reject speaking in tongues, if you are an unbeliever in this manifestation, speaking in tongues makes you confront the supernatural and you are forced to accept or reject it as being from God or not.

In private the tongues are for personal edification. It is always good to communicate with God. Some have got it in their head that tongues must always be some known, spoken language here on earth. That was certainly the case on the day of Pentecost and on many other occasions since. Tongues on these occasions were a language unknown by the speaker, but known by the hearer. This doesn’t necessarily have to be the case. Many commentators talk about the gift of tongues in connection with evangelism to preach the gospel to foreigners. That interpretation doesn’t fit with Paul’s instruction. He was talking to Corinthians, speaking in tongues to Corinthians. Notice Paul’s words in the following passages:

1 Corinthians 13:1

13 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

NKJV

1 Corinthians 14:2

2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

NKJV

He says he who speaks in tongues speaks to God and NO MAN understands him. I believe the Spirit gives a heavenly language that is a Spirit prompted communication of our spirit with God. When Paul said he spoke in tongues more than all the Corinthians, he was clearly talking about his private prayer life. Some have called tongues a prayer language. Paul's statement here would seem to support that description. Should everyone speak in tongues as part of their personal prayers? There is no clear doctrinal statement on the subject, but if we follow Paul's example, it appears to be a spiritually beneficial practice.

Conclusion – Be led of the Spirit. Don't reject any of His ways of ministering to you and through you. Remember “**why**” the Spirit works, for the profit of all, and it will keep your understanding of “**how**” He works in balance.

Lesson 16
The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ

Matthew 28:1-8

1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

NKJV

Glory to God, we worship the Risen Lord! I don't doubt the promised blessings of the Gospel because I believe the evidence of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. His own clear predictions of His death and resurrection, the eye witnesses, 500 at one time, the inability of the enemies of the Gospel to point to an occupied tomb, the thriving of the Church of God, the changed lives down through the centuries all point to the truth of His resurrection. The evidence is clear. He is risen!

Many Churches and denominations have abandoned the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and only see it as a metaphor for overcoming difficult circumstances in life. Such religious notions are not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus is risen and is ascended into heaven making intercession for the saints and is soon to return for those who believe.

If you believe that Jesus is risen, then you need to understand how His resurrection impacts you personally. The Bible teaches us that we can know that other specific things are true because Jesus rose from the dead.

1) Proof of His Deity -

Romans 1:1-4

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

NKJV

His birth and His death were evidence of the humanity of Jesus. His resurrection proved His deity. Jesus had made some claims about Himself. Without a resurrection, He was a fraud and a con artist.

Matthew 12:38-41

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

NKJV

The Pharisees wanted a definite sign of His deity. They had already seen Him perform miracle after miracle. He calls them an evil generation. "I'll give you the irrefutable sign of my resurrection from the dead and you still will not believe." "Destroy this temple and I will build it again in three days" "I lay my life down, I raise it up again," were all claims that Jesus made during His ministry. If they are untrue then Jesus is not God. Only God could overcome death. Only God could give detailed prophecies and predictions of death and resurrection and then bring them to pass. Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

2) Proof of the sufficiency of His sacrifice –

Romans 4:21-25

21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,

24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,

25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. NKJV

Jesus was raised for our justification. The full penalty of sin was paid on the cross, but the evidence of God's acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ for our sins and of our resulting forgiveness and justification, or right standing with Himself, was the resurrection of His Son.

Example - A crude comparison may be that of a receipt marked paid. The bill may have been paid, but without the evidence of the receipt, there is no proof that the money was received or accepted.

Romans 8:31-34

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

NKJV

Who is it that can dispute our claim to being right with God? God is the Judge. God sent His Son to die for our sins. He declares that His sacrifice is sufficient and the full payment for the sins of the world. We have the evidence of Christ's resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:17

17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

NKJV

Without the resurrection, we have no proof of justification. With it, there is no room for doubt.

3) Our present victory over sin -

There are very practical results of the resurrection that we can benefit from in our daily life.

Romans 6:1-13

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

NKJV

Faith identifies us with Christ. Our Old Man died with Christ. When He rose from the grave, He rose as the Head of a new race of men. Once sin was placed on Jesus on the cross and judged, nothing remained but His own sinless life. God places that life in us upon believing. It cannot sin. As we yield to that life and nourish it, we will live a life that is pleasing to God. A life of godliness is an abundant life.

Philippians 3:10

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

NKJV

The believer possesses the power of His resurrection. It is the power to live godly, free from the power of sin. Because Christ lives, and He lives in you, you do not have to constantly fall victim to the destructive habits of sin.

Galatians 2:20

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

NKJV

Among God's people today there are two extremes that rob God's people of the blessing of this truth and that rob God of His glory. One extreme is legality that tries to tame and control the sinful flesh nature with rules and regulations. The more you try to tame the flesh the more rebellious and proud it becomes. Legality says, "I don't need the death and resurrection of Jesus for victory over sin. I can conquer sin on my own." The other extreme is license. License is the attitude that since we are saved by grace, our sins are forgiven and our home in heaven is secure, we don't need to concern ourselves with our daily acts of sin. According to those who embrace this error sin is of no consequence in the life of the believer. Both errors rob God of His glory and God's people of His best. I want to know the power of His resurrection in my life so that I may know the blessing, peace, joy and eternal reward of godliness.

4) Our resurrection –

1 Corinthians 15:12-22

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise.

16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

18 *Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*

19 *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

20 *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

21 *For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.*

22 *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

NKJV

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

51 *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed —*

52 *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

53 *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54 *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

55 *"O Death, where is your sting?*

O Hades, where is your victory?"

56 *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.*

57 *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

NKJV

What honesty and what assurance from a man who was well-educated, and before being saved was skeptical of anything outside his realm of experience and a persecutor of the Church of Jesus Christ. What changed His mind and direction of life? He had seen the glory of the risen Lord.

Because Christ, the Head of the redeemed, had been raised, Paul was confident that those in Christ will also be raised.

Death is a conquered foe. Those in Christ are not to be pitied. We are to be envied.

Romans 8:11

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

NKJV

5) Our inheritance –

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

NKJV

Every believer is born to a living hope and an inheritance by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our hope is not quenched by the cruelty of this life that ends in death. As we become older and come to the end of our days we suffer many indignities. Much of what we worked all our life to gain is slowly taken away from us. But that is not the end to which we are called. Though we may suffer those indignities in this life, they cannot take away from us the eternal glory, wealth, position and power He has reserved for us in heaven.

Colossians 3:1-4

3 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

NKJV

We will be raised to live forever and to enjoy the riches and blessings of heaven. The things of the earth shall quickly pass. Only what's done for Christ will last. Set your affections

on things above. Rejoice that you have a living hope because you serve a living Savior.

6) Divine Judgment –

Acts 17:30-31

30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

NKJV

His resurrection is also proof that all of the judgments that we read about in the book of **Revelation** are going to come to pass. He's alive to execute righteousness. His resurrection proves God's choice of Jesus Christ to judge the human race. He died to redeem the human race. He rose to execute His will for the redeemed and to execute righteous judgment on those who rebel against God.

Since we know that Jesus is risen and that He is coming again, let's rededicate ourselves to a life of loving service to the One who died for us and rose again to oversee all His plans and purposes for those who believe.

1 Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

NKJV

Lesson 17

The Fatherhood of God and our Adoption

Galatians 4:4-7

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

NKJV

A unique and precious doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Fatherhood of God and the adoption as sons of God of all who believe in Jesus Christ. In the context of the letter to the Galatians Paul was correcting the error of the Gentile believers in Galatia who were being deceived by some Jewish legalist into thinking that they had to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved and to keep saved. The legality of the law can only bring death, condemnation and bondage. Because of the sinful nature of man, man constantly falls short of the righteous demands of the Law and so those who try to keep it find themselves in an endless, burdensome cycle of demands, works and failure. The Law only magnifies and augments man's sin, it cannot remove its guilt or pay its penalty. The more one tries to obtain the righteousness of God by keeping the Law the more he increases his sin. What slavery! What bondage!

All who have put their faith in the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross have been redeemed from the bondage and curse of the Law, sin and death. How can man be delivered from such slavery? Through the redemption that was purchased by the blood of Christ. Through identification with Christ and His death. His death to sin is our death to sin. His resurrection and acceptance by His Father is our resurrection to new life and acceptance by God as His children.

Faith in Christ brings about a spiritual birth with a new nature, something that the Law never could bring about. The sacrifice of Christ settled the sin question once for all and changes the relationship of God to the believer from being a Judge to being our Father.

John 1:12

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

NKJV

This personal, intimate relationship with God as Father is only found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We no longer have to live our life in slavery trying to make ourselves accepted by God. Instead we rest in the grace of God that has made us accepted and

given us the rights of sons that we by faith may boldly exercise and enjoy the liberty we have in Christ to be pleasing to God.

Birth or Adoption?

It is not a contradiction when the Bible says that we are born into the family of God and that we are adopted. It is simply two different ways employed by the Spirit to explain the fullness of our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Our spiritual birth or regeneration emphasizes the truth that we have been made a new creation and have received a new nature. The believer in Christ possesses a power and ability to know and obey the will of God that an unbeliever does not possess. We are a new race of men. Our death to sin is as real as the death of a slave who was in bondage to a cruel master. That cruel master can no longer injure him or impose his will on him. Our spiritual birth into the family of God is as real and fresh as the birth of an infant into a royal family and who possesses all the genetic building blocks of his exalted and powerful father the king.

When the Bible speaks of adoption it is a metaphor that utilizes the illustration of the Greek and Roman practice of adoption that involved a public, legal and official act that bestowed on an individual the full rights and privileges of a son. This ceremony was often performed for biological sons as well as adopted sons. It was a rite of passage and a public acknowledgement of the rights and privileges of the individual as a son. Our adoption emphasizes God's choice of us when we were yet His enemy and His grace and generosity that has openly and officially bestowed upon us all the privileges and rights to approach Him as a son approaches a father. It is this doctrine of adoption that assures us of God's clear and open commitment to be to us a Father and to love us to the same degree that He loves His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

John 17:22-23

22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

NKJV

The God of heaven and earth is my Heavenly Father! He loves me with an everlasting love. He is for me and not against

me. A revelation of the fatherhood of God will give you comfort, strength, purpose, guidance and understanding.

Let's look at what the Bible says about fathers. The passages will give us a picture of God as our Father.

Joy

John the Baptist's Father –

Luke 1:13-14

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."

NKJV

The birth of his son brought Zacharias great joy for many reasons. There is just something about fathering another living being that is a part of you and that comes from you that fills a good father with great joy. That child shares a part of you that no one else can or does. You share a common heritage, genetics, characteristics. There is something about that identification and closeness that brings the joy of a relationship and the possibility of precious fellowship.

In the case of Zacharias, part of his joy was knowing what his son would become. The voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Messiah. In the 15th chapter of Luke, Jesus uses three parables about things that are lost, but then are found: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin and the Lost Son. The analogies are different than that of the birth of a child, but they all illustrate the salvation of those who believe in Jesus. The primary emphasis of the parables is that of God's rejoicing when a person repents and is saved.

Luke 15:10

10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

NKJV

Do we realize what this statement is revealing to us about God and about ourselves? The infinite God, the Creator of heaven and earth, not only takes notice of us as an individual, but actively seeks us out and rejoices with great joy when we are born again. God is for me, not against me. He takes pleasure in the fact that I am His child.

2 Peter 1:2-4

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

NKJV

This is why God will never deny me or reject me, because He cannot deny or reject Himself. His grace has made me a part of Him. The believer in Christ is like no other of God's creation. We share a part of who He is and that gives God great joy. I love to watch a proud papa holding his new baby in his arms. Of all the beauty of creation, there is nothing that brings him greater joy or satisfaction than to sit and hold his little baby. He loves to sit and stare at that child and cuddle it and speak to it in soft and reassuring tones. Of all the magnificent creations that God has created, nothing gives Him greater pleasure and satisfaction than me, His child, His workmanship, His new creation in Christ. His joy over each individual child is as if each of us were His first and only child. That fact gives my life significance. It encourages me when I'm feeling like no one cares what I'm going through. I'm important to God. I'm His child and He is my Heavenly Father who rejoices over the fact that I'm a member of His eternal family.

Provision

Joshua 15:18-19

18 Now it was so, when she came to him, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?"

19 She answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

NKJV

Caleb grants his daughter's request.

