

*Bible Studies on
Walking in the Spirit
Pathway to Production*

William Gibbs

Bible Studies on Walking in the Spirit: Pathway to Production

Copyright © 2012 by William Dixon Gibbs, III
All rights reserved.

AUTHOR'S ADDRESS

P.O. Box 165688

Irving, TX 75016

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ®, NIV ®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible ®, copyright © 2005, by Biblical Studies Press, LLC. (www.bible.org) All rights reserved. Scripture quoted by permission.

*Bible Studies on Walking in the Spirit:
Pathway to Production*

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| The Internal Make-up of Man..... | 3 |
| Make-up of Man (Chart) | 16 |
| Protecting the Heart | 18 |
| The Holy Spirit is God..... | 21 |
| The Coming of the Holy Spirit..... | 23 |
| The Roles of the Holy Spirit..... | 26 |
| The Holy Spirit is Our Teacher..... | 32 |
| What We Are Told to Do Regarding the Holy Spirit..... | 39 |
| Faith in the Flesh...and Such..... | 42 |
| The Filling of the Spirit..... | 48 |
| Restoring and Maintaining Fellowship..... | 54 |
| The Age of the Law vs. the Age of the Spirit, or Law vs. Grace..... | 60 |
| Chart: Depicting The Law (Flesh) vs. Grace (Spirit) | 72 |
| The Fruit of the Spirit..... | 73 |
| Prayer, Worship, and Other Spiritual Activities Done in the Spirit..... | 75 |
| Working in God’s Power..... | 77 |
| Endnotes..... | 80 |
| Appendix A: Scriptures on Mind, Soul, Spirit, and Heart...and the Holy Spirit..... | 81 |
| Appendix B: Expansion of Concepts in Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8, Regarding the Spirit..... | 82 |

Introduction

Most of the Christian life is lived on the inside. We are mostly “hidden beings”, which we experience internally as “ourselves”. Others experience us as a voice, a touch, an appearance, movement, and numerous expressions. But our view of self and others takes place mostly on the inside. We see evidence of God in our outer “experience”, but our interaction with God is almost entirely internal. This is the place where we must know God, trust, maintain purity, pray, and plan according to God’s will. (Spirituality flows from the inside to the outside. Satan tries to get us to start with the outside and work inward.)

The *manifestation* of what goes on “inside” takes place “outside”, and we will look at the outside. But our primary focus in this study will be on our interior selves, that part which we experience, but cannot see...our immaterial parts...our inner lives. This will place us “on location” for our spiritual encounter with God, and will enable us to pinpoint the exact spot where we have access to Him, and where He accesses us spiritually. Permissions both ways are required for this access; neither has access without the other’s permission. Sound strange? Keep reading.

We live in Christ, and Christ lives in us, but there are places where we do not go without meeting His conditions (e.g., we must be *pure* in our hearts to “draw near to Him”). And He will not access our hearts and minds without our permission. This has been explained thoroughly in previous studies. We must *choose* to give Him access to our inner parts, even though we have seen repeatedly that He already *lives* inside every believer.

By desiring Him and choosing Him, we give Him access, so that He can open our minds to His transforming and renewing work. The idea that we can refuse access to God may sound bizarre and counter-intuitive, but we know that He has given us free choice; we know that sin prevents our fellowship with Him; and we have seen that the Holy Spirit will not “control” us if the sinful nature is in charge...so there are things that we *decide* to do that prevent His access to our minds. Even new scriptural knowledge cannot process past our “brains” and into our hearts, if we are not in a place of communion with the Holy Spirit.

This series of studies deals with our inner selves and the access of the Holy Spirit to all our immaterial parts. Our interest is also targeted toward understanding the correlation between our internal *make-up* and the role of the Holy Spirit. We want to examine ways to access and maintain the control and power of the Holy Spirit within us, and what it really means to “walk in the Spirit”. We will also consider our place in the Age of the Spirit, as opposed to the Age of the Law. We live in the Age of the Spirit, but often operate under the Age of the Law. These are as different as daylight and dark. We finally have an explanation as to why we must NOT live under the Law.

Here's how important it is that you understand the content of this series. If you do not operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, you will have no resistance to sin, you will produce no "divine" good, you will not please God, your plans will not work, you will experience God's discipline, and you will be constantly puzzled as to why life is such a pit.

Unbelievers can get away with things that you can't. The world will allow them to spread their feathers and flaunt their successes, while their flesh revels in the ways of the world. But the world doesn't work that way for you. You will experience special difficulties in the world...as a believer...because the *world* is not designed to support your faith. As a believer, if you are doing "wrong", you will be disciplined. If you are doing "right" you will be tested for training. So life is no cake-walk for believers. But—if we learn to walk in the Spirit, we can be sure that everything is working together for our good, and God will supply *all* our needs. This is the "walk" we want...the pathway we choose. Let's get started.

The Internal Make-up of Man

Setting the Stage for This Study. This part of the study deals with our inner selves. We will examine the mind, the soul, the spirit, and the heart, in the light of Scripture, to see how these parts of ourselves function in our relationship with God. Each part carries certain distinctions, which exist as nuances, rather than major differences. All our inner parts are connected, interacting with seamless precision.

There's no pencil line in our immaterial selves to distinguish the parts. For example, the thoughts in the brain are hard to separate from the perception of the soul, which is—in turn—quite similar to the spirit. And *all* the parts seem to be ensconced within that *innermost* part of ourselves... the “heart”. All our parts are inextricably linked, but Scripture divides these, so we will, also. It is important to see each of our parts separately, and the whole of them taken together, because it is in these areas that we actually meet God, experience His power, understand His truth, and draw on His divine nature. It is instructive, for example, for us to know such things as what actually takes place when we are filled with the Spirit, and where the Holy Spirit lives within us, and where knowledge is stored.

Heb. 4:12 indicates that Scripture divides soul and spirit, and is a judge of the motivations of the heart. The Bible, therefore, distinguishes our parts. 1 Cor. 14:15 says, “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.” Spirit is spiritual; mind is mental...they are different. Matt. 22:37 shows this distinction, saying, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind;” and I Thess. 5:23b adds, “May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The body is the “temple”, so we will not ignore it as we examine parts of ourselves. Rom. 6:11-14 tells us to submit our bodies to God, and 1 Cor. 6:20 tells us to “honor God with our bodies”. The body is the *physical* container for all our immaterial parts...the place where the Holy Spirit is housed, and the residence for that imposing part of ourselves known as the “flesh”. The flesh, or sinful nature, can cover our minds, souls, spirits, and hearts and actually rule these parts, when we choose to sin. Then it's black-out time. The mind, soul, spirit, and heart are all corrupted, and are at the mercy of the flesh. The body then displays corruption.

As for the brain, it is the physiological receptor for knowledge, the **temporal** portal (doorway) for spiritual reality, the gate through which Bible information passes. When we are in fellowship, God will “open” our minds, so that we can process the truth received by our brains into our innermost parts (minds, souls, spirits, and hearts). These are nourished by truth, and become strengthened as vessels of faith.

The inner parts are separate, but, as we have suggested, they are closely inter-related. What follows is an imagined example of the way these parts might work together:

- Confession purifies the heart, which sends a signal to the mind to open up and allow truth in. The mind perceives the truth and processes it into the soul, spirit, and heart, which are “established” by the inculcation of truth.
- The spirit sees that the mind is open and the heart is pure, so it opens the prayer line and avenues for worship, and signals the heart to pray and praise God.
- The soul receives the truth, is strengthened along with the heart and spirit, and processes love through the mind to the brain and on to the body, where love is exhibited.
- In the meantime, confession and faith have released the power of the Holy Spirit throughout our entire being, with the result that His fruit begins in the heart and permeates through the spirit and soul to the mind and then out to the brain and body.