Matthew 7:7-11

7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

NKJV

Philippians 4:19

19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

NKJV

What a glorious rest is found in knowing that our Heavenly Father has promised to provide for our every need. We don't have to be afraid to ask. We don't have to wonder whether or not He cares about our need. He's our Father. My Father will supply what I need, when I need it, if I will only ask Him in faith, believing that He is willing and able. That confidence of course is only found in His will for us and rests in His wisdom to know what we need and when we need it to benefit to the fullest degree from His gracious provision. The All-wise, All-knowing, All-powerful God is my Heavenly Father. He will answer my petitions according to His love, power, grace and wisdom in a way that is eternally beneficial to me, His child.

Protection

One of the strongest, built-in instincts of a parent, whether it be a father or mother, is the instinct to protect your children from harm and danger. We see this protection demonstrated by the parents of Moses.

Hebrews 11:23

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

NKJV

We see it in Abraham who was like a father to Lot. When Lot was taken captive by an enemy army, Abraham quickly went

to his rescue. When David's family was taken captive by the Amalekites in ***1Samuel 30***, David went and rescued them.

Dads have always been looked to as a source of protection. When a young child is confronted with danger, a stranger, a dog or whatever it might be, he or she runs to Daddy who picks him up to a place of strength and safety. He becomes his tower of protection. That's what my Heavenly Father is for me.

Psalms 91:1 - 16

*1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

*2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."*

*3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
And from the perilous pestilence.*

*4 He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take refuge;
His truth shall be your shield and buckler.*

*5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow that flies by day,*

*6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.*

*7 A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you.*

*8 Only with your eyes shall you look,
And see the reward of the wicked.*

*9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,*

*10 No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;*

*11 For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.*

*12 In their hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*

*13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample
underfoot.*

*14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will
deliver him;*

*I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.
16 With long life I will satisfy him,
And show him My salvation."*
NKJV

When I run to my Heavenly Father in time of trouble, He will keep me from any real, eternal harm.

John 17:15

15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.
NKJV

God keeps me from suffering from the destructive purposes of the enemy. That's why I want to always walk close to my Father. I know my need of His protection.

John 10:29

29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.
NKJV

It's always a little humorous when I overhear two little boys bragging on their Dads. "My Dad is bigger than your Dad." "My Dad can beat up your Dad." In most cases, I'm sure there is one of those Dads that is hoping the other Dad didn't hear his son's boast because the other Dad really is bigger than the other one and really can beat him up. My Father is the Eternal, Almighty God. Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world. For anyone to get to me to do me any real harm, they have to get through my Heavenly Father first. That gives me comfort to know that when I am going through difficult times, it's not working against my eternal good but for it, because my Father has allowed it.

Instruction

Proverbs 4:1-4

*1 Hear, my children, the instruction of a father,
And give attention to know understanding;*

2 For I give you good doctrine:

Do not forsake my law.

3 When I was my father's son,

Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother,

4 He also taught me, and said to me:

"Let your heart retain my words;

Keep my commands, and live."

NKJV

A father's instruction and encouragement is important in the life of a child if that child is going to be successful in life. In Jewish culture every male child was taught a trade and every female child was taught to run a household. A good father doesn't just discipline when a child is bad, but takes the time and effort to instruct in the ways that lead to success and prosperity. As Christian fathers, our greatest responsibility to our children is to instruct them in the fear of the Lord that will lead them to eternal success and prosperity. That's what our Heavenly Father does for us in His Word.

Psalms 32:8-9

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will guide you with My eye.

9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule,

Which have no understanding,

Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,

Else they will not come near you.

NKJV

We need to look at God's Word as the wise instruction of a loving Father.

1 Thessalonians 2:10-13

10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;

11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

NKJV

Paul was reflecting the Fatherhood of God when he instructed the Thessalonians in the ways of the Lord.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

NKJV

Discipline

Hebrews 12:3-11

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;*

*6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."*

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

NKJV

When instruction is ignored or rebelled against, a good father makes the child feel the consequences of such disobedience in order that the child might not have to experience the greater sorrow of living foolishly. Our Heavenly Father does the same with us.

Jeremiah 10:23-24

*23 O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself;
It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*

24 O Lord, correct me, but with justice;

Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.

NKJV

God disciplines His children, not in judgment and condemnation, but as a loving Father who seeks His child's best. I'm glad my Father doesn't let me get away with anything, but faithfully, by His Spirit, brings conviction and correction that I might know the joys of walking in obedience to His rewarding will.

Inheritance

Genesis 25:5

5 And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

NKJV

A wealthy father leaves a wealthy inheritance for his children.

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

NKJV

Romans 8:32

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

NKJV

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

NKJV

Glory, power, wealth, heaven are all part of my inheritance from my Father. Like Isaac we all have the opportunity to receive the full inheritance of our Father.

These are just a few of the rights and privileges that we rest in and enjoy as those who have been born again into the family of God and adopted or placed as sons of God with full rights and privileges bestowed upon us by the grace of God.

1 John 3:1-3

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

NKJV

John exhorts us to stop and look, to know and experience the love of God as a child knows and experiences his father's love. May we daily take time to behold the love of our Father and live to honor Him.

Lesson 18

The Inerrancy Of The Word Of God

The essential doctrine that we are going to consider in this lesson is really the bedrock foundation for all the other doctrines that we have and will consider because it has to do with the reliability of our source for Christian doctrine, the Bible. The doctrine that we are considering is the inerrancy of the Word of God, the Bible. Two companion doctrines that go hand in hand with the inerrancy of Scripture are the doctrine of inspiration and the total and final authority of the Bible for doctrine and conduct for the believer in Christ.

Many of the essential doctrines that we have studied so far in our series and many of those that we are yet going to consider have been abandoned by much of Christendom because they first abandoned the inerrancy of the Bible as the Word of God. Much

of the Church has thrown away the Bible as God's revelation and God's standard of what is true and right and have substituted their own ideas in order to justify their unbelief and to indulge their carnal appetite for living the lifestyle that they want to live. Christendom today, influenced by the unbelief of the world, has systematically denied the authority of the Scriptures in many areas while pretending to uphold and value the teaching of Jesus Christ. Many who consider themselves Christian do not believe in the Genesis account of Creation, the account of the universal flood in Noah's time, the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, the literal history of Jonah, the virgin birth of Christ, or His resurrection from the dead or the promise of His literal return to take the Church to heaven.

To justify their rejection of the authority of the Bible for doctrine and practice they say that the Bible simply has too many errors and contradictions and that it cannot be trusted to be true in every case. Many say that parts of it are true, but not all. So everyone picks and chooses what they want to believe and what they want to reject. This is why we see the gross apostasy in Christendom today. This is why among Christians there are so many different sets of doctrinal beliefs. Everyone is picking and choosing from the Bible what they want to believe or not believe.

If we are going to save ourselves and others from the devastation and ruin of apostasy and unbelief, we must be firmly grounded on the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible.

Definition:

"The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact" (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, page 90).

In other words the Bible is never wrong. It is always right and in its original form contains no errors or contradictions of truth.

Psalms 119:160

160 The entirety of Your word is truth,

And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.

NKJV

Inspiration:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

NKJV

2 Peter 1:21

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

NKJV

God breathed, moved and directed, holy men, not independent of their personalities or writing styles, to communicate accurately to the human race who God is and what His purposes are.

Tim Challies:

“So what we affirm in this definition, is that a perfect God moved human authors, by His Spirit, to perfectly transcribe what He wanted to communicate. It is important to note that this definition does not apply to the transmission of Scripture through the ages and the translation into other languages. We affirm that only the original autographs are inerrant.” -

Authority:

If the Bible came from God then it is true and reliable because God cannot lie. If the Bible is from God and true, then its revelation possesses the weight and authority of the Creator of the universe.

Matthew 4:4

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

NKJV

Some Churches, denominations and religions say that their leadership has greater authority than the Bible to decide what Christians should believe and how they should conduct themselves. For a Preacher, Pastor, Priest, Bishop or Pope to say that their word has more authority than the Bible is to say that their word has more authority than God's word. That is

blasphemy. Jesus Himself affirmed the Old and New Testament scriptures as being the accurate revelation and recording of God's word to Man. He often referred to the Old Testament Scriptures, the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms as being the divine revelation of God to man. He affirmed the Genesis account of creation, the flood of judgment in the days of Noah and the historical accuracy of the account of Jonah. One of Jesus' last conversations with His disciples had to do with the unity of the Old Testament writings as being from one mind with one unifying theme.

Luke 24:44-49

44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And you are witnesses of these things.

49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

NKJV

To pretend to be a follower of Christ and reject the accuracy of the Old Testament record is to call Jesus a liar. Jesus affirmed the divine inspiration of the New Testament by telling the men that He called to be His disciples that He was going to give them a fuller revelation than what they had received during His earthly ministry to them.

John 16:12-15

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own

authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

NKJV

These same men acknowledged God's calling on the apostle Paul and affirmed his writings as inspired Scripture.

2 Peter 3:16-17

16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

NKJV

Paul himself claims divine inspiration and the Spirit's power demonstrated in Paul's ministry bears witness to Paul being God's apostle to the Church.

Galatians 1:11-12

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

NKJV

We also know that after Paul, God has not given any new revelations to man. All that God has to reveal to the human race in this life He has already revealed through the revelation of the Old and New Testament.

Colossians 1:25-26

25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill (to complete, make full) the word of God,

26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

NKJV

Galatians 1:8-9

8 *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*

9 *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

NKJV

If the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then it must be infallible. God cannot lie. Therefore the revelation that He directed and has protected is trustworthy. If the Bible is the inspired word of God and if it is trustworthy, then it must be the only source for doctrine and practice for the believer in Jesus Christ. The Bible must be acknowledged as the final authority on all matters of faith and practice.

Is the Bible really to be given such a high place of authority in our lives? Do we worship the Bible? No, but we worship God and the Bible is the divine expression of God and His will. It is from Him. It is to be accepted as if God Himself stands before us and speaks to us.

Again, we cite Paul's words to Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*

17 *that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

NKJV

For doctrine - what we should and should not believe.

For reproof - what's wrong and unacceptable.

For correction - how to correct what's wrong.

For instruction in righteousness - to tell us what's right and what we should do.

The end result - perfect - capable and equipped to do the will of God.

God's word can be trusted to be true in all of its claims and instructions -

Psalms 119:137-138

137 x TSADDE

Righteous are You, O Lord,

*And upright are Your judgments.
138 Your testimonies, which You have commanded,
Are righteous and very faithful.*

NKJV

The word translated “faithful” means “established, lasting, continuing and certain.” We can trust what it says about creation, heaven, hell, family, morality, faith and eternal life. If the Bible is true and its declarations certain, then we need to make its judgments our judgments. We must say what God says if we want to end up on the side of truth.

Romans 3:4

4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written:

*"That You may be justified in Your words,
And may overcome when You are judged."*

NKJV

In every area of our life, every relationship, every thought we must learn to put aside our opinions, prejudice, loyalties and desires and conform ourselves to the word of God.

2 Corinthians 10:5

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

NKJV

If we are going to successfully bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, we must have an understanding of the Bible. You will be pressured by the world, by teachers, by employers and co-workers to deny that the Bible is true. You will be mocked and made fun of for your belief that the Bible is God’s infallible word. They will say that in the light of science and technology to believe the Genesis account or the story of Jonah or the miracles of the New Testament is just foolish and naïve. When appropriate, humbly ask those who put such confidence in man’s science and knowledge if men of science have ever arrogantly boasted that one of their ideas was right and irrefutable and then later it was proven to be wrong. If they are honest, they will tell you that man’s knowledge is constantly changing and being corrected and revised. There has never been an archeological discovery that has disproven the accuracy of the Scriptures. Many have arrogantly said the Bible

was wrong about the existence of certain ancient leaders or cities because there was no historical evidence ever found that they existed. Then, “lo and behold,” someone digs up some ruins and finds the names of people and places just like the Bible said it was. True science never contradicts the Bible. The problem is that much of what is called science is man’s speculation and theory. Many scientists have already acknowledged that certain human DNA can be traced back to one female original source. Many still try to apply that to their evolution theories, but that sounds to me a lot like the Genesis account of Adam and Eve. Don’t let the world bully you or intimidate you into questioning the authority of the Bible. It is God’s Word. It is true wisdom, knowledge and truth. Everything and everyone else will one day be made to agree with the Word.

1 Corinthians 3:18-23

18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness";

20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

21 Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours:

22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come — all are yours.

23 And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

NKJV

Dedicate yourself to learning everything God’s Word has to teach you.

2 Timothy 2:15

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

NKJV

Too much of what passes for religion and faith today is nothing more than tradition, superstition and sentiment and has no foundation in the truth of the Word of God. The reason such error flourishes is because God’s people fail to put it to the test of the Word of God

Acts 17:11

11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

NKJV

Are we searching the Scriptures to see if the doctrine that we believe and live by is true or not? If we do not, we will be living a lie. All that is built on a lie will one day be destroyed like a sand castle in the tide. In contrast, building your life on Truth, the Word of God, has tremendous benefits for time and eternity.

Psalms 19:7-11

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold,

Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,

And in keeping them there is great reward.

NKJV

Perfect - “complete, sound”.

Converting - “returns” Returns us to fellowship and blessing.

Sure - established, faithful.

Wisdom

Joy

Understanding

Desirable

True riches

Warning

Protection

Reward

Acts 20:32

32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

NKJV

The best proof of the trustworthiness of the Bible is a life of obedience. Someone once said, "Obedience is the greatest commentary upon the Bible - Do and thou shalt know." That is a truth that was declared by Christ.

John 7:17

17 If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

NKJV

David challenged, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." (**Psalm 34:8**)

1 Thessalonians 2:13

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

NKJV

May we also receive the Word of God as God's Word in order that we might experience the same glorious power of God working in us and through us.

Lesson 19
Redemption, Justification, Predestination,
Reconciliation and Sanctification

Acts 20:26-32

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to

shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

32 So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

NKJV

These essential doctrines that we have been studying in this series of lessons are the revelation of the will and purposes of God and they are the only message that can restore man back to a relationship with his Creator and God. Faith in these doctrines will result in the individual believer entering into God's best in this life and in eternity. The Christian cannot reach spiritual maturity with all of its blessings, protections and provision apart from knowing and submitting to these truths. Those who know and yield to these teachings are promised a full inheritance in eternity as a joint heir with Christ. These essential doctrines that make up the whole counsel of God are the message and mission of the Church. To neglect, ignore or fail to proclaim these truths is to fail to do the will of God. Such failure results in corruption and loss of so many things.

No series on essential doctrines would be complete without pointing to these next five doctrines. This lesson will only be a brief summary of these doctrines. Separate tracts and study booklets that deal with each of these doctrines separately and more thoroughly can be found on the Abundant Grace Fellowship website: www.agfwheatridgeco.com

The five essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we want to briefly summarize in this lesson are:

Redemption - Liberty

Justification - Right Standing

Predestination - Assurance

Reconciliation - Peace, Blessing

Sanctification - Usefulness

Redemption - Liberty

The doctrine of redemption emphasizes that all who have put their faith in Jesus Christ have been set free, redeemed, bought with a price, from the cruel dictates of sin and are now free to serve God and do His will which leads to all that is good and eternal.

Colossians 1:13-14

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

NKJV

Praise God, I know I've been redeemed from the power of darkness and that I've been translated from a kingdom of sin and death into the kingdom of life where Jesus reigns supreme because the Bible declares it so through the doctrine of redemption. The Bible teaches that every human being is born a slave to sin because of Adam's sin. Sin is rebellion and disobedience against God and His will. We are sold under sin. That condition dominates everything we do and leads to sorrow, destruction and loss and ultimately eternal separation from the glory and presence of our Creator and God.

A quick observation of the sad condition of the human race in general and of individuals' lives of self-destructive behavior confirms that the declaration of the Bible is true. The common enemy of man, death, has a common cause, sin in the human race. Death is like a cruel slave owner who uses and abuses his slaves for his own pleasure until they fall broken and ruined in death.

But Jesus came to pay the price to set me free from sin and give me the right and ability to serve God and follow His loving, life-giving, life-sustaining, beneficial will for my life. The price Jesus paid for my redemption was great. The sinless Son of God became sin for me, dying as a sinner, in the place of all sinners; He died to sin once and for all. I died with Him. Even the cruelest of slave owners can no longer exert power or pain on a slave that is dead. When Jesus rose from the dead His resurrection was my resurrection as a member of the household of faith that lives to serve and honor God and His grace.

Redemption through faith in the sufficiency of the shed blood of Jesus Christ includes being set free from the penalty of sin, that is, eternal condemnation. My old master sin condemned me to eternal death. My new loving Master promises me life and glory. My redemption sets me free from the power of sin to dominate by daily choices. I'm free to choose the will of God every day in every situation and enjoy the benefits of living righteously.

The doctrine of redemption reveals that the ransom of the blood of Jesus Christ also purchased us the assurance of one day being set free from the very presence of sin. Our redemption includes the promise of glorified bodies fit for eternity. This life can be so cruel because of the presence of sin. Crime, violence, sickness and death are all the result of the presence of sin. Thank God, I'm redeemed and I know that Jesus is coming again to pick up His purchased possession and take me to a place where there will be no more pain, sorrow or death.

If you have not yet accepted God's gracious offer of redemption and you are tired of the guilt, sorrow and pain of being a slave to sin, put your faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and you will be redeemed. If you have already accepted Jesus as your Savior, praise God for your redemption. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. The song of redemption will be our song for all eternity.

Revelation 5:8-10

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

10 And have made us kings and priests to our God;

And we shall reign on the earth."

NKJV

Justification

To be right with God in a position of favor:

The doctrine of justification reveals that all that put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation have been made right before the Judge of heaven and earth. The opposite of being justified is being accused or condemned. Before accepting Jesus as our Savior we stood before God condemned as sinners worthy of the just wrath of our Creator. Jesus, by His death and resurrection secured for us the forgiveness of our sins through the paying of the debt of our sin, satisfying the just wrath of our Creator.

Romans 5:16-21

16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NKJV

Having been declared just or righteous before the court of heaven, I stand in a place of favor to enjoy all the rights and privileges of a citizen of heaven. Even in our courts, criminals suffer the loss of certain rights and privileges that other citizens enjoy. My citizenship is in heaven and I stand in a position of grace, favor and life because I have been made the righteousness of God in Christ. My justification, according to the teaching of

Scripture is not obtained or maintained by my works, but solely and wholly by faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Romans 3:27-28

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

NKJV

I did not earn my righteous standing before God, it was imputed, put to my account, by the love and grace of God. Therefore, I know that there is nothing I can do that will ever annul the power of the righteousness of Jesus Christ to remove me from my right standing. I do not fear God's condemnation or rejection because I understand the doctrine of justification. Nothing can separate me from the love and grace of God because it was His love and grace that have declared me to be right with God, righteous, justified.

Predestination - Assurance

Romans 8:29-30

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

NKJV

The doctrine of predestination assures us of the certainty of our eternal destiny and all the benefits of our redemption and justification. Christians who do not understand the Biblical teaching of predestination often go through their Christian experience in constant fear that every day they may do or say something that will undo all that Jesus accomplished on the cross and that they will ultimately be condemned to an eternity without God. Thank God for the doctrine of predestination. I know that my eternal home is heaven. My eternal destiny is glory, not shame and darkness. How can I be so sure? Because the Bible teaches me that before God created Adam, He looked down through the ages and foreknew me and my decision concerning His Son. Knowing me, He predestined me, set boundaries around me to direct me in a certain, unalterable direction and

destiny which was life, glory and to be like His Son. Having predestined me He called me His own and saw to it that I would hear the call of the Gospel. Having called me, He justified me, declared me eternally right with Him. And lastly, He glorified me. He made all the provision to ensure my ultimate glorification. All this He did before the world began.

Ephesians 1:4

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

NKJV

I don't waste any time, emotion or energy wondering about where I will spend eternity. Since I know heaven is my home, I can spend my time and energy living in preparation for that glorious day when I will be called home to glory.

Reconciliation - Peace & Blessing

The doctrine of reconciliation stresses the fact that God is for us and not against us because the blood of Jesus Christ has forever removed the enmity and hostility that once existed between us and God.

Romans 5:1-2

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

NKJV

Romans 5:10-11

10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

NKJV

Romans 8:31

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

NKJV

My heart is filled with peace, joy and expectation for life and for eternity because I know that God is not out to do me

harm. I was His enemy, but by His work of reconciliation on the cross, I've been made His child. In every situation and circumstance of life, even the difficult and unpleasant ones, I can find strength and comfort in knowing that it is working for me and not against me because God is over all and God is for me.

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

NKJV

Thank God for the doctrine of reconciliation.

Sanctification - Usefulness

The doctrine of sanctification stresses the change in our condition from being useless to God to being made useful. Before being saved we were separated from God and useless to Him to bring Him glory. This is why so many unsaved people are overwhelmed with a sense of insignificance and emptiness. Separated from our Creator, the source of life, man, quite literally, is good for nothing. Upon accepting Jesus as our Savior we are set apart from the rest of humanity and made fit to be used of God to do His will and bring Him glory. Our life now has meaning.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NKJV

The world doesn't acknowledge me as anyone particularly special. But I have been chosen and set apart by the Creator of heaven and earth to be used to bring Him glory for eternity and then to share in that glory. I'm so glad that God by His love and grace separated me unto Himself.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,

10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

NKJV

Faith in these doctrines will change your life. Ignorance of them will keep the sinner from salvation and the believer from rest and spiritual maturity. Thank God for:

Redemption - Liberty

Justification - Right Standing

Predestination - Assurance

Reconciliation - Peace, Blessing

Sanctification - Usefulness

Lesson 20

Prayer

In this lesson we are going to consider a very familiar passage of Scripture known by many as the Lord's Prayer. It's a passage that deals with one of the most essential and basic elements of our Christian experience, and is one of the essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The subject this morning is prayer. The apostle to the Church, the apostle Paul tells us that we are to pray.

1 Timothy 2:8

8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

NKJV

Paul recorded a number of his own prayers that are very profitable to study and are good examples to follow in our own prayers. However, in this lesson we will use the model prayer that I believe was the pattern for Paul's prayers and should be the pattern for all prayers offered in this Church Age.

Matthew 6:5-13

5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

6 *But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

7 *And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

8 *"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

9 *In this manner, therefore, pray:*

*Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.*

10 *Your kingdom come.*

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

11 *Give us this day our daily bread.*

12 *And forgive us our debts,*

As we forgive our debtors.

13 *And do not lead us into temptation,*

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

NKJV

Commonly called the Lord's Prayer, more accurately it should be called the Lord's example of how to pray. This prayer was never meant to be repeated word for word in a cold ceremonial way. Jesus in His wisdom, included all the basic elements of what our petitioning prayers should include, but in our own words and as they specifically apply to our lives. There is nothing wrong with reading or repeating these words as long as they are used as a genuine expression of your heart.

Attitude

- Verses 5 - 8 -

Before we ever begin to pray, we need to have the proper attitude and understanding of what we are doing. Jesus condemns two religious concepts and practices of prayer. The first error that Jesus condemns is using prayer to draw attention to yourself as a spiritual person. Public prayer, praying together with other Christians, is not prohibited by Scripture. In fact it is encouraged,

but the use of prayer as a means of exalting yourself above others is what Jesus is forbidding.

Example -

Luke 18:9-12

9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

NKJV

The Pharisee prayed with himself. God did not hear him. He was praying that others might hear. They did. He has his reward.

Prayer of faith

Jesus taught that we are to pray in our closet, or private room where no one else knows, sees or hears. Who would shut themselves in a room and talk when no one else is in the room? Someone who truly believed that someone was listening, even if that someone couldn't be seen. Do you have that kind of faith? Do you spend time in private, personal prayer to your heavenly Father? God has promised to answer this kind of prayer. When we learn to pray in private, He will show to others the results of our prayers publicly by supplying our need, protecting us and guiding us.

Psalms 34:15

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry.

Psalms 34:18

18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

NKJV

Vain repetition

Jesus also condemns the use of vain repetition of many words. He is not prohibiting long prayers. Jesus prayed all night on occasions. Nor is He forbidding repeating words in our prayers. Jesus repeated his petition in the garden three times. **(Matthew 26:39)** "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass

from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." What is forbidden is the superstitious repeating of prayers as a merit for God's blessing. Muslims and Catholics both use a rosary of prayers and even many Protestants use the repeating of the Lord's prayer and other prayers in this way. Many idol worshipers had similar practices, thinking that they could wear their gods down until they finally gave them what they wanted.

Bible Encyclopedia:

Prayer beads are used by members of various religious traditions such as Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Anglicanism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Bahá'í Faith to count the repetitions of prayers, chants or devotions, such as the rosary of Virgin Mary in Christianity and dhikr (remembrance of God) in Islam.