The actual flow of this process is conjectural, of course, but there is Scripture to back up this algorithm as “feasible”, as we shall see. Perhaps by understanding how our inner parts work together, we will have a better conceptual framework onto which we can build our connections with God’s grace and power.

When we meet God’s conditions for spirituality, He goes to work *in* us and *through* us, because we have invited Him to take over. He begins to work on our minds through our souls and spirits, and on our souls and spirits through our hearts, and on our hearts through His very Spirit...enabling Him to glorify Christ in us. This is what we seek...Christ’s glory...promoted by the Holy Spirit...through us.

Now, our internal parts....

Sub-chapter A: The Mind (Greek word: *nous*)

The Seat of Understanding. The mind is often confused with the brain. It is important to note that the mind is mental, which has the connotation of brain activity, but the mind is a separate entity all its own. The brain processes and stores information, but it does not have the capacity to hang on to spiritual truths. The “natural man” cannot perceive the reality of God, and must operate in the dark regarding spiritual matters. “Understanding”, which is the ability to perceive truth, can only take place in the “mind”, and then only under certain conditions, such as fellowship with the Holy Spirit. When the mind is engaged spiritually, understanding takes place, which means that Bible knowledge is processed into the soul (etc.), and received as a spiritual nutrient.

The Greek word for “mind” is *nous*, which means the intellect or understanding. (Endnote 1) Our interest in the mind is in the area of spiritual understanding, and not *human* “intellect” or wisdom, which cannot fathom the Creator. Unbelievers (or believers out of fellowship) can intellectually perceive information about God or Christ or faith, but they cannot “internalize” it, meaning that the concepts they grasp do not process into their innermost parts...souls, spirits, and hearts. They “know” it, but they cannot “understand” it.

Like many other things in the Christian experience, a single entity can be either good, or bad, at any given time. The mind is like that. It can be good, under the right conditions, or it can be bad. We will look at the mind under both conditions, as described in Scripture.

The Mind Can Be Bad. Here are some descriptions of the mind in a bad place or state, with the scriptures from which they were derived:

- An unspiritual mind creates delusions of grandeur and walks in pride. Col. 2:18b says, “Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.”
- Pride, competition, and greed are the result of a “corrupt” mind. 1 Tim. 6:5 says, “...and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.”
- An unbeliever or a believer out of fellowship will be corrupt in both mind and conscience. Titus 1:15 tells us, “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.”

A reprobate (depraved) mind is going to practice all kinds of evil. A reprobate mind comes from not believing God and not knowing God. Such is the state of mind of an unbeliever (possibly some believers). Rom. 1:28-29a says, “Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness....

The Mind Can be Good. These points, reflecting our minds in positive states, will be given the same treatment as the “bad mind” above, as we see in the following:

- The law of sin battles against the law of a “mind in fellowship”. Rom. 7:23 says this: “...but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”
- The mind of a believer in fellowship is opened to the truth in God’s Word. Jesus opened the minds of two disciples in Luke 24:45, which says, “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”

- The mind can be controlled by the Holy Spirit (in which case I would be in my “right” mind). When this happens, the righteous requirements of the Law will be fulfilled. The mind connected to divine power is a potent force for good. However, if the sinful nature takes over, the mind will be enslaved by sin. Rom. 7:25b says, “So then I myself in my [right] mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”
- A mind preoccupied by the world will be controlled by the flesh; therefore, God will not be important. A mind can be transformed, however, when it is renewed by the washing of the Word. Rom. 12:2a says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
- When our minds receive renewal (by receiving correct information), we can progressively discard the old self and put on the new one. Bible teaching (believed) has the effect of renewing our minds. Eph. 4:23-24 says you can be “made new in the attitude of your minds...” and “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”
- The mind is involved in prayer. 1 Cor. 14:15a tells us, “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind...” (pray with understanding).

Sub-chapter B: The Soul (Greek word: *psyche*)

The Seat of Life. The word “soul” comes from the Greek word *psyche*, which means life. (See Endnote 1) The soul is life itself, a living being, but not just an ordinary creature...the soul is a moral being, designed to exist for all of eternity, and is distinguished from—and lives beyond—the life of the body it occupies. Like the mind, the soul can be good or bad.

We will interject an admission here that the characteristics we are presenting for the mind, the soul, the spirit, and the heart are representative...not plenary. A more complete list of characteristics will be presented later in this study for all of our inner parts, and a complete list of verses dealing with each of them can be found in Appendix A, at the end of this study (back of the book).

The Soul Can be Bad. The soul has an adversary in the form of sinful lusts. In fact, *all* of our inner parts are opposed by the sinful nature, which wars especially against the soul. 1 Pet. 2:11 says, “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.” And sometimes the soul loses the battle, because sometimes the soul is bad. Acts 14:2 tells us the soul can be made to become evil, as follows: “But the unbelieving Jews raised up and made malignant the souls of the nations against the brothers.” (Endnote 2) This illustrates the influence that the world and the sinful

nature can have on the soul to prompt it to do evil. But most evil does not come from the outside, but from the INSIDE, which is where the real battle is waged. Jesus Himself said, “There is nothing from outside the man which entering into him is able to defile him. But the things going out from him, those are the things defiling the man” (Mark 7:15). (Endnote 3)

And there is something within the truths of this topic that cannot be ignored: Souls that become evil will be targeted for torment. One of the consequences for sin is the anguish it brings to the soul. Once again, welcome to life as a Christian. Unbelievers are not saddled with the same responsibilities we are. Rom. 2:9, rendered here in a literal translation from the *Interlinear Bible*, tells us about *believers out of fellowship*. The following does not make for smooth reading, but it is accurate:

But to those who even disobeying the truth, out of self-interest, and obeying unrighteousness will be anger and wrath, trouble and pain on every soul that works out evil, both of Jew first, and of Greek. (Endnote 4)

This trouble and pain comes to the **soul**. Disorientation, confusion, depression, agonizing in loneliness, and panic...these are the effects of sin on the souls of believers. This is “hell on earth”, which we as believers receive for correction, instead of “eternal destruction”, which is the outcome for those who refuse to believe in Christ. For the believer who is not living in God’s will, the outcome is unhappiness and unnecessary suffering.

Hope for the Soul. For unbelievers, there is the hope that they can be saved. Heb. 10:39 says, “But we are not of those drawing back to destruction, but of faith, to the preservation of the soul.” If they will join believers in their faith in Jesus Christ, rather than holding back in unbelief, they will avoid eternal destruction and their *souls* will be preserved. Souls can be saved, by grace, through faith.

For believers, there is hope that they will avoid the anguish that comes when the sinful nature dominates their lives. When our souls get back on track, either 1) our suffering will change from “discipline” to “testing” for growth, or 2) it will be removed altogether. Both of these are good outcomes. When souls are restored and returned to fellowship with the Holy Spirit, these souls can become the “center” for doing God’s will, as we see in Eph. 6:6, which says, “...not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the soul.” (Endnote 5) Whatever else the soul does and is, it can be the medium for the performance of service to Christ, thus pleasing God and satisfying His will. This will enable the soul to live in contentment, rather than anguish.

Jesus’ Use of the Term “Soul”. Jesus Himself commented on the soul. Observe in the following verses quoting Christ, that “life” is often used to translate the Greek word *psyche*, or “soul”:

- Matt. 6:25—“Do not worry about your life [*psyche*, soul] what you will eat or drink...is not your life [*psyche*, soul] more important than food...”

- Matt. 10:28—“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.”
- Matt. 10:39—“Whoever finds his life [*psyche*, soul] will lose it, and whoever loses his life [*psyche*, soul] will find it.”
- Matt. 11:29—“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”
- Matt. 20:28—“...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life [*psyche*, soul] as a ransom for many.”

Other characteristics distinguishing the soul as an inner feature of man, and verses reflecting these, will be provided later in this series.