Two uses of prayer beads:

1. Repetition of the same devotion a set (usually large) number of times. This is the earliest form of prayer beads (the Japa Mala) and the earliest Christian form (the prayer rope). This is also the type in use by the Bahá'í Faith

2. Repetition of several different prayers in some pattern, possibly interspersed with or accompanied by meditations.

Jesus says such nonsense is unnecessary. We don't have to earn, beg or wear God out to get what we need. He knows what we need and wants to meet our need.

Matthew 7:7-11

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

NKJV

So we approach God and speak to Him as one who sees, hears and understands. We use words that express our own heart and mind. Through prayer we converse with God.

Let's look at Jesus' prayer to see what kinds of things we are to pray for and in what manner. He gives us an outline of prayer that we then are to fill in with our own prayers.

Our Father

The first thing that we notice is that petition prayer is directed to God the Father, not the Son nor the Holy Spirit and certainly not to Mary or any of the so-called Saints. Praise can and should be given directly to Jesus, but petitions are directed to the Father. Since it's to the Father, it means it is from a son. The only prayer that God has promised to hear from an unsaved person is the prayer of repentance for salvation.

Acts 2:21

21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'

NKJV

Otherwise the promise of answered prayer is given to His children.

John 1:12

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

NKJV

Even for His children, we find that the Father places the requirement of walking in fellowship with Him on the promise of answered prayer.

1 John 3:19-22

19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

NKJV

You don't need to be perfect to pray, you just need to genuinely want to be pleasing to your Father and be willing to submit to His plan for your life. Obedience to the will of God does not cause you to earn the blessing of answered prayer, it

simply places you in a position where your Father's blessing can be enjoyed. A child can have parents that love and provide for Him because he is their child. The home and backyard can be filled with all kinds of gifts for his pleasure, enjoyment, protection, safety and health, but if the child chooses to run away from home, he doesn't quit being his parent's child, but he has removed himself from a position in which he can benefit from his parent's love, protection and provision. The same is true of the children of God. If you choose to live in disobedience to your Father's loving instruction, you remove yourself from the privileged position of petitioning your Heavenly Father in faith. As children, we have the right and privilege to ask our heavenly Father for the things we have need of. Don't shame Him by looking anywhere else for the supply of your need. We cry out to our Father, not in a cold, ritualistic way, but as a child cries out to his father.

In Jesus' name

John 14:13-14

13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

NKJV

John 16:23

23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

NKJV

We ask the Father in the name or authority or merit of Jesus. This is not to be a vain phrase that we use to end our prayers. It is the understanding that we have no merit of our own, but that we have been granted access to the throne of God because of what Jesus has done and is doing on our behalf.

Hebrews 4:15-16

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

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

NKJV

Our boldness is in knowing that we are accepted in the Beloved and that our prayers will be answered. The Father hears and answers and Jesus sees to it that the answer is delivered. You can't get a more reliable communication service than that.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is also an active member of the Trinity in our prayers.

Romans 8:26-27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

NKJV

He prompts us to pray and teaches us how to pray according to God's will and expresses our inner most needs and desires clearly and accurately before the throne of Grace. Don't let the enemy tell you that you can't pray. Not everyone has a gift of public prayer, but every Christian can pray effectively in their private life. If you obey by faith, come before Him in Jesus' name, the Trinity will see to it that your prayers will be pleasing and effective.

In Heaven

Though we have the privilege to call Him Father, never forget whom you are addressing. Our Father is the Almighty God.

Isaiah 66:1-2

1 Thus says the Lord:

"Heaven is My throne,

And earth is My footstool.

Where is the house that you will build Me?

And where is the place of My rest?

2 For all those things My hand has made,

And all those things exist,"

Says the Lord.

"But on this one will I look:

On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,

And who trembles at My word. NKJV

Hallowed

“Holy or set apart as something special.” It is the opposite of common. His name is worthy to be praised and honored.

Psalms 149:1-6

1 Praise the Lord!

*Sing to the Lord a new song,
And His praise in the assembly of saints.*

*2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*

*3 Let them praise His name with the dance;
Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.*

*4 For the Lord takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the humble with salvation.*

*5 Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.*

*6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,*

NKJV

Praise must be a part of our prayers. We cannot pray in faith if we do not understand His greatness. We cannot understand His greatness without voicing His praise. An important part of praise is thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

NKJV

When we acknowledge the things He has already done, we acknowledge His worthiness of praise.

Your kingdom come

Revelation 22:20

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

NKJV

Even so come. To pray for God's purposes for Israel and the nations expresses our oneness with God's will and causes our faith to grow and causes us to keep a heavenly and eternal perspective about our present needs and trials. Before Jesus

comes in glory to restore the nation of Israel, He will come for His Church.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

NKJV

The brighter the revelation of Christ's return in our hearts, the more intense, effective and persistent our prayers will be.

Your will be done

Much prayer today is "my will be done". God has placed limitation on prayer.

1 John 5:14-15

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

NKJV

Don't get wrapped up in telling God exactly what you think you want and how He should supply it. Express to Him your circumstance and your faith that He is your Source and Deliverer and trust Him to answer according to His wisdom.

Daily Bread

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

NKJV

If we do not learn to daily depend on Him, it will lead to the misery of arrogant self-dependence.

Revelation 3:17-18

17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked —

18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

NKJV

Forgive us our debts

This forgiveness is for fellowship not salvation.

Mark 11:22-26

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.

23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

NKJV

Notice it says your Father not your Judge or your God will not forgive you if you do not forgive others. For us to enjoy God's blessing we need to walk in fellowship with Him. If we hold bitterness and hatred towards our brother, we are not walking in fellowship with God. All our relationships with others need to be according to God's loving, wise instruction if we are going to enjoy the blessing of answered prayers.

1 Peter 3:7

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

NKJV

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

This is a petition for guidance and protection that expresses our knowledge that we are unable to direct our own life in such a way as to make anything good come from it.

Psalms 23:1 - 6

1 The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever.

NKJV

We need a daily revelation of His word and will.

James 1:5

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

NKJV

Deliverance

Such a petition acknowledges that we have an enemy that we are defenseless against without the loving care of God and His Son. If we do not acknowledge our need of direction and protection in daily prayer, we slowly begin to lose our way and expose ourselves to the cruelty of the enemy.

Colossians 1:9-13

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

NKJV

For Yours is the kingdom, power, glory

The Lord's model prayer ends with praise and confidence. When you pray in faith according to the will of God, you know that the One to whom you have prayed is well able to fulfill all that He has promised.

Ephesians 3:20-21

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

NKJV

Amen - "so be it"

What a privilege is ours to pray to our heavenly Father. How necessary it is for us to pray that we might be all that His grace can make us.

Lesson 21

The Church - What Is The Church?

Our next doctrine in our series of lessons on the essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the doctrine of the Church of God. What is the Church? Is it important? How do you join? What's its function? How is it to operate?

In our society the word Church has come to mean a building or a certain religious organization of which there are many. There are many opinions about what a Church should be and do. Fortunately, we are not left to figure out for ourselves

what the Church is or what it is to be doing. We have been given clear, Biblical doctrine on the subject. The next several lessons will cover a number of specific revelations about the Church and its mission and how it is to function.

We are not going to change the vocabulary of our society or of the Christian community in general. We may not even be able to break ourselves of the habit of improper vocabulary, but we must have a clear understanding what the Church is as well as its mission and how we are to conduct ourselves in a way that honors God. We need a clear revelation as to how the Church is to function on a wide scale and on a local level if we are going to contribute to its success and be a part of what God is doing through the Church for eternity.

What is it?

The Word translated “Church” in the New Testament comes from a compound word meaning “to call out” or “an out calling.”

1 Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

NKJV

The first thing we must understand is that the Church is not a man-made institution or organization. Many denominations and movements are attributed to certain men or women and their teaching. (Wesley, Anna Baptist, Luther, Copley, Foster...) The founding, maintenance and growth of the Church is a divine work of God according to His choosing and calling and any true manifestation of that Church is from Him and belongs to Him. Otherwise it is just another man-made religious organization and has no lasting value.

The following is an example of the corrupt thinking that many believers possess about certain denominations and movements. My great-grandfather, C. E. Foster, was pastor of a congregation in Topeka, Kansas for over 60 years. During this time there were several times of spiritual revival and the lives of many people were changed forever. Many preachers, teachers and

missionaries of the Pauline Gospel were sent from this local assembly who in turn impacted the lives of many people.

In the year 1985 the congregation of this assembly asked me to be its pastor and having liberty from the Holy Spirit I accepted the invitation. One day someone approached me with the intent of giving me a complement. This individual said to me, "It is a good thing that the Church remains in the hands of a descendent of C. E. Foster since he was the founder." I did not accept his comment as a complement or as a good thing. I did not consider the work in Topeka as the work of my great-grandfather and the Foster family. My call to shepherd this flock came from God and not from the fact that my great-grandfather was used of God as its first pastor. Either the work is God's work or it is the work of man. The Church belongs to God and He chooses whom He wills to go forward with the work. He is not limited to a family. He is not dependent on man. I believe that my great-grandfather was called by the Lord and was faithful in that calling and used by God in a big way, but the eternal work done in the lives of God's people was God's work not his. God uses faithful men and women and often even uses faithful families to do the work of the Church and to cause the ministry of the Church to prosper, but the Church and its work belong to God and it owes its life and prosperity to the direction and protection of God. If a work, an assembly or a religious movement continues simply as a legacy of or commemorative monument to an individual or a family, that work is not the work of God or His Church. When we lose sight of this truth we start down the path of apostasy and carnality. That congregation in Topeka has disbanded and the whole counsel of God is no longer being proclaimed in that place.

We also see from *1 Peter 2:9-10* and other passages that the Church is not a thing, but is a group of people that have been chosen by God and called out and separated from the rest of humanity as a group that is special to God. The true Church is made up of individuals that have been called by God and set aside for the special purpose of bringing Him praise and glory. They are a people who have been taken from spiritual darkness and its eternal ruin and brought into the realm of light, life and blessing by God's mercy. The Church is made up of individuals that have a different destiny than the rest of humanity.

Acts 15:14

14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

NKJV

The Church is a people who are favored of God.

Revelation 5:8-10

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

10 And have made us kings and priests to our God;

And we shall reign on the earth."

NKJV

The Church includes people from around the world. The true Church is global. The Americanizing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a corruption of the Gospel. America is not the Church. The Church is made up of individuals from every nationality and race.

You are a part of this special called out group by God's choice.

Romans 8:29-30

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

NKJV

How does one know if they have been chosen? God's choice of us is based on His foreknowledge of our decision concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whosoever will may come. If you've accepted Jesus as your personal Savior, then you know that you've been chosen.

Being a member of the true Church has nothing to do with putting your name on a membership register here on earth. It has nothing to do with any exterior rite or ceremony. It is a union and a joining that takes place in the spirit realm. By faith in Jesus Christ you are made a member of the spiritual and true Church.

Hebrews 12:22-24

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

NKJV

To be a member of the Church is to have come to -

Zion - grace, in contrast to Sinai and the law.

Heavenly city of Jerusalem - not to an earthly center or headquarters.

Living God - not a dead religion.

Association with angels - not an association with frail men who boast power.

General Assembly - a festive gathering of universal companionship, fellowship.

First born written - registered in heaven's book of privileged birth.

To God, Judge - our joining is to God Himself. It is to worship in spirit and truth and come to an understanding of and fellowship with God.

Just men made perfect - justified by faith.

Jesus, Mediator of the new covenant - you have become a benefactor of the agreement between God the Father and God the Son that was sealed and made effective by the blood of Jesus Christ.

It is not important or impressive to God that your name is on the membership of some exclusive club or organization or family tree, but He places extreme importance on us having our name written on the membership rolls of heaven.

Luke 10:17-20

17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

18 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

NKJV

Praise God! I'm joined with God. I'm set aside for His glory and I'm declared to be special to Him. As a member of those called out by God, I'm a recipient of His mercy and grace for time and eternity.

Revelation 21:27

27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

NKJV

My name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Men will do about anything to see to it that their names are seen in the right places, on the right memberships or in the right newspapers or magazines. Men want their names associated with other great men. What thrills my heart is to know that my name is written in the Lamb's book of life. It is there by His grace and mercy. I'm eternally associated with the King of kings and Lord of lords. He called me out of a lost humanity that is bound for eternal destruction and made me a recipient of His grace.

There are not many Churches. There is only one. It is not Abundant Grace Fellowship or Pentecostal Grace or First Baptist or Faith Bible Chapel, ect... What assembly you attend and what doctrine you adhere to and support is important, as we have already discovered and will continue to discover as we go on with our study, but there is only one Church and it is the Church of those that are born again.

Ephesians 4:4-6

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

NKJV

All those who are born again by faith in Jesus Christ are a part of the same Church as I am. We are part of the same body, have benefited from the ministry of the same Spirit. We have the same hope and destiny. We have the same Lord, the same redeeming faith, the same initial beginning. We have the same Father. We are intimately associated and related. That association and relationship is not based on what group we do or do not belong to. Attending the worship services of a particular local assembly doesn't automatically make you a member of the true Church. Any who claims to be a part of the Church because of their membership in a certain group or because of the completion of some ceremony or work or anything other than faith and faith alone in the atoning power of the blood of Christ, is not a part of this called out group.

The Church is described by three analogies that help us to understand our special relationship to God and to each other.

House

Body

Family

These analogies help us to understand how the Church is to function and what is our mission. Paul often refers to local assemblies as the "Church of God" in such and such a place. In doing so, he is referring of course to the group of saints that congregate in those places. There is a Biblical mission of the Church that is to be carried out on a local level in the local assembly. There are detailed Scriptural instructions to help us carry out that mission.

A House -

1 Peter 2:4-5

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

NKJV

The Church is a spiritual house. A house stands on its foundation. The Church stands on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. A house stands as a testament to the skill and abilities of its Architect and Builder. The Church is to point others to the glory and majesty of God who redeemed us by the shed blood of His Son. The members of the Church relate to one another as living stones fitted together as individuals, but fulfilling a purpose that benefits and beautifies the whole. Each stone is precisely and inseparably placed and joined together with other stones. Each is individual yet a part of the whole.

A house or building is built for a purpose. It is built to house someone or something or to accommodate some activity. The Church, the redeemed, are the storehouse of truth.

1 Timothy 3:15

15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

NKJV

The Church is built to preserve and proclaim the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The activities that are to take place in this spiritual house are worship, praise and the bringing of glory to God through faithful service and sacrifice.

Ephesians 2:20-22

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

NKJV

God, His ways and His will are to be seen in His people, the Church.

A Body -

Ephesians 1:22-23

22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

NKJV

This analogy describes for us both our relationship to Christ and to one another in vivid detail. Christ is the Head of this Body and each member of the Church is intricately connected to Him. This mystical Body has many members who are dependent on one another and who are directly dependent on the Head. The members of this body are used to minister to each other and to carry out the will of the Head. Thus, the Church is Christ's Body through which He accomplishes His will here on earth.

A Family

Ephesians 2:19

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

NKJV

Every believer in Jesus Christ shares a common heritage and inheritance. We are closely related. We are to bring glory to our Father and live to please Him. We belong to Him by birth.

John 1:12-13

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

NKJV

Those who have trusted in Jesus for salvation have been given the right to be called the children of God. We share His eternal nature. As a family we are to care for and protect one another.

This is what the Church of God is. The more we understand what the Church is, the better we will be able to understand what the Church is to be doing and how it is to function. Our next several lessons will look at what the Bible says about our mission and how it should be carried out. I rejoice to know that I am a member of the one true Church of God, the Church of the firstborn.

Lesson 22

How The Church Is To Function

The Church is a spiritual house or temple to God, the Body of Christ and the family of God. Individually believers are members of the Church, individual living stones, one of the many parts of the Body and one of many children. Collectively they are called the Church. Whenever there is a gathering of believers it is proper to say the Church is there. All the Church is not gathered there, but they represent the whole in that particular location.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NKJV

Paul makes it clear that he is not talking about a special building or even about a mixed group that all meet in the same building. He refers to the Church at Corinth as being all individuals who are sanctified in Christ, called saints.

We have also discovered that the purpose of the Church is to bring glory to God through spiritual worship and service. The Church is the ground and pillar of God's truth. The Church, as the spiritual Body of Christ, is the vehicle through which He accomplishes His will on the earth.

Our relationship and fellowship with God is personal and individual. When we come to the doctrine of rewards, we will see that we will receive our reward based on individual obedience. We each have an individual race course to run. Nevertheless we are intricately connected to one another and we need one another and are to work together.

There are many ideas and opinions on how the Church is to carry out its mission and bring glory to God. The following is

a brief list of only some popular ideas on how the Church should function and be governed.

1) Everyone is just to do their own thing without regard to anyone else. It's not even necessary to gather with other Christians.

2) Everyone should be doing the same thing in the same place at the same time.

3) Some feel the Church can best carry out its mission through politics.

4) Others feel it's best to isolate one's self completely from civilization.

5) Some feel the Church operates best by a democratic system and should be run by the will of the majority.

6) Others prefer a dictatorship and

7) Some prefer no defined order at all.

The fact is that the Church is God's Church and He has given some very clear instruction on how the Church is to function in order that it might bring Him glory and accomplish its mission. Every local assembly will not be exactly the same and there are many different ways to worship and serve God that fall within the Biblical pattern, but there are certain things that pertain to all assemblies. There are instructions that every meeting should obey.

The Church is to assemble -

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

NKJV

Acts 2:42

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

NKJV

The need for believers to assemble together in fellowship in a local meeting place was established from the very beginning of the Church. Many believers today neglect this need and responsibility. To do so is to neglect the will of God. It is to rob yourself of God's fullest blessing. The need to assemble is not just for yourself. We need to desire to assemble ourselves for the sake of our fellow believers as well as for ourselves.

Hebrews 10:24-25

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

NKJV

You need to come to meeting for your own good and for the good of your brothers and sisters in Christ. When God's people come together it is essential that they obey His instruction concerning their conduct and activities at such gatherings. His instructions leave room for the Spirit to lead in many different ways at different times and in different places, but always within the confines of His revealed will.

Here is an example of two different assemblies that do some things very differently, yet both follow God's instruction concerning their mission. One assembly holds their Sunday School classes and their Sunday Morning Service at same time. The other has an hour of Sunday School classes first and then a combined morning worship service with all ages. One congregation takes their prayer request and then everyone comes around the altar to pray. The other assembly simply stands at their pews to pray. One pastor uses a power point presentation when giving his sermons and projects the congregational songs on the wall. The other does not. All of those things are different from each other, but fall within the pattern given in Scripture.

1 Timothy 3:14-15

14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;

15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

NKJV

It matters to God how His people conduct themselves when they gather together.

1 Corinthians 14:40

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

NKJV

Everything that is done in the local assembly should be done decently and in order. This should always be the rule when God's people gather together. There may be shouting, singing, praise and many other things. There may be differences, difficulties and problems, but there is to always be decency and order and never carnal confusion that comes when individuals conduct themselves in a purely selfish manner without consideration for God's will or the good of others.

Ephesians 5:15-21

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

NKJV

Divine Order

To ensure such order in the local assembly God has established a divine order of leadership for the Church.

The Head -

Ephesians 1:22-23

22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

NKJV

The Lord and His will have supreme authority in the Church. He has revealed His will through the apostles:

Ephesians 2:19-22

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

NKJV

Chosen men to record truth

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

NKJV

ANY ASSEMBLY THAT TEACHES, PROMOTES OR PERMITS ANYTHING CONTRARY TO THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE IS NOT DOING THE WORK OF THE LORD AND IS OUT OF ORDER.

The Spirit is also used by our Head to direct us in a very timely way.

Revelation 2:29

29 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

NKJV

The Spirit gives us wisdom to apply the Scripture properly in every situation.

Jesus, the Head, has also given other gifts to direct His people:

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

NKJV

These gifts are given by the Head, Christ, to the Body. To reject the ministry of those given these gifts, when they are exercised in obedience to the revealed will of the Lord, is to reject the authority of Christ. These gifts are to operate in the local assembly. The gift of the apostles refers to the foundation apostles who were inspired to record Scripture. Prophets are those who foretell and forth tell the will of God. An evangelist is a bringer of good news. Pastors are shepherds that lead, guide, protect and care for a local congregation. Teachers are those who are gifted to instruct others in the will of God.

We will look at the requirements and responsibilities of those who have been given these gifts and the congregation's proper attitude and response toward those who possess these gifts in our next study, but when these gifts are operating as they should and are being given the place that the Lord intended, then there will be order and all will benefit.

The purpose of these ministries is for the perfecting or "equipping" of the saints for the work of the ministry. The end result of these gifts in the Church is to build up the saints and bring them to a mature faith and knowledge of God. The exercising of these gifts should bring the congregation to an understanding of truth. This will enable the Church to glorify God by worshiping Him in spirit and in truth.

The purpose of gathering together in Jesus' name is to come to an understanding and obedience to the will of God and to encourage one another in doing that will. Then as we depart each is to do the work of the ministry of the Church by living a life of

righteousness and being able to share your hope with those around you.

1 Peter 3:15-16

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

NKJV

Every true believer belongs to the same true Church. Everyone who has trusted Christ as their Savior is to be esteemed as a brother or sister in Christ. Nevertheless, it is important which local meeting you attend and support. We must not be satisfied with anything less than an assembly that is according to God's order. We must insist on godly leadership that is in submission to Christ as the Head and who instructs and edifies according to the revealed truth of the Word of God. Otherwise, things are out of order and we will fall short of our mission of glorifying God. Many choose to attend a meeting for all the wrong reasons. Some attend a local assembly because their children go there. Others because they like the kind of music they sing. Many attend a meeting because they like the social activities that it offers. But if you are not being built up in the truth, you are wasting your time and God's. May the Lord help us to learn to assemble ourselves together and to worship in spirit and in truth. It is possible to go to "Church" and be worse off spiritually for doing so when things are out of order.

1 Corinthians 11:17

17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.

NKJV

There are no perfect assemblies, no perfect pastors or elders or deacons that get it right every time. However, the leadership and members of a local assembly must always endeavor to desire to be conformed to the Biblical standard of what the local manifestation of the Church of the living God should be. We must continue to allow the Holy Spirit to make the changes and corrections that are necessary for us to be the shining light the Lord has intended for us to be. The moment we stop

caring, or stop being vigilant is the moment the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ becomes less bright for the world to see and be drawn to Jesus Christ through faith.

In the book of Revelation we are told that Jesus Himself during this Church Age is walking in the midst of the local assemblies and judging and evaluating our obedience to His will. May our Lord be able to say about our local assembly what He said to the congregation at Philadelphia:

Revelation 3:7-13

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

"These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie — indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

NKJV

Are we listening?

Lesson 23

Godly Leadership In The Church

Let's consider in more detail the Biblical teaching on Church government or the divine order for how the Church is to function on a local level. We established in our previous lesson that it is God's will for believers to gather together with other believers for their mutual encouragement and spiritual growth. In the local assembly the gifts of ministry should operate in accordance with the Word of God and by the direction of the Holy Spirit for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry of the Church in the world. To insure that all things are done decently and in order, God calls individuals to places of leadership and authority. God did not establish a priesthood or clergy for the Church, but He does call certain ones to lead with authority that others are to recognize for the glory of the Jesus Christ and for the spiritual well-being of all the members.

Every believer is to be an example of righteousness. Every believer is to be a spiritual leader in their daily activities. Mothers are to teach their children the fear of the Lord and be an encourager and helper to her husband. Husbands are to be the spiritual leader of the household to guide and nurture the spiritual growth of all the family members. Every believer in every situation is to conduct himself as an ambassador of Christ. However, there are gifts of ministry and administration to which not everyone is called or for which everyone is equipped. Jesus gives the gift. God calls individuals. Man's responsibility is to acknowledge God's call.

Acts 13:1-3

1 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

NKJV

The ministry is not a profession to be chosen. It is a calling to be heeded. It is a calling that other godly men will recognize and give place to and allow the gift to be exercised.

2 Timothy 2:1-2

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

NKJV

It is proper for the leadership of the local assembly to be appointed by godly men with a proven testimony of godliness. Pastors, elders and deacons should not be appointed by popular vote of the congregation, but by spiritually minded men with a testimony of wisdom and godliness. There are several different titles for the spiritual leadership of the local assembly. There are elders whose title stresses their maturity to give wise counsel. There are deacons whose name emphasizes that they are servants that tend to the physical and material needs of the congregation. There are pastors or under shepherds who care for the general, spiritual well-being of the congregation. Bishops are those who fill the role of administrator, supervisor and inspector. Teachers instruct the people of God concerning the will of God. Evangelists are gifted to proclaim the good news of the Gospel to the lost.