Sub-chapter C: The Spirit (Greek word: *pneuma*)

Another Part of Our Inner Selves: Spirit. “Spirit” comes from the Greek word, *pneuma*, meaning “breath”. (See Endnote 1) The spirit is one of the parts of our inner make-up that we need to understand. One thing that we noticed in conducting this study is this: As we move from mind to soul to spirit to heart—we do not see discrete and separate units from one part to the next. Our inner life seems to consist of a continuum, whereby each of our inner parts is joined with the other parts in fluid connections that begin with the mind, progress through the soul and spirit to the heart, and end at the Most Holy Place...the temple within us. Of course, the sinful nature is inside of us, also, and can block our entrance to the Most Holy Place.

The Seat of Vitality, Reason, and Decision-Making. The spirit is often used interchangeably with the soul. It has many qualities in common with the soul, but it seems to have a stronger connection with the heart and with “spiritual” matters. “Spirit” comes from the Greek word *pneuma*, which frames the spirit as a vital principle of life, a place where reason occurs, a power-center for decision-making, and a source for motivation.

Our bodies are alive, because of the spirit within us. James 2:26a says, “As the body without the spirit is dead...” This shows that the spirit sustains life, just like the soul. They both disappear from the body at physical death, and are probably largely identical. But nuances can be important, and that is what we want to see. When Jesus died, He gave up His soul (Matt. 20:28, quoted above), but in Matt. 27:50, Jesus was said to have given up His “spirit”. This shows a strong connection between the soul and the spirit. As Stephen was dying after being stoned, as described in Acts 7:59, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The spirit is eternal and will be in the presence of the Lord after death, the same as the soul.

The Spirit Can be Bad, But There is Hope. Just like the soul and the mind, the spirit can be bad. 2 Cor. 7:1b indicates that the spirit can become “filthy”. This verse says, “...let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” When the spirit becomes dirty, it must be cleansed, so that it will be pure. Then we can move toward maturity and God’s holiness, and we will be trusting Him.

Like the soul, the spirit can be “saved”. Unbelievers can decide to trust in Christ, resulting in their spirits receiving eternal life. This is implied in 1 Cor. 5:5, which says, “...hand this man over to Satan, so that the flesh may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.” The spirit will be preserved, even after the body has been discarded.

As for believers, the spirit is strengthened by the grace of God, when we access that grace through confession of sins and faith in Him for provision of our spiritual and material needs. Paul prayed that the Galatians would continue to access grace for their lives, so that their spirits would be nurtured by the Lord. Gal. 6:18 shows Paul praying that grace would be working for these believers, saying, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.”

When grace is tending our spirits, because we are under the control of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to serve the Lord BY our spirit. Rom. 1:9 describes this, as follows: “For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how without ceasing I make mention of you...” (Endnote 6) Paul served *in his spirit*, just as he called on us to be “doing the will of God from the soul”. Strong correlation is shown again. Spirit and soul are mates.

Additional characteristics of the spirit, and verses that describe them, are provided later in this study. At this time, we will address the characteristics and nature of the over-arching inner quality: the heart.

Sub-chapter D: The Heart (Greek word: *cardia*)

The Heart: Definition and Scope. In the Bible, the term “heart” does not, as some claim, refer to that vital organ that pumps life-giving blood through our veins. The Greek term, *cardia*, **can** be used as the physical instrument within us that beats steadily. But the use of this term in Scripture envisages the heart as an invisible reality in our spiritual being. Thayer gives us the following run-down on *cardia* (See Endnote 1). Here, in essence and in part, is what he provides, telling us that the heart is the center for spiritual life:

- It is identified with the “soul”, or the “mind”, as it is the seat of thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, and endeavors.
- It is the center of understanding, the faculty and seat of intelligence.

- It is the “will” and character.
- It can be affected and stirred in a bad way or a good one.
- It is the seat of sensibilities, affections, emotions, desires, appetites, and passions.

Do you get the feeling that the heart more or less subsumes all the other parts of our inner lives? When we discuss the mind or soul or spirit, it is as though we are talking about each as a sub-unit of the heart. But we want to keep them in their respective roles, because that is how they are presented in Scripture. Perhaps it is better for us to see the heart as the superintendent of our inner lives, interacting with and overseeing all the other parts.

It is readily clear that the “immaterial” heart is a big and central place, yet it is something that is often downplayed, because of our “scientific” view of man as cells and corpuscles, a biological entity and not a spiritual one. But we ARE spiritual. Our true selves can be found in our inner lives, more than any state or condition that exists in our corporeal experience. But being a “spiritual” creature does not mean we are perfect, because sitting on the executive board of our hearts there are characters who will make motions and vote against us every time. This calls to mind the sinful nature, the “negative” board member. If we are not careful, the influence of the sinful nature will drag us into counter-productive patterns that will destroy our effectiveness as Christians.

The Heart Can be Bad. Our hearts are wide open for outside and inside lures that draw us toward bad thinking and behavior, making us vulnerable to attacks from the world, Satan, and the sinful nature. Rom. 16:18b says, “...by smooth talking and flattering they deceive the hearts of those who are without guile.” (Endnote 7) Being “without guile” means to be naïve. When scriptural understanding and wisdom are lacking, the heart will be a target for deceptive and evil forces that want to pull our attention away from God and toward self and the world. This is what happens when spiritual preparation and maturity are lacking.

Most of the time, evil originates from within the heart itself. Here is what Jesus said about this:

He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean’. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’.” (Mark 7:20-23)

When it comes to evil, we are self-made men. It comes from inside our beings...we create it from scratch...with plenty of help, of course. Evil comes from within us, not because the heart is bad altogether, but because we have the nature of the fallen Adam, the principle of sin, the *sinful nature*, inside of us. The hiding place for the sinful nature is in the heart. The divided heart, the double-minded man, and the “duality” of influences within us, are caused by the presence of the sinful nature in our hearts. That is because the Holy Spirit also lives there, and keeps a watchful eye on our hearts, jealously guarding them. The sinful nature

vies for our attention and wars against the Spirit, thus giving us bi-polar spiritual lives. The slope is tilted toward sin, making movement toward God a constant climb. When we let up, we slide back.

We are going to compact some of the concepts and verses dealing with evil in, from, and around the heart, into the following bulleted list:

- Unbelief and rejection of Bible understanding are the source of evil, seen as “uncircumcision” of the heart. Acts 7:51—“You stiff-necked people [refusing instruction], with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit.”
- Unbelief goes on in the heart, and is evil. Heb. 3:12—“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”
- The hearts of believers can drift into a dullness of their understanding of truth. Matt. 13:15—“For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”
- Things we say come out of the heart. Matt. 15:18—“For the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean’.”
- Hearts can resist the truth long enough for them to become crystallized into a permanent state of rejection of God. Eph. 4:18—“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”
- Since we are able to sense God’s reality through His creation, rejecting Him results in an a state of confusion and a refusal of the truth. Rom. 1:21—“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”
- Honoring God with words means nothing, if the heart is not behind it. Matt. 15:8—“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”
- The heart is the place where evil thoughts originate. Matt. 9:4—“Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, ‘Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?’”
- For good to come from us, our hearts must be pure. Acts 8:21—“You have no part in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.”
- When we do not pay attention to God’s Word, and do not know His ways, we will make mistakes. Heb. 3:10—“That is why I was angry with that generation,

and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’”

- The heart that will not show a humility that prompts the confession of sins will accumulate divine discipline. Rom. 2:5a—“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself...”
- The heart can be a dark place of incurable evil. Jer. 17:9—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is incurable; who can know it?”

There is another feature of the heart that we must point out: The heart is the *recorder for sins*. What we have called “mental sins” cannot be seen and are experienced and recorded internally, unlike “overt” sins, which can be seen. Overt sins are experienced internally *and* externally, but they are only recorded *internally*. This means that every single sin we commit is recorded on the inside...or in the heart. The memory involved in a sin can spill over to all inner parts, but the actual “record” of the sin, apart from God’s records, is stored in the heart. This is why the heart becomes filthy, and why it needs to be purified. This is why we confess our sins, to be forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness...to cleanse the heart.

The Heart Can be Good. When we get into the heart as the place where good lives, we must understand that good derives from God...He is its original source. Our heart can be good, but only by participating in the good that God produces in us. *It is not in our nature to be good, not even as believers.* We have labored through the last five books trying to understand and practice the techniques God has provided for us to participate in His goodness and exhibit His righteousness.

The heart is the battlefield for evil and good, the flesh and the Spirit, sin and righteousness. Rev. 2:23 shows us that God searches our hearts to see what our spiritual condition is. The key to our qualification for participation in God’s “good” is whether God sees sin in our hearts. If He does, His power will not be available to us. But, as we saw above, if we confess our sins, we are forgiven, and God can operate freely within our hearts, until we sin again, which usually occurs at a frequency of “often”.

Our main object as believers is to use our time as wisely and fruitfully as possible. We want to become constant in our faith, and unwavering in our commitment to become more like Jesus Christ in our walk with the Father. We want to be firmly planted and stable, or—as the scriptures often say—“established” in our hearts, which means strengthened. We see this in the middle of Heb. 13:9, which says, “It is good to be strengthened by grace...” 1 Thess. 3:13 adds, “May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”

To be holy and blameless, one of the first things we must do is assume a spirit of humility. Matt. 11:29b tells us where this humility resides, quoting Jesus saying of Himself that He was “gentle and humble of heart”. Humility begins in the heart. James 4:5 says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” So—for starters—we must be humble,

and humility comes from the heart. This is also true of faith, surrender, fear of the Lord, God-consciousness, and thanksgiving. Many good potentialities arise from the heart. We will look at a few of these.

Verses on the Potential for the Heart Being Good. The number of verses dealing with the heart as a potentially good quality are too numerous for us to cite here. But we can represent the idea that good can come to the heart, as shown in the following:

- The heart can be purified, as it must be for us to draw near to God. James 4:8—“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (cf., Heb. 10:22).
- When the heart is pure, we can call on the Lord and see the fruit of His Spirit produced in our lives. 2 Tim. 2:22—“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
- A pure heart *leads to* love, generated through us by the Holy Spirit, Who controls us when our hearts are pure. 1 Pet. 1:22 (NET)—“You have purified your souls by obeying the truth in order to show sincere mutual love. So love one another earnestly from a pure heart.”
- A pure heart *produces* love. 1 Tim. 1:5—“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”
- The heart is the place where we choose God’s way over our own. Acts 11:23—“When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.”
- The heart is the place where faith emerges. Rom. 10:10^a—“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified. . . .”
- The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts. 2 Cor. 1:21^b-22—“He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (cf., Gal. 4:6)
- When we do things God’s way, and operate in His power, we are directed into His love and the patience of Christ. 2 Th. 3:5—“May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”
- When we are in a spirit of worship, acknowledgment of God, faith, and surrender, God will open our minds to the truth, so we can feed on His Word and grow. Acts 16:14—“One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.”

- Scripture is recorded, not only in our minds, but in our hearts. Heb. 8:10b—“I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (cf., Rom. 10:8)
- We obey God’s instructions from the heart. Rom. 6:17b—“...you obeyed from the heart the form of teaching to which you were delivered.” (Endnote 8)
- Love enabled by the Spirit will be generated in all our inner parts. Matt. 22:37—“Jesus replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”
- The character of Christ shines in our hearts, so that His “light” can shine through us into the darkness of a lost and dying world. 2 Cor. 4:6a—“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts....”
- We cannot comprehend all the intricacies of God’s plan, but we know that His peace protects our minds and our hearts from anguish and misery, when we are in fellowship. Phil. 4:7—“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The heart is the place of opportunity to do “good” and follow God. It is rich and fertile ground for truth and faith. It is the place of prayer and worship. It is the place where we meet God. It is the place where fruit blossoms. It is the actual place where the Christian life is lived, and is the repository for all that God provides for our growth and production. It is the site of God’s temple within us, the Most Holy Place where we seek mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Unfortunately, we have a sign on the window of our heart which reads, “Sin Nature On Board.”

More on the Heart. There are a few additional things we want to include here concerning the heart, before we visit a “chart” showing the features of all the inner parts. The following items round out our understanding of the heart:

- Volition operates in the hearts of believers providing impetus to choose or reject God’s direction at any given time. Volition motivates the hearts of unbelievers to choose to accept or reject Christ. When Christ is accepted, the veil between the new believer and God is taken away. There is an application here for believers, as well, in that sin puts up a curtain between our hearts and the Holy Spirit. When fellowship is restored, that curtain is opened, so that we can access, or “draw near to”, God. (For a detailed study on “accessibility” for believers, see *Maturity*, particularly the chapter “God Within Us”.) 1 Cor. 3:15-16 says, “Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”
- The heart sets purposes and makes decisions. 2 Cor. 9:7 tells us, “Each man should give as he has decided in his heart to give....”

- The heart can make determinations and resolutions, as we see in 1 Cor. 7:37, which says, “But he who stands firm in heart...” (Endnote 9) This elliptical phrase tells us that the heart is a place where decisions are made, and resolve is set.
- The heart is the place where reasoning takes place. Mark 2:6 confirms this, saying, “But some of the scribes were sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts...” (Endnote 10)
- The heart thinks and plans. Heb. 4:12 says the Word is “able to judge of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Endnote 11)
- The things that we value determine the focus of our hearts. When we seek first God’s kingdom, it is because we value God and spiritual things, as clearly enunciated in Matt. 6:21: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
- The heart can have joy or sorrow. It is a place where our strength can fail, and extreme anguish can be felt. Ps 38:8-10 describes this for us, saying, “I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes.”

As we explore the role of the Holy Spirit in heaven, in the world, and in our hearts, we will see how these interact with purpose, and it will be our intention to learn how to operate in the middle of that purpose.

The chart on the next page gives a clear separation of the features of our inner parts.

Make-up of Man (excluding the body)

Chart Reflecting the Make-up of Man (excluding the body). What follows is a chart that delineates the characteristics and parameters for each of our inner parts.

| Brain | Mind | Soul | Spirit | Heart |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | |
| physical | perceives truth | life | sustains life | spiritual-life center |
| temporal | base for understanding | self | rational | soul or mind |
| decaying | spiritual reasoning | moral being | knowing/deciding | seat of passions |
| sense-oriented | sober judge | eternal | base for action | determines purposes |
| perceives facts/ideas | can be opened | has volition | a synonym for soul | seat of intelligence |
| | may be deprived | soul can love | can be saved | will |
| | may be fleshly | can be blameless | can worship | character |
| | can be renewed | can be evil | can pray | can be good |
| | | can anguish | can be filthy | can be bad |
| | | can do God's will | can be renewed | may reason |
| | | can be saved | can be preserved | Satan may control |
| | | can be condemned | can be attitude | dark when sinful |
| | | | Spirit speaks to spirit | stores Scripture |

| Brain (Cont'd.) | Mind (Cont'd.) | Soul (Cont'd.) | Spirit (Cont'd.) | Heart (Cont'd.) |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | | | grace can be with | deceivable |
| | | | can glorify God | makes decrees |
| | | | | decision maker |
| | | | | where Spirit resides |
| | | | | shows light of Christ |
| | | | | God can influence |
| | | | | sets purposes |
| | | | | may be established |
| | | | | Lord may direct |
| | | | | source of charity |
| | | | | must be pure to pray |
| | | | | errs if ignorant |
| | | | | center of faith |
| | | | | has thoughts |
| | | | | has intentions |
| | | | | grace stabilizes |
| | | | | must be pure |
| | | | | God sees and knows |
| | | | | where "sin nature" is |

A complete list of verses for each of these categories, except for the "Brain", can be found in Appendix A.