There is no set rule as to how many pastors, elders or deacons an assembly should have. The pattern of scripture seems to be a lead pastor with elders to give him counsel. Sometimes, out of necessity, a single pastor has to be the elder, deacon, preacher and teacher. Those in place of leadership have specific responsibilities. Though these offices and gifts are to be respected and valued they are not to be considered a place of superiority, but rather a place of great responsibility.

1 Peter 5:1-4

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

NKJV

A pastor is to feed the spiritual flock with the spiritual food of the Word of God. He is to diligently watch over them and their spiritual condition and direction. He must not do so grudgingly, but willingly with a genuine concern for the well-being of the flock of God. Not for filthy lucre, not merely as a way to make a living, but a willing response to the call of God. A godly pastor is not a dictator that orders people around to fulfill his own carnal and selfish desires, but is one who is an example of seeking and doing the will of God. The reward for such faithful stewardship will come from Christ Himself, the True Shepherd.

Acts 20:28

28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

NKJV

Obviously, to carry out these responsibilities God has given those in leadership certain authority. With that authority comes extreme obligation to God and to the people of God.

Specific requirements

There are not two standards of conduct, one for the leaders and another for the so called layman. Every believer should allow God to bring about these virtues and character in their life, but for those in places of leadership they are required. Godly leaders are not perfect men who never make a mistake. If I thought that was what God demanded, I could not stand up and preach and teach and pretend that I was such a man. However, God does demand that the leadership of the Church desire to live this kind of life and that they look to Him to enable them to be an example. When they fall short there must be repentance and a crying out to God for a restoration to faithfulness.

1 Timothy 3:1-15

1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

2 *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;*

3 *not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;*

4 *one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence*

5 *(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);*

6 *not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*

7 *Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

8 *Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,*

9 *holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.*

10 *But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.*

11 *Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.*

12 *Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*

13 *For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

14 *These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;*

15 *but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

NKJV

If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. To desire means “to stretch oneself, to reach.” Who should desire a place of leadership in the local assembly? Those who have been called and given one of the gifts. Though I believe that woman can be gifted teachers and preachers, I believe that the Bible is clear that it is God’s order for men to be the spiritual leaders in the home and in the local assembly. (see tract “Should Women Teach” at www.agfwheatridgeco.com)

Blameless - “not arrested” in other words not guilty. Since being saved, he must not have a reputation of wrong doing.

Husband of one - moral purity and faithfulness to his wife. Doesn't mean that anyone who has been divorced shouldn't be an overseer. The Bible does give license for divorce and remarriage in certain cases. (see tract “Divorce” at www.agfwheatridgeco.com) But it does mean that those who are spiritual leaders are to faithfully honor the marriage commitment to their wife before God.

Vigilant - sober or temperate, not controlled by carnal passions.

Sober - sound mind, good judgment.

Good behavior - orderly, modest. If their own life is in constant turmoil and confusion, how can they oversee the order in the Church.

Given to hospitality - lover of guests.

Apt to teach - skillful in giving instruction.

Not given to wine - addicted to wine or any alcohol.

Not striker - not prone to physical violence.

Not greedy - not fond of dishonest gain.

Patient - appropriate, mild.

Not a brawler - not contentious, looking for a fight, but a peacemaker.

Not covetous - not loving money.

Own household - if he can't keep order in his own family, he won't be able to keep it in the Church.

Not a novice - leaders must be of a proven reputation.

Good report - good testimony among non-believers.

Leaders are not without accountability -

1 Timothy 5:19-20

19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

NKJV

Any, who are proven unfit for the ministry, even though they may have been given the gift, are to be removed by other godly men.

Congregation's attitude toward those in leadership

1 Timothy 5:17-18

17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

NKJV

The congregation of a local assembly has an obligation before God for the material support of its pastor enabling them to give themselves more fully to the ministry. The support of those who minister the Word of God is an expression of the value the members of a congregation place on the proclamation of the Word of God. The congregation is to submit to, be subordinate to, obey the example and instruction of those who are called to lead them.

1 Corinthians 16:15-18

15 I urge you, brethren — you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints —

16 that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us.

17 I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied.

18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

NKJV

To acknowledge gifted men and women is to acknowledge or recognize the gift that Christ has given them and willingly receive from their ministry. We are not talking about a blind obedience, but obedience to sound doctrine and an acknowledgement of the Spirit guided ministry given for the direction of the assembly.

Hebrews 13:17-18

17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

18 Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. NKJV

The pastor and the congregation must work together. The congregation needs to acknowledge the God-given authority of the pastor or the pastor is going to be ineffective in feeding and protecting the flock. I often tell individuals that I need to admonish or correct that I have no real authority over them, but what they acknowledge that God has given me. I can't force anyone to change or stop doing what they shouldn't be doing or make them do what they should. That's not my place. All I can do, all that I have been called to do, is to point God's people to the revealed will of God and have them examine their attitudes and actions in the light of truth. A believer can reject that authority and get angry with the pastor or they can listen to the admonition or correction and then examine it in the light of Scripture. If the admonition is in accordance with the will of God, then they should obey that admonition. What the preacher has to say about your spiritual condition does seem to matter to God. We also see the need for the congregation to pray for the integrity and spirituality of the pastor.

I have found that most people respect my authority as a pastor until it is necessary for me to exercise that authority toward them in admonition or correction. Most appreciate my faithfulness to admonish and correct others for their good and the good of the congregation, but if I find it necessary to admonish them, then I am, all of a sudden, an arrogant, power hungry tyrant.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,

13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

NKJV

Another practical area of Church government is the practical area of the funding of the operations and ministry of the local assembly. The Bible teaches that the members of a local assembly are to give tithes and offerings to be administered by the spiritual leadership of the assembly. Many Churches and denominations have to resort to fund raising programs because their members have never been taught God's order. Most Christians only give if it is something they are interested in or

excited about. Otherwise they don't give. If everyone in the congregation only gives to support specific projects or programs that they are interested in the assembly will not be able to function as it should. The pastor, the deacons and the elders are the ones that have been placed in the position and responsibility to best know the overall needs of the assembly and how best to administer the tithes and offerings of the congregation.

The precedent of giving tithes to the work of the Lord was established with Abraham before the giving of the Law. We are to give a tenth of our income to the work of the Lord. The Law set the storehouse example of collecting tithes and offerings that were administered by God's chosen spiritual leaders, the priests.

Malachi 3:10

*10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the Lord of hosts,
"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you such blessing
That there will not be room enough to receive it.
NKJV*

Nehemiah 12:44

*44 And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered.
NKJV*

The New Testament Church follows the pattern of the Old Testament tithe and offering being administered by those whom God has called to leadership in the assembly.

Acts 4:34-35

*34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,
35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.
NKJV*

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:

2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

NKJV

2 Corinthians 9:5-15

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

9 As it is written:

"He has dispersed abroad,

He has given to the poor;

His righteousness endures forever."

10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,

11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,

13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,

14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

NKJV

As we each submit to God's divine order the light of the Gospel will be able to shine unhindered from our local assemblies and through our individual lives for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Lesson 24

The Second Coming Of Christ

Many denominations today have abandoned the teaching of the literal return of Jesus Christ. The goal of many religions today is to try to make life on this earth a utopia for all. This life is the heaven that many try to create with their teachings and religious efforts.

Is this life the heaven we should be looking for and striving to create?

1 Corinthians 15:19

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

NKJV

Many associate the belief of the return of Jesus with fanatical cults like David Karish and Jim Jones. There are nuts out there who claim to be Jesus Christ returned to earth. Jesus warned that such imposters would come.

Luke 21:8

8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.

NKJV

There are those like, Harold Camping, who think it's their job to predict the exact day in which Christ will return. When those predictions prove false, then the world mocks the validity of the doctrine of Christ's return altogether. The doctrine itself teaches us that we cannot know the day or the hour.

Matthew 24:36

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

NKJV

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

NKJV

The Bible tells us how to recognize imposters, while we anticipate His coming. We need to ask ourselves and settle the question, “are we fanatical nut jobs for believing that Jesus is literally going to return from heaven, put down man’s rebellious governments and set up His own eternal kingdom?” “Is the doctrine of the literal return of Jesus Christ truly a fundamental and essential doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?”

John 14:1-3

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

NKJV

Jesus said He is preparing a place for us and is coming to take us to that place. If we cannot believe this promise of Christ, we cannot believe anything He promised or taught.

As we study the Bible and what it teaches about the second coming of Christ we quickly find that there are two aspects to His 2nd coming.

1) His coming to the Church

2) His coming in glory with His Church to save and restore a remnant of Israel

To help us outline what the Bible teaches about His coming we will ask 4 questions about both aspects of His coming.

1) What precedes His coming?

2) How or in what manner does He come?

3) What takes place at His coming?

4) What takes place after His coming?

His Coming To The Church

1) What precedes His coming?

We often speak of the signs of the coming of the Lord and well we should, for the Bible tells us there will be signs. However, most of the signs that we are told about immediately precede His coming in glory. Nevertheless, if we are already beginning to see the signs of His coming in glory, that means that His coming to the Church is only that much closer.

There is only one main sign that is said to point to Christ's coming to the Church. That sign is a condition of apostasy in the Church.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;

5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

NKJV

2 Timothy 3:1 - 5

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

2 Timothy 3:13 - 17

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

NKJV

Apostasy is a falling away from the truth. The world gets bolder and bolder in their rebellion against God's righteousness, but we see the very Church that is supposed to be representing His righteousness forsaking righteousness and proclaiming its own standard. The visible Christian Church speaks of God, but rejects the authority of His Word. The sad condition of the Church is a sign of the soon return of the Lord. Obviously, there has always been apostasy in the Church, but in our day apostasy is what characterizes the Church.

Those who seek and follow after truth as revealed in the Word of God are the remnant of the Church and that remnant grows smaller with each passing day. Those who faithfully follow after truth and proclaim it are persecuted by the world and the rest of the Church. But that persecution and the faithfulness of the remnant is also a sign of the coming of the Lord. Even the false prophets like Harold Camping that bring such reproach to the Gospel of Jesus Christ are a sign in and of themselves of the coming of the Lord.

Matthew 24:11

11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

NKJV

2) How does He come?

His coming to the Church is often referred to as His secret coming for He does not reveal Himself to the whole world at this time.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

NKJV

The only ones that are mentioned that are affected and are aware of His coming are those who are in Christ. He comes in secret as far as the world is concerned, but in power and rejoicing for believers. He does not come to earth at this time. We are caught up to meet Him in the air.

3) What takes place when He comes?

Jesus returns with the spirit and soul of those who have died in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:8

8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

NKJV

They are reunited with the body that has been transformed and glorified.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed —

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

NKJV

There are ranks of glory and resurrection, but this is the pattern for all who have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

4) What follows the rapture of the Church?

2 Thessalonians 2:3-12

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

NKJV

The first rank of believers represented by the Four Living Ones and 24 Elders in the book of Revelation are the only group we see taken to heaven before the Anti-christ comes on the scene peaceably. Thus it is the faithfulness of Spirit filled, Spirit led believers that restrain his coming. Once they are removed, the Anti-christ begins his vicious career. The first 3 1/2 years are characterized by natural disasters, economic hardship and wars. God allows Satan's man to inflict his cruel deception on the nations in order to judge their unbelief. He allows Israel to be persecuted in order that they too might be judged and that a remnant might be refined and redeemed. After the middle of the week all the Church will have been taken out and the great

tribulation begins and God's wrath will be poured out on a Christ rejecting world.

Revelation 12:12

12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

NKJV

His Coming In Glory

1) What proceeds?

Matthew 24:3-20

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

15 *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),*

16 *"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

17 *Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.*

18 *And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.*

19 *But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!*

20 *And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.*

NKJV

Matthew 24:36-39

36 *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.*

37 *But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

38 *For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,*

39 *and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

NKJV

Wars, famines and earthquakes will increase as the coming of the Lord in glory nears. There will be renewed and intensified hatred of the Jews by many around the world. Moral degeneration will continue to increase with absolutely no conscience or understanding of what is right and wrong. Finally, will come the abomination, the anti-christ setting himself up as God in the temple that will have been rebuilt in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 14:1-3

1 *Behold, the day of the Lord is coming,*

And your spoil will be divided in your midst.

2 *For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem;*

The city shall be taken,

The houses rifled,

And the women ravished.