Protecting the Heart

The Heart is Central. We see in the foregoing chart that the heart plays a pivotal role in the function of our inner parts. It is the core of all spiritual conditions, and may even wrap around all the other internal states. Anything we say about the mind, the soul, and the spirit can also be said about the heart. For all the differences among the qualities of our inner lives, the heart is clearly central, and that means we must pay attention to it regarding fellowship with God, learning Scripture, and increasing our faith. Most of all, we must find ways to preserve and protect this important “spiritual” organ.

The Peace of God Protects the Heart. Phil. 4:7 introduces this topic for us by saying, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” The term “guard” is presented by some other translators as “keep”, but Thayer uses the word “protect”, also. I like “protect”, because it seems more proactive than the others. “Protect” seems stronger. This protection comes from the “peace” of God, which is interesting, because peace connotes a kind of passivity, or a lack of potency. How can peace protect us?

Peace is rendered in basically two ways in terms of our spiritual state or condition. The first is the peace we get when we become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 5:1 says, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...” We are eternally shrouded in the righteousness of Jesus Christ...all sins have been removed. We are able to commune with God because He is at peace with us due to His acceptance of the work of His Son. And we are at peace with Him, because *He accepts us*. We find peace in the assurance that, once we are His children, He will never leave us or forsake us.

The second occasion for peace has to do with the management of sins *in our Christian lives*, so they will be forgiven. By applying 1 Jn. 1:9, or *confessing the sins we know*, we have them forgiven...even the sins we can't remember. This restores fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and puts us back under His control. The separation from grace (which is loss of fellowship, *not* salvation), that occurs when we sin, results in our being disciplined to get us to confess and move back into conformity with the Word. When we are restored, peace is reinstated, and we can enjoy the benefits of God's grace and power.

The peace that protects our hearts is the second kind. Phil. 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” The term “transcends all understanding” is usually taken to mean that we just can't understand such great and holy peace. This is true enough, but consider another angle: The word translated “understanding” comes from *nous* in the Greek. (Endnote 1) *Nous* is the word we saw in the last study, which is almost always translated “mind”. This could well mean that the peace that is protecting our hearts can only operate *in the heart*, where all the heavy

spiritual lifting is done. The heart is ABOVE the mind (“transcends” it), and it is in the heart that the protection of God’s peace begins. The heart is where fellowship is restored or lost, and the place where the peace of fellowship with God can be introduced or withdrawn. If this is true, Phil. 4:7 could perhaps be translated, “And the peace of God that comes from fellowship and which rests in a place above the mind [the heart] will protect, not only the heart, but also the mind...through Christ Jesus.” The peace is in the heart, but will protect other inner parts, as well as the heart. Worried about your mind? Stay in fellowship, and it will be protected.

To have peace in our lives, then, we must get into fellowship with God by constantly confessing our sins, and then we must maintain it through ongoing and growing faith in Christ and His Spirit. We remember from the previous study how both the soul and the heart can be in anguish when sin has infested them. We are, in a sense, “crazy”, when this happens. There is no peace for us when we sin, and we are NOT THINKING STRAIGHT! Furthermore, our hearts are not protected from internal and external forces that have as their purpose to destroy our peace, corrupt our minds, and disrupt our faith. The world has no answers when this happens...Satan cannot be trusted...and the sinful nature is clueless (and not particularly concerned with our state of mind, anyway). It is only with God that we can find clear minds and pure hearts, so that we can experience the peace He offers when we get close to Him.

Guarding the Heart. Prov. 4:20-27 has something to say on this subject, and we present this passage here in its entirety, as follows:

My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

Every word in this passage carries weight, and we are tempted to “milk” these verses for content, but some of it goes beyond our current topic, so we will focus on those aspects of it that pertain to our discussion, as follows:

- “Listen closely to my words...keep them within your heart”. This instructs us to study God’s Word faithfully, and process what we learn into our hearts by faith. (cf., Ps. 119:11)
- “Guard your heart”. This has to do with keeping the heart pure, as suggested by the next phrase, which describes sin: “Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.” When we eliminate sin, first by confession,

and then by walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), we will have the peace of God in our hearts, which will “protect our hearts”.

- “Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.” When we walk in the Spirit, our spiritual paths will be level and firm, and we will be empowered to avoid sin. Sin is what we are protected from. The Holy Spirit is our protector.

Scriptural Add-ons Regarding the “Heart”. Heb. 3:12 says, “See to it, brothers, that none of you have a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.” A lack of faith results in sin, which God is seeing, because He “looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). What He sees in the heart is evil, imbedded within the sinful nature (Jer. 7:9-10). This means that evil originates in the heart, as we see in Matt. 5:28, which says, “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

The heart is where the best and the worst happens. It is where the Holy Spirit resides and controls, and it is where the sinful nature lurks. When we access God’s grace and power, we can find assets to help strengthen our weak hearts, and protect us from sin. Ps. 73:26 says, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” *All that we are*—inside and out—is weak, and will fail; but with God, our hearts will be strong and we will stay out of trouble.

This is why we must go after God with everything we have...by studying and praying and believing...and by seeking Him above anything or anyone else. Period. Jer. 29:13 says, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” No double-mindedness or divided heart here (cf., Ps. 86:11)...this is seeking God with everything we are. This is the focus of our lives. Ps. 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” When we delight in God, our desires will be to please Him, which will lead us to do the things we have learned. When we delight in Him, we will be able to pray, with David, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” (Ps. 19:14) By staying close to God, we will be protected from sin.

The Holy Spirit is God

The Trinity. There are some who rule out the tri-partite nature of God. Some claim that God is a single Person; others believe that God consists of the Father and the Son. And some allow for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but do not credit the Holy Spirit as a separate personality in the Godhead. It is our position that God consists of three distinct persons, divided in function, but united in essence. Can we explain it all? No. We hardly grasp the size of our universe, let alone the grandeur of God, Who created it. 1 Jn. 5:7 says, “For there are three bearing witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” (Endnote 12) The number is three; the number is also *one*. Three equals one. This is the Trinity of God, and the Holy Spirit is co-equal as One of the Three.

Instances in Which the Holy Spirit is Seen as God. We see the Deity of the Holy Spirit in many places. 1 Cor. 3:16 says, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” We are God’s temple, and that means the Holy Spirit (God) lives in us. Jesus recognizes all three members of the Trinity in Matt. 28:19, which says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....”

There are others. In Phil. 1:19, Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as Christ’s Spirit, as we see here: “...for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.” The Holy Spirit is also said to be “everywhere” in Ps. 139:7-10, which is offered in the following:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

The Holy Spirit also knows *God’s* thoughts, the way our own spirits know *our* thoughts. Our spirits are not only aware of our thoughts...they are part of the process that *creates* them. They are part of us...in a sense, they ARE us. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is part of the process that creates worlds, makes plans, and runs the universe. He knows God’s thoughts, because He is thinking them. 1 Cor. 2:10-11 confirms this in the following:

...but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

Part of the Spirit’s “Holy Make-up” is helping design the Ages and Covenants that specify parameters for God’s dealing at particular times with particular people in particular ways. Heb. 10:15-17 makes this clear, as follows:

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

If the Holy Spirit were not God, He would not be able to make covenants or put divine laws into people’s hearts, or forgive their sins.

Old Testament Passages Quoted in the New Testament Show the Spirit’s Deity.

In Is. 6:8 God gave a message to Isaiah to pass on to the people of Israel. This verse says, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’” Isaiah quickly volunteers to be the one to go and deliver the message from the “King, the Lord Almighty” (v. 5). The message (vv. 9-10) is partially quoted by Paul in Acts 28:26-27, following v. 25b, where Paul substituted “the Lord” with the “Holy Spirit” as the one giving Isaiah the message. The point: They are the same.

A similar connection is seen between Jer. 31:31-34 and Heb. 10:15-17 (quoted above), where the Person in the Old Testament is called, “the Lord”, and “God”, while that same Person is referred to in the New Testament as “the Holy Spirit”.

The Holy Spirit is God. We believe that has been established, and now we can proceed on firm footing, having confidence that the Person Whose name is associated with the title of this book...is God Himself.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is Anticipated. The Holy Spirit is promised or anticipated in a number of passages in the Old Testament. In Ez. 37:14a, God promises to put the Holy Spirit in us, saying, “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land.” Is. 44:3 predicts this also, declaring, “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” Joel 2:28-29 confirms the promise, as follows:

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Back to Ezekiel, we see in 36:24-27 how Scripture anticipated the advent of the Holy Spirit. This passage is quoted here:

For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

This passage anticipates not only the coming of the Holy Spirit, but the Age of the Spirit, which will get a lot of our attention later in this study.

The Holy Spirit During the Interim. There was, of course, a transition period from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, or the Age of Law to the Age of Grace (the Age of Grace is also called the Age of the Spirit). The process of moving from the former age to the new one was not abrupt, as it was bridged by the ministry of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the Church. During the time *between* these “ages”, the Holy Spirit was given in ways that differ from the way we receive the Holy Spirit now.

In Luke 11:13, Jesus described a way the Holy Spirit could be acquired during the interim period. This verse says, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” To get the Holy Spirit at one point, believers had to *ask* for Him. This is certainly not the way we get Him now...more on this later.

At one point, Jesus “breathed” the Holy Spirit onto the disciples, as we see in Jn. 20:22: “And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” After that, Christ was able to speak to the apostles through the Holy Spirit Whom they had received. Acts 1:1-2 describes how Jesus taught the apostles while He was still with them, giving them “instructions through the Holy Spirit” (v. 2b). And even though the apostles had “received”

the Holy Spirit, they had not been “baptized” with the Holy Spirit. This means that their receiving of the Holy Spirit from Christ breathing on them did not constitute the “permanent indwelling” that began at Pentecost. In fact, in Acts 1:4-8, Christ told them not to begin their worldwide ministry until the Holy Spirit had been received in all its enabling power, which would not occur until Christ ascended to heaven.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit. Here is the sequence of events for the “arrival” of the Holy Spirit:

1. The coming of the Holy Spirit was promised by Christ. Acts 1:5—“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”
2. The Holy Spirit came to believing Jews on the Day of Pentecost. This is described in Acts 2:1-4, with a summary in v. 4—“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”
3. Joel 2:28-32 is quoted in Acts 2:17-21 to link the Spirit described by Joel with the events of Pentecost being moderated by Peter. Acts 2:16—“No, this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel.”
4. The Holy Spirit’s coming to the Gentiles is described in Acts 10:44-45—“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.” (cf., Acts 15:8)
5. Following the coming of the Holy Spirit, there was a time when apostles could follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in dispensing the Spirit to believers. This was done by “laying hands” on believers. Acts 19:6—“When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other languages and prophesied.” (cf., Acts 8:15-17)
6. When the presence of the Holy Spirit was widespread among believers, the ministry of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ began. He directed the apostles in their ministries, even telling them when to go or stay. Acts 16:6-7 demonstrates this in the following:

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

This was the result of a vision Paul had received in the night, which gave him clear marching orders for himself and the apostles.

Some churches want to transplant into our time the same methods for accessing the Holy Spirit that were used during the earthly ministry of Christ...and while the church was forming. God can certainly deal as He chooses...anything can happen if He plans it...but to impose apostolic powers on ministers and evangelists of today may unintentionally invite

false teachings and practices, and may exalt experience above God's completed Word as the basis for understanding God's truth. Our position on this issue is not dogmatic, but caution is advised.

The Roles of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit Glorifies Christ. The primary role of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. The means for doing this is, first of all, to provide every opportunity for unbelievers to accept Christ, and indwelling them when they do. The second is to fill/control willing believers so they can show Christ's love to the world. The single greatest event for glorifying Christ occurs when a person turns from unbelief to faith in Jesus Christ. The next is for believers to grow in Christ and shine his light on an unbelieving world, and to love brothers enough to encourage, strengthen, and teach them. Everything the Spirit does is for empowering us, as believers, to share the gospel in courage and compassion, and to enable us to build each other up, so we can all become mature Christians that are serving God in the right way.

Jn. 16:13-15 points up the function of the Holy Spirit in honoring Christ, as follows:

But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

The Holy Spirit does not announce to the world that faith in the *Holy Spirit* brings salvation. Rather, He declares that faith in *Jesus Christ* enables one to be saved. After salvation, the communion of the believer is with the Holy Spirit, while access is given to the Father, and life is lived in the power of the resurrection of Christ. The entire Trinity is involved. But the role of the Holy Spirit is to point to Christ.

The job of the believer is to walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, so the Holy Spirit can *honor Christ* through the believer. To do this, the believer must let divine power operate by allowing the Spirit to do His job...in and through the believer. When we are "on the Spirit train" it will carry us toward the destination of Christ's glory.

John 15:26 reinforces the concept of the Holy Spirit pointing our attention toward Jesus Christ, saying, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me." The Spirit tells the world that Jesus Christ died for their sins, and that—if they believe in Him—they will not be condemned, but will live forever.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Christ. Instances are given in Scripture telling that Jesus was led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Luke 4:1 says, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert..." Luke 4:14 says, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread

through the whole countryside.” Verse 18 (still chapter 4) quotes Jesus, saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.”

The Holy Spirit was instrumental throughout the life of Christ, and was even the means for His preparation for death, as we see in Heb. 9:14^a, which says, “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God...” From beginning to end, the Holy Spirit was present with Christ, and Christ depended on the Spirit and His Father for every breath and every step. That is how it can work with us, not because we “qualify”, but because we trust that the Holy Spirit can prepare us for life, the way He prepared Christ for death...by keeping us pure.

The Role of Indwelling. We become Christians by believing in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. We “obey” the gospel by believing, and receive the Holy Spirit as a result. On one occasion, Peter spoke to the Sanhedrin and faced the inquiry of the high priest. These men were unbelievers, who were disobeying the gospel command to believe. Peter said to them, “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32). Obeying God, to the unbeliever, is *believing* the gospel message, and when this happens, the Holy Spirit is *given*.

2 Thess. 2:10^b tells what happens when an unbeliever decides to *stay* an unbeliever. “They perish because they refused to love the truth [negative volition toward the gospel] and so be saved.” Negative volition prevents reception of the gospel message, and indicates a choice to embrace sin and self over God, a result of not believing. They believe Satan’s lies, and the consequences are clear: “...all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but delighted in wickedness” (2 Thess. 2:12^b). Believing the gospel is the moment that begins the Christian life, and the time we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

In Jn. 14:16-17, Jesus anticipated the role of the Holy Spirit at salvation, saying the following to His disciples:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

The Holy Spirit is **in** us when we believe. Gal. 3:14 says, “He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” The promised Spirit of Truth of Jn. 14:16-17 (seen above) is received by faith.

Jesus was also anticipating the role of the Spirit at salvation, saying in John 7:37b-38, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” The next verse (v. 39) links the “living water”, which will “flow from within believers”, with the Holy Spirit. Verse 39 says, “By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” Verse 38

uses the term “from within”; verse 39 tells us the Holy Spirit is the one “within”, because we received Him at salvation.