Half of the city shall go into captivity,

But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

*3 Then the Lord will go forth
And fight against those nations,
As He fights in the day of battle.*

NKJV

Just as it looks like Israel will be wiped out forever, Jesus returns to deliver His earthly people.

2) In what manner does He come?

Zechariah 14:4

4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,

Which faces Jerusalem on the east.

And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,

From east to west,

Making a very large valley;

Half of the mountain shall move toward the north

And half of it toward the south.

NKJV

Acts 1:11

11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

NKJV

Matthew 24:26-31

26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it.

27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see

the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

NKJV

This time He comes in great glory and the entire world will see Him.

3) What takes place?

2 Thessalonians 2:8

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

NKJV

The anti-christ is destroyed and Israel is delivered.

Revelation 19:11-21

*11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called *Faithful and True*, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

*13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called *The Word of God*.*

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those

who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

NKJV

Nations are destroyed at the battle of Armageddon. The nations are so arrogant in their display of power and authority, giving no regard to the Almighty. When He comes, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him to be Lord.

4) What follows?

Revelation 20:6

6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

NKJV

1,000 years reign of Christ on the earth will begin. It will be characterized by peace and righteousness. After the kingdom age to come there follows a short-lived rebellion. Then...

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

27 For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.

28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

NKJV

The Son will turn the Kingdom over to the Father and the Day of God, eternity begins.

Revelation 21:1

21 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

NKJV

Hebrews 12:26-28

26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."

27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

NKJV

Jesus is coming! May we be found serving Him in love and anticipating His soon return.

Lesson 25

Rewards

This lesson is on the doctrine of rewards. The word that many times in the New Testament is translated "rewards" has the meaning of "payment for services rendered, award for performance or compensation for sacrifice." Salvation, eternal life, forgiveness of the guilt of our sins, are never called a reward in the Bible. Salvation is God's gift of grace, unmerited favor, to be received by faith. Every believer is eternally complete in Christ. There is nothing more we need to do or add to make ourselves or keep ourselves accepted by God or worthy of heaven. Jesus did it all and our salvation is complete.

Colossians 2:9-10

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

NKJV

Because the Bible is very clear on Salvation being God's gift of grace, some feel the teaching of rewards is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. They feel no one deserves anything, so everyone who is saved by grace will all have the same inheritance. God loves all His children equally so surely He will give each of His children the exact same inheritance.

The fact that works clearly have no place in God's plans to redeem us, should not lead us to conclude that works have no place in God's plans for those who are redeemed.

Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

NKJV

Unto Good Works, Before Ordained – Every believer has a life to live, a walk to walk, a course to run, a service to render that has been ordered by God and for God from past eternity. All have been given the same provision to succeed, but not all avail themselves to the promise and this is what distinguishes one believer from another. If we want to bring God the greatest glory, it should be our ambition in life to faithfully walk in the ordained works that God has planned for us. If God has promised to reward such faithfulness, which He has, we should say, like David and Mary, “so be it unto me according to your Word.” **(2 Samuel 7:27 - 29 / Luke 1:38)**

Our motivation for being found worthy of reward is not pride or competition, but love and appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:15

15 Be diligent (put forth prompt, earnest effort) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

NKJV

Some of God's people are going to be approved, past the test, qualify. Others will not. The word translated "approved" is the word that the Greeks used to describe metals that had been tested and found fit and sound.

1 Corinthians 9:27

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

NKJV

The word disqualified means castaway. It is the same word with a negative in front of it that Paul used in **2 Timothy 2:15**. Not approved. The big question is, approved or disapproved for what?

There is a difference between being accepted by God and being acceptable to God. A child who is dressed for Sunday School and then goes outside and plays in the mud will be accepted by his mother when she calls him in to go, but he will not be acceptable. He will be disciplined and then cleaned up and made acceptable.

Everyone who has put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is already eternally accepted by God and made worthy of Heaven. Our eternal destiny is not the subject of these verses. That work is done. After one is saved he or she is now made fit to serve the Lord. It is God that enables and equips us to serve Him, but He graciously promises to reward those who render Him faithful, loving service.

1 Corinthians 3:5-15

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

NKJV

Verse 8 clearly says that each will receive their own reward. Verse 14 says that if one's work abides, endures and passes the test, he or she will receive a reward. Our work, our service to God is not done until our life is over so the final test will not come until our life is over. God will reward faithful, loving service. A life that is surrendered to the will of God, no matter what temporal sacrifices are necessary, no matter what labor or effort is required, will be compensated with eternal reward that is over and above the gift of eternal life and the basic inheritance that all Christians will enjoy.

Different degrees of rewards

It does not take much investigation to observe that there are many degrees of faithfulness and service to the Lord among believers. Faithfulness is the direct result of faith. There are degrees of faithfulness because there are different degrees of knowing and believing God's Word. The Bible speaks of little faith, great faith and even faith the size of a mustard seed.

Where does faith come from? -

Romans 10:17

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

NKJV

Faith comes from hearing and receiving God's Word. The Word will bring forth a harvest of faith and works of faith.

Matthew 13:23

23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

NKJV

The size of the harvest depends on how much seed takes root. The degree of your faith and therefore your faithfulness depends on the degree that you know, receive and apply the Word of God to your life. The greater the harvest, the greater the glory that it brings to God for it's His seed and His harvest. Some are just content to know that they are saved and never go on to grow spiritually. They seldom attend church services or Bible studies. Their fellowship is based on what God can and should do for them. Others are willing to make any and all sacrifices necessary for their own spiritual growth and for that of others. And there are many different levels between the two. Scripture acknowledges different degrees of faithfulness and teaches that the reward will be proportionate with the service. We have already read that every man will receive his own reward according to his own labor. Paul's teaching clearly indicates that the reward is a very individual matter. Some will be scarcely saved. Others will have some things in their life remain standing to receive a degree of reward and others, who have diligently sought to use only sound doctrine and the life of Christ to build their life, will be rewarded more highly than those who did not exercise the same degree of faith. Jesus told His disciples to lay up treasures in Heaven (adding to your heavenly inheritance) by serving the Lord with sincerity, godliness and faithfulness.

Matthew 6:19-21

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

NKJV

If every believer has the same amount of treasure in heaven that God gives every Christian, why did Jesus tell His disciples to lay up treasure in heaven? There is an inheritance that every child of God has by virtue of being one of God's children, but it is possible to add to that inheritance.

2 John 8

8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

NKJV

A full reward is promised to those who continue in truth and who resist false doctrine and false teachers.

Philippians 4:17

17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

NKJV

Believers who allow themselves to fall into the snare of false doctrine and carnal living will suffer the loss of reward.

Peter talks about an abundant entrance into heaven being given those who are faithful to spiritual maturity.

2 Peter 1:5-11

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

NKJV

When are these rewards presented and received?

Without question the rewards of faithfully serving the Lord begin in this life and are immense.

Answered prayer for example:

1 John 3:20-22

20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

NKJV

Likewise, there are consequences to be suffered in this life for spiritual unfaithfulness to the Lord.

Proverbs 13:15

*15 Good understanding gains favor,
But the way of the unfaithful is hard.*

NKJV

But to limit God's reward for faithfulness to this life is to lose sight of God's eternal purposes. Remember, Jesus said lay up treasures in heaven. Also, the examining fire that will prove the worth of the works of our life can only be applied after this life has been completed.

Revelation 14:13

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

NKJV

Revelation 22:12

12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

NKJV

His reward is with Him and will be awarded at His coming.

2 Corinthians 5:10

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. NKJV

The believer will never be condemned, but our works will be judged and rewards handed out or withheld based on the judgment or assessment by Christ of our works. To make this present life the time of the judgment seat of Christ is to miss the whole character of the context of the verses that proceed Paul's declaration. He is speaking of eternity and what awaits us. Paul writes about being absent from the body and present with the Lord. What's more, he writes that we must or we are bound to appear, not that we are now appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment is of things done while in the body. The final judgment of those things can't be given until I am done with this body and am absent from it.

Romans 14:10

10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

NKJV

Romans 14:12

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

NKJV

Clearly, the Bible teaches that the differences in the degree of faithfulness to do the will of God among God's people now, in this life, will have an effect on our inheritance in Heaven. May we not allow the enemy to rob us of God's best. May we not allow the enemy to rob God of the greatest glory for the work of His Grace in us and through us.

Colossians 2:18

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

NKJV

Let no one cheat you or beguile or defraud you of your prize and cause you to be disqualified. The phrase "cheat you of your reward" is a translation of the Greek word *katabrabeu* (NT:2603) which means "to decide as umpire against one, to declare him unworthy of the prize; to defraud of the prize of victory." (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon) Satan cheats us when we allow anything or anyone to distract us from walking in the ordained works of the will of God for our life. When our

motives, words and actions contradict the revelation of the Word of God we are allowing Satan to cheat us of God's best.

Revelation 3:11

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

NKJV

Unfaithfulness results in the loss of reward that God's grace has freely offered to all believers. God is able to cause everyone of us to abound in His will, but the choice is ours. To what degree do we surrender our will to His?

In our next lesson we will look at some specific rewards that are mentioned in the Bible that will be given to those who will have been found faithful.

Lesson 26

What Rewards Are Given To The Faithful?

We have so far discovered that our Salvation or eternal life is not a reward, but a free gift of God, received by faith. But we have also discovered that the Word of God emphatically teaches that every believer has a walk to walk, a course to run, a service to render that has been ordered by God and for God. All have been given the promise of provision to succeed, but not all avail themselves to the promise of God's grace and this is what distinguishes one believer from another now in this life and those differences will merit different degrees of reward or loss of reward in eternity.

1 Corinthians 3:15

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

NKJV

2 John 8

8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

NKJV

Clearly, how the believer lives his life has an impact on our inheritance and position in heaven for eternity. We have read

Biblical phrases like, “a workman that does not need to be ashamed,” “full reward” and “abundant entrance” as well as “those who suffer loss” and who are “saved yet so as by fire.” Paul teaches that every believer will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ where our deeds done in this life, as the servants of the Lord, will be examined. Each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

I readily admit, there are some things I don’t fully understand about how the giving and receiving of rewards in heaven will transpire. It is clear that some believers in heaven will be aware of their shame and loss in failing to obtain God’s best.

1 John 2:28

28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

NKJV

We know that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. We know that the fleshly nature will not inherit heaven. We know that heaven is a place of rejoicing for all its inhabitants. So when and how will the shame and sense of loss be felt and expressed by those who are examined by the fire of examination and whose works in this life are burned up? I don’t know. I only know that I want to be a workman that is not ashamed before my loving Lord.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

NKJV

I want to be found faithful to the One who gave Himself for me. And it’s important for us to know that we can be. All it takes is a desire and a surrendering to the grace of God.

What are the actual rewards that are offered? Money? Possessions? Power? There are several specific rewards mentioned in the Bible, but the reward for faithfulness is not a thing, but a person and a position next to Him.

James and John valued and esteemed a closeness to Christ in His kingdom.

Mark 10:35-45

35 *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."*

36 *And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"*

37 *They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."*

38 *But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*

39 *They said to Him, "We are able."*

So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized;

40 but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."

41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.

42 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.

44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

NKJV

Though their understanding of that place close to Jesus in eternity was incomplete and their motives may or may not have been tainted with selfishness, Jesus does not deny that such a place will be enjoyed by some. In fact the indication is that such a place is reserved for those to whom the Father will give it. It is not obtained by merely asking, but by being willing to drink the same cup of suffering that Jesus did. The cup that Jesus drank from was the cup of rejection by the world while doing the will of God. In other words, the closest place to Jesus in eternity is given as a reward for faithful service to God and to His people.

2 Timothy 2:12

12 If we endure,

We shall also reign (as a co-regent) with Him.

If we deny Him,

He also will deny us. (that close place)

NKJV

Romans 8:17

17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

NKJV

The New Testament utilizes several descriptions of this place of honor given as a reward to faithful believers in heaven. One of the favorite ways to describe this high reward is to describe it as a crown.

Crowns -

Several crowns are offered those who faithfully serve the Lord out of love for Him. They represent that close place that James and John sought after.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

NKJV

Incorruptible crown - The crown represents the highest glory, power and privilege offered as an award for performance.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

NKJV

Crown of righteousness - Because Paul fought, ran and kept or obeyed, a crown was reserved for him.

James 1:12

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

NKJV

Crown of life - The Crown of life and eternal life cannot refer to the same thing since eternal life is a free gift from the Shepherd to His sheep. The crown of life is given only after one has endured and after having been tried and approved as fit.

Revelation 2:10

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Faithfulness until death is never said to be a requirement to possess eternal life.)

NKJV

1 Peter 5:4

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

NKJV

Crown of glory for pastors

This crown is promised to pastors, but those who acknowledge the ministry of godly pastors will also be eligible for this crown.

Matthew 10:40-42

40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

NKJV

Every Christian possesses the incorruptible seed of Christ within. Every believer has been made the righteousness of God in Christ. Every child of God has life and will be glorified, but these crowns represent the highest degree of entering into God's grace awarded to the faithful.

The motivation to win these crowns is one of love for the Lord Jesus Christ -

Revelation 4:4

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

NKJV

Revelation 4:9-11

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

11 "You are worthy, O Lord,

To receive glory and honor and power;

For You created all things,

And by Your will they exist and were created."

NKJV

The faithful saints will cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus knowing that they were faithful only because of His faithfulness as their Savior and High Priest. They are close to Him and rule jointly with Him as a reward for their faithful service in this life.

1 Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

NKJV

Your labor in the work and will of God is not in vain. We must fall in love with Jesus Christ if we are going to be faithful believers. However, knowing that our love for Him, no

matter what the sacrifice, will not go unrewarded, will give us strength and encouragement to press on. Our love for Him will motivate us to faithfulness and God's promise is that faithfulness will be rewarded with the closest place to our Beloved in eternity.

Philippians 3:7-14

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

NKJV

To win Christ is to be found worthy of ruling with Christ in eternity as His queen, His eternal partner. This closeness to Christ is offered as a reward, not a gift. Without question we are only able to win Him, by His grace, but we must surrender ourselves wholly to His will and the work of His grace. What a small price to pay to win such a glorious and eternal prize.

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

NKJV

He ran for us, let's faithfully run for Him.

Lesson 27 **The Bride**

The Requirements To Be The Lamb's Wife

Revelation 19:6-9

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

NKJV

This lesson will be the last in this series of lessons on essential doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was my intention to give a systematic series of lessons on the basic, fundamental and essential doctrines that were revealed to the Church that clearly declare our mission and our message as believers in Jesus Christ. This final doctrine is the pinnacle to which all other Christian doctrines point.

In our study of rewards we discovered that rewards have more to do with the favored place in eternity at the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal kingdom than with things. It is a place that is going to be awarded to the faithful saints of this Church Age that will make up the company of believers known as

the Lamb's wife. All Christians will have a home in heaven and enjoy the blessings of eternal life, but not all will occupy the same place in glory. Some will enjoy a greater inheritance and reward than others. There are the guests that are invited to the marriage supper who are blessed and then there is the Lamb's wife who was granted the privilege of wearing the wedding gown.

The emphasis of the previous lesson was to remind us that such a place has been offered us and that it is a prize and a reward that is worth whatever investment of sacrifice and service and training we are called on to make in running this race course of life in the will of God. It is the place that God desires for us.

I want to continue to consider this favored place in eternity at the right hand of the Son of God, but with a focus on the Scriptural requirements for winning this prize.

What does it take to win Christ?

We touched on some of the requirements in our last lesson, but I want us to consider them more closely this morning. This doctrine of a favored place in the eternal kingdom of Christ has come to be known by a number of different names: Bridal Truth, Out Resurrection, Full Overcomers. Paul uses the marriage analogy twice to describe this place, but never once uses the word Bride. Did he preach Bridal Truth? Yes, he did, but he used a variety of other expressions to present this favored place offered to believers: Victorious soldier, winning athlete, farmer, servant, crowns all speak of the same favored place that is to be occupied by the company of believers known as the Lamb's wife.

Paul did not just talk about the existence of such a place. Paul stressed in his writings the requirements to obtain to that high place. Paul proclaimed the glorious, spiritual and eternal purposes of God, but he also stressed the practical application and effects of those purposes in the daily life of the believer. When you hear a lesson or sermon on what God requires of those who will be rewarded the highest place in glory, you are hearing Bridal Truth whether or not the word Bride is ever used. In fact, I believe that every sound doctrine taught in the God's Word for this Church Age is directly linked to this glorious prize. Each point of doctrine is like a building block in a pyramid that starts with the foundation of Jesus Christ and builds and builds until you reach the pinnacle block which is the doctrine of God's best offered in eternity to those who believe. Without all the other

blocks, the pinnacle block cannot properly be seen or displayed as it was intended to be.

Sometime back, I received a letter from a young man from South America who asked me if it was a requirement to be in the Bride of Christ to attend a Church that was associated with our group and with our missionaries and teachers. I wrote him back and told him absolutely not. From time to time there have been those among the “Grace Movement” that have pretty much declared that unless you attend their Church or Bible School you cannot be in the Bridal company. I believe the Bride, like the Church in general, will be made up of individuals from every tongue, people and nation from around the world and many of them, probably most, will have never heard of me or any of the teachers that have been influential in my life. How will they know about the Bride then? From the same source as my knowledge of this place, the Bible, by the same revelation of the Holy Spirit that gave me an understanding of this place and what’s required to obtain it.

Any Christian that understands the Biblical requirements for winning Christ and that submits to them will be a part of the Bridal Company no matter what name is above the doorway of the Church that they attend. However, the sad reality is that there are fewer and fewer Churches that are teaching the sound doctrine of the Word of God that enables the Lamb’s Wife to make herself ready. Fewer and fewer are faithful to proclaim the whole counsel of Paul’s Gospel and so to attend such an assembly is to deprive one’s self of the necessary material required to make the wedding garment to be the Lamb’s wife.

Of course, another sad reality is that there are those who do attend Churches where the whole counsel of God is being taught and yet they fail to avail themselves to all that God has for them. They fail to follow the requirements to win Christ and they disqualify themselves for that favored place by their own unbelief and carnality.

When we get to heaven, the Lord is not going to ask us what Church we attended to determine if we will be granted to be arrayed in the wedding dress. He will not ask us if we have heard of the Bridal Truth. He will, however, know whether we have been faithful to Him and His revelation of what He required of His followers.

So what are the requirements? What are the righteous acts of the saints that are the material for the wedding gown of the Lamb's wife? The requirements are found in knowing and obeying all that is revealed in the Word of God to be His will for us in this Church Age. A complete study of the requirements to win Christ involves a complete study of the Bible. Such a study takes a lifetime. Preparation to be the Lamb's wife is a process that takes a lifetime. Sometimes God does a quick work when one's life span is short, but those who dedicate themselves to knowing and obeying God's Word in whatever time God gives them on earth are dedicating themselves to making themselves ready for the most glorious event of time and eternity.

Let's consider Paul's summary of his own life as a summary of the requirements to win the highest place in glory.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

NKJV

These three things, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" could serve to summarize all the requirements for winning the crown of righteousness, the crown or reward for doing the right thing in God's sight. This

crown represents the same favored placed seen in **Revelation 19**. The motivation is love for the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not win Christ by loving the Bridal truth. You win Him by loving Him. That love will motive you to fight, run and guard the truth.

I have fought the good fight

This phrase points to a struggle with an adversary like a wrestler or boxer or even a soldier where the stakes are even higher. The things required for a wrestler or a soldier to be successful against their opponent are the same things that are required for a child of God to be awarded the crown of righteousness.

Obedience –

James 1:22

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

NKJV

James 1:25

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

NKJV

A good wrestler is going to listen to his coach and do what he is told. A good soldier is going to carry out the orders of his or her superior.

1 Timothy 6:11-12

11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

NKJV

It is impossible to fight successfully against our adversary unless we obey our General's loving orders and we occupy ourselves in the things that He says will protect us from the enemy's attacks and overthrow his purposes against us.

Alertness

Don't be ignorant of Satan's devices. Know the traps and avoid them.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-7

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

NKJV

Most of God's people are asleep when they are supposed to be on guard duty. Instead of being alert in occupying in the things that prepare us for eternity, the majority of the Church has been lulled to sleep with things that pacify the lusts of the flesh.

Preparedness

Ephesians 6:10-20

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints

19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

NKJV

Most Christians are not prepared to wrestle with the adversary because they have not put on the Word of God. They can't resist and defeat Satan's purposes because they don't understand God's purposes as revealed in His Word.

Suffering –

2 Timothy 2:3

3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

NKJV

One requirement that Paul and the other New Testament writers repeat probably more times than all the other requirements is the requirement to suffer. When you follow Christ in a Christ rejecting world, you will suffer because of that association with Him and His will. It is not always fun or easy to be identified with Christ and His ways in a world that is influenced by the powers of darkness.

2 Timothy 3:10-12

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,

11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

NKJV

Does your manner of life so reflect the will of God that your adversary and his followers target you to resist you and make your way difficult? Don't give in under the pressure, like

Paul, Peter and John, glory in the privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ.

Philippians 3:10-11

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

NKJV

Don't be distracted by the suffering, rather focus on the prize.

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

NKJV

2 Timothy 2:11-13

11 This is a faithful saying:

For if we died with Him,

We shall also live with Him.

12 If we endure,

We shall also reign with Him.

If we deny Him,

He also will deny us.

13 If we are faithless,

He remains faithful;

He cannot deny Himself.

NKJV

I have finished the race –

Discipline

One of the essential requirements for success in running track is self-discipline.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

25 *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

26 *Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

27 *But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

NKJV

A disciplined Christian life is one that is dedicated to the occupations and things that promote victory in winning Christ and that abstains from all that would hinder that endeavor. So of the things that promote winning the race are Bible study, prayer, assembling together, service to others, thanksgiving, honesty and integrity in business even with unbelievers. Things that hinder us from winning the race are anything that keeps us from dedicating ourselves to the things that result in winning Christ. If you let anything and everything keep you from reading your Bible, praying or assembling yourself together with God's people, you are not living a disciplined life. You are not running well your race. You can talk all you want about wanting to be in the Bride, but you cannot win Christ if your life is undisciplined by the will of God.

I have kept the faith

Faithfulness in living and proclaiming the deposit of Truth. It means to guard the truth.

One of the reasons that faithfulness to know, support and proclaim the sound doctrine of Paul's Gospel is so important to me is because I believe that such faithfulness is a requirement to be in the Bride of Christ.

1 Timothy 6:20-21

20 *O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge —*

21 *by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.*

Grace be with you. Amen.

NKJV

2 Timothy 2:1-2

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

NKJV

Paul encouraged Timothy to follow his example of faithfulness to proclaim the whole council of God.

Acts 20:17-32

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,

19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to

shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

NKJV

Doctrine, what you believe, what you teach, what you support, matters. The company of believers that will make up the Lamb's wife will consist of those who have been faithful to Christ and His message.

The list of requirements may seem daunting and impossible to comply with. Many Christians who understand salvation is by grace and who understand the reality of the Two Natures often shy away from talking about the requirements of being in the Bridal Company because they know that no one, including themselves, is perfect and that we all have at times fallen short of God's standard for His children. One of the most common misconceptions among Christians concerning the teaching of the requirements to be the Lamb's wife is to think that those who will obtain to that close place next Jesus in eternity must somehow reach sinless perfection in this life. There are no believers that never fall short of God's standard in this life. Being faithful and living in such a way as to one day receive the crown of righteousness is a matter of learning to fully surrender to God's work of grace.

Example

My wife doesn't sew much anymore, but at one time she was a very good dress maker. The finished product looked flawless. Looking at the finished product you'd think she never made a mistake, but in making a dress I've seen my wife make a mistake and have to rip out a seam and do it all over again. When she was finished the dress was just like the pattern maker intended it to be, not because she never made a mistake, but because she kept examining her work according to the pattern.

When she saw that her work didn't agree with the pattern, she made her work conform to the pattern, not the other way around.

We all make mistakes and fall short of God's standard for His children, but if we will acknowledge those mistakes, repent and return to the pattern given us in God's Word, we can make ourselves ready to be the Lamb's wife. If we simply ignore the pattern of God's Word and continue in our sins and carnal choices we will not be found worthy to be granted to be arrayed in the glorious wedding garment that is being sewn today by the righteous acts of obedience by men and women of faith.

If it were not possible to live in such a way as to be able to win Christ, it would be cruel for God to even say to us that such a place is offered to us. I believe God's grace is able to teach me to live godly. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is faithful to convict me of sin and enable me to abandon sin and to live righteously. I believe that God doesn't throw me on the trash heap when I fail and that His grace keeps me and calls me ever onward and upward if I will only trust Him to finish that work which He has begun in me.

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