1 Jn. 4:13-15 proves that God the Holy Spirit moves into our beings (our “hearts”, from previous studies) and then lives “in us”. Here is what this passage says:

We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.

He is in us...and only us. Only believers have the Holy Spirit. Eph. 1:13-14 sees the placement of the Holy Spirit as a “deposit”, as follows:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

Once the Spirit is in us, we become His temple, which is also within. 1 Cor. 6:19 describes it this way: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own....” When God lives in you, He *owns* you, even though He doesn’t always *control* you.

The Holy Spirit is not *God’s* Holy Spirit alone, but also Christ’s. All members of the Trinity are equal, even though they differ in function. And the Spirit is the Spirit. And He is the one living inside of us. Rom. 8:9 says, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” Col. 1:27 makes Christ and the Spirit identical, saying, “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory.” The richness of the gospel for believers is that the Spirit of Christ lives in us, which is to say, the Holy Spirit indwells us.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Moving us From “Condemned” to “Saved”. The Holy Spirit performs the operation of our “rebirth”, taking us from eternal condemnation to eternal life. There are many verses depicting the role of the Holy Spirit in our transformation from *unbelievers* to *believers*. Here are a few of them...with comments:

- Unbelievers do not have the Holy Spirit, and are “condemned”, whereas believers are *not* condemned, and reside in Christ. Rom. 8:1—“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- The Holy Spirit sanctifies (completely cleanses) us at salvation. 2 Thess. 2:13—“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”
- At salvation we receive an “anointing” by the Holy Spirit, which is the place of the Spirit within us that teaches us truth. 1 Jn. 2:27—“And the anointing which you

received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you. But as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and as He taught you, abide in Him.” (Endnote 13).

- We are bought, sealed (like the Good Housekeeping Seal, suggesting validation), and marked for inheritance by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us, which takes place when we believe. Eph. 1:13-14 says this:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

- In another passage, we see once more that we are anointed and sealed at salvation, and the Holy Spirit is our deed to salvation. 2 Cor. 1:21-22—“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (cf., 2 Cor. 5:5)
- Both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father through the Spirit of Christ. Eph. 2:18—“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”
- We are baptized by the Holy Spirit, Who immerses us into the body of Christ. 1 Cor. 12:13—“For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”
- We are regenerated, or reborn, by the Holy Spirit. Jn. 3:5-8 gives us this:

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

- The Holy Spirit washes us and renews us at salvation. Titus 3:5-6 says the following:
...he saved us, not because of righteousness that we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.
- The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God’s children. Rom. 8:16—“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

- When it comes to salvation, the Holy Spirit is the power that saves, and the flesh contributes nothing to the process. Jn. 6:63—“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”

At salvation, we are indwelled, baptized, sealed, anointed, and regenerated. And the deal is done. There is no more to be done for salvation. None of these will need to be repeated. We can't be “baptized” by the Spirit again, or “anointed” by the Spirit over and over, or in varying degrees. These are *fait accompli*...done at salvation without any need for repetition. They are completed by the Holy Spirit, and do not need a “re-do”...ever.

Other Functions of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does many things besides saving us. The following gives us a closer look at the range of His roles:

- The Holy Spirit was involved in creation. Gen. 1:2—“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”
- The universe is renewed and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Ps. 104:30—“When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”
- The Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Rom. 8:27—“And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”
- The Holy Spirit actually prays in our place. Rom. 8:26—“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”
- The Holy Spirit is involved in giving believers gifts which are used to build up fellow believers. 1 Cor. 12:4-6—“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.”
- Here is another passage indicating that the Spirit is the One Who gives spiritual gifts. 1 Cor. 12:11—“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” (See “Gifts”, in *Studies on Maturing as a Christian*.)
- The Holy Spirit uses our gifts to enable believers to help each other grow in faith and love, and mature for great service for God. Heb. 10:24—“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”
- The Holy Spirit can give specific directions, though directions in this age are most reliably received from the Word of God. Acts 8:29—“The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’”

- The Holy Spirit told the apostles His preference in specific instances. Acts 15:28—“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements....”
- The Holy Spirit restrains sin. 2 Thess. 2:6—“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.”
- Another verse tells of the role of the Spirit with regard to sin. Jn. 16:8a—“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin....”

As we can see, the Holy Spirit does many wonderful things. We will see others along the way as we make our way toward understanding ways to walk in His power, so our lives are meaningful and well-directed. We will see how the Holy Spirit teaches us, provides fellowship, empowers us for producing righteousness, helps us mature, and produces the character of Christ in us.

The Holy Spirit is Our Teacher

The Holy Spirit “Convinces” us of Certain Things. The job of the Holy Spirit as our “live-in tutor” is to show us what is true. If we look back on all the studies that have been completed in previous series, we recall that the Holy Spirit is in us, but that the power and resources of the Holy Spirit will not be available if we have unconfessed sin in our lives. The internal wall (veil) between the Holy Spirit and our inner parts that is erected when sin exists prevents the ministries of the Holy Spirit within us. We have learned that maturity, which is the strengthening of our faith through study and God’s training, will enable us to be more consistent in keeping the wall out of the way, and more resistant to its being built in the first place. In other words, we have learned the conditions required for the Holy Spirit to have access to our inner selves, thus empowering us to produce divine fruit.

The teaching role of the Holy Spirit becomes collateral damage when this wall is put up. The Holy Spirit is unable to teach us through the wall. Other things happen, also: Love is lost, faith is flat, prayers are nothing but sounds or empty thoughts, study is brain-work only, and we are backing up, rather than moving forward. But if we will build on the main pillars of all our studies, including confessing, praying, studying, and trusting as we go, we will be learning and growing quickly, and equipping ourselves for real service.

Jn. 16:8-11 tells us of three areas of instruction addressed by the Holy Spirit. This passage says the following:

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Here are the three areas considered in this passage, for which the Holy Spirit provides teaching:

- Sin—This applies to unbelievers...the ones whose sin is that they “do not believe”. The Holy Spirit brings information to unbelievers in the form of the gospel to persuade them to believe and accept Christ.
- Righteousness—This has two implications: a) righteousness imputed by Christ when we accept Him as the Savior, and b) righteousness manifested in “spiritual” believers by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Judgment—This is the current and future treatment of Satan, his angels, and all unbelievers. The Holy Spirit teaches us about these and all future events on God’s calendar. (cf., Jn. 16:13).

So the three major areas of instruction in the course offered by the Holy Spirit are 1) salvation, 2) Christian living, viz., righteousness produced in the power of the Spirit, and 3) prophecy related to the future.

The Holy Spirit is Our Guide into Truth. Jn. 16:13-15, cited in a previous study to show how the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, is presented here to emphasize the role of the Spirit as our teacher. This passage says the following:

But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Jesus is speaking these words to His disciples. He is announcing that that Holy Spirit will guide them into divine truth. The Holy Spirit, Who enabled prophets, disciples, apostles, etc., to write down the truths we now study, is the same One Who indwells us. He guided the writers of Scripture “into” the truth, and now He is guiding us “with” the truth. The truth of Scripture becomes meaningful and useful to us when we open our hearts to His instruction. The Word of God is the “sword of the Spirit”, as per Eph. 6:17, and He uses it inside of us to fend off false teachings and evil. Without fellowship and maturity, though, that sword becomes a foam noodle on our spiritual battlefield.

2 Pet 1:19-21 confirms that the Word of God was given to “men” to shed light on their paths. This passage gives us the following:

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Who would know more about this process than Peter? He is giving a first-hand account of how the inspired Word came onto paper through the minds and hearts of God’s appointed writers, who received *ideas* from the Holy Spirit, which were presented as *expressions* of the writers, but were directed by the Spirit in a way that preserved the divine integrity of God’s exact message. This concept is seen again in 2 Tim. 3:14-16, which tells us that the Word is divinely inspired, and is of great benefit. That is what we see in the following:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching,

rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Scripture is useful for the unbeliever, because it gives the gospel message, and for the believer, because it tells how righteousness and “good works” can be achieved. We can rely on Scripture, because it is “God-breathed”, and there is no better witness that *what we have is God’s Word...* than God’s Word itself. It is, as they say, “self evident”.

The Word is the content we need for knowing and getting closer to Him. It is our source for inspiration, truth, guidance, strength, growth, knowing God’s will, and assurance. Scripture does not just tell us what our “works” should be...it tells us HOW they are produced. Sometimes we attempt the end...without the means. And it is the Holy Spirit Who opens the eyes of our hearts to see it. Eph. 1:17-18a says just that in the following quotation:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you....

Our objective is to know Him better. When the Spirit and the Truth unite within us, and we are in fellowship, our growth takes off like a rocket (v. 17). But how is this done? This is what we will see next.

How Does the Holy Spirit Teach Us? I want to deal with this topic with as much intellectual honesty and spiritual integrity as I have in me (not for the first time, I hope). The big question is whether the Holy Spirit gives us instruction directly from within, through some divine whispering into our spiritual ears, or whether the words He breathed through the prophets and apostles (that became our Bible) are all we need to know.

We are certain of the second possibility...less so of the first. We are confident that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that it gives us a complete picture of what God wants us to know. We are not as sure about prophecies being rendered today as revelations from the Holy Spirit. We can trust the Bible, but we must carefully weigh with sensitive scales the value of all other claimants to the throne of truth.

The information in the Word is true and powerful, but to those in darkness, it is like Egyptian hieroglyphics. This would include unbelievers...and believers out of fellowship...because both are in spiritual darkness. Here’s the ticket: If a believer is in fellowship and is seeking the truth, and will open the Bible through whatever media is available, the information that is received will become spiritual nourishment that will feed and strengthen the believer and lead him toward maturity. This is because the Holy Spirit takes the information that we study from the Word, makes it clear to us, and processes it into our inner parts to prepare us for action on the basis of our growing faith.

We want to preface any further comments on our position regarding modern-day prophecy, with this: we are *not dogmatic against it*, but we are *doubtful*, that God communicates directly

with people in our present time, even with those who *seem* to be gifted to receive such information. Some things, though, I do not doubt...two positions that I am adamant about, regarding direct prophetic insight: 1) No new knowledge can be allowed to contradict the established and clear truths in the existing Word of God, and 2) the identification of Scripture as the source of truth must surmount any other source, and any additional revelation can only be used to clarify and support the Word, rather than supplant it. If we do not take these positions, we will be chasing truths about God and the Christian life into every rabbit hole around. God is not the author of such confusion.

As we look at other ways in which the Spirit teaches us, we believe additional light will be shed on His use of internal instruction. God uses many methods to teach us. He certainly clarifies Scripture within us...we could not understand it without His opening the apertures of our minds to the light of spiritual truths, but we don't need "more" truth than the Bible presents. And the Spirit does not teach "different" truths to each of us. The Word presents universal truths that enable us to live and serve in God's kingdom. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of Truth to teach us, and He delivers it to us in a variety of ways.

One way we believe the Holy Spirit teaches us in the "Church Age" is through the gifts He gives us. Rom. 15:14 shows how believers who are mature can exercise their gifts to edify (build up) each other, or actually "instruct" one another. Here's what this verse says: "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another." The Holy Spirit uses the gifts He provides (and empowers believers to use) to provide teaching for the body of Christ. Some of these gifts are solely for providing instruction, but it seems all believers can provide information to each other, based on maturity and knowledge. The gifts that are dedicated to teaching include those seen in Eph. 4:11-13, which says this:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Questions regarding "direct revelation" overlap those dealing with the existence or absence of certain gifts. We do not see clear indication regarding the continuation or cessation of gifts, though both are argued assiduously for and against in seminaries and church "councils". But the one gift we are sure is currently operational, in connection with teaching, is that of pastor/teacher. We have confidence that this gift is legitimate for our time, because this gift is used to explain what the BIBLE says. We see this primarily as a single-purpose gift which emphasizes teaching, to the exclusion of numerous peripheral functions (calling for other gifts) that face so many pastors. Their role is to teach the Word. When pastors study and teach, the Holy Spirit is teaching through their gift. That is how it is *supposed* to work.

Through pastor/teachers, we get instructions that elucidate the Scripture. In addition, we can study on our own through other means, such as reading or watching instructional dramatizations of truth, and so on. In one paragraph from a blog that I wrote for my website at www.biblestudiesforchristiangrowth.com, I stated the following:

Weak, lazy Christianity! That's what we have. The solution? Dig it out! Sit at the feet of a "teaching" pastor, but take some initiative in finding out for yourself what the Bible says. Go to biblos.com, type in the word "faith" at the top, and read the verses that are given. Do the same thing for prayer, love, surrender, hope, peace, and so on. You will be surprised how clear the Word is on specific topics.

The point is that study opportunities are more readily available today than ever before. Go to bible.org, for free articles, videos, and books; or go to tgm.org/bible.htm, for excellent study tools.

When we do study the Word, aided by the Holy Spirit, is it the Word or the Holy Spirit that is teaching us? Well, it is both. The Word is the truth, and the Spirit helps us understand and process the truth.

There are scriptures that clarify this for us. 2 Pet. 1:2-4 gives us this:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

This passage is pure gold. We have discussed in previous studies the process of actually eating and drinking the "nature" of God by feeding on the Word, which gives us what we need to escape corruption and allow God to produce His righteousness through us. But we want to focus on the phrase, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him..." All we need is received through "knowledge", which was being amassed into Scripture as Paul wrote his words. The written message was not completely done at the time Paul was writing, but it was in the process of being completed. And Paul anticipated that, once the project was finished, the complete, God-breathed Word would be available, and we would "have everything we need." This would suggest that, whatever the Holy Spirit does on the inside of us to facilitate instruction, He is using the Word as His source of information, and this *Word* comprises the syllabus and content for the entire course He is teaching us.

Since we have the completed Word, we can apply 2 Cor. 10:5a, which says, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God..." If we use any criterion other than the Word, as illuminated by the Holy Spirit within us, we run

the risk of entertaining those ideas and forces that set themselves up “against the knowledge of God”.

1 Cor. 2:6 to 3:3 speaks of wisdom that comes to us from the Holy Spirit. This passage is too long to quote in its entirety, so we will give its essence through comments and smaller quotes in the following. Please take time to read this passage before proceeding. We will give the main points here in a list:

- Paul starts off in verses 6-8 saying that the wisdom which he is “speaking” to them is for mature believers, because it is complex and new. It has been so well hidden throughout the ages that even Satan and his followers had no clue about it. This refers especially to the crucifixion: If Satan, et al, had known what was happening when Christ went to the cross, they would have engineered a plan to stop it. Oops! Didn’t see that one coming, did they!
- In verses 9-10a, Paul is talking about the *revelation* of God’s plan, as given by the Holy Spirit, which consists of 1) the gospel, and 2) the way for believers to prepare for life in the Age of the Spirit. Paul is being given the Word by the Spirit...“God has revealed it to us by his Spirit” (v. 10a).
- In verses 10b-13, the Holy Spirit is shown to be qualified to reveal the truths of Scripture, since He is God Himself, and He knows what God thinks, because it is also what He thinks. He teaches, as the Holy Spirit, spiritual truths, in spiritual words...to the spirit of man (the heart). But the “spirit” cannot receive the truths of the Spirit, if conditions are not right.
- Verse 14 gives the rub...the condition under which we will *not* learn. “Man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” The tricky term here is, “man without the Spirit.” This sounds like an unbeliever, and can be, of course. But Paul is referring primarily to believers, saying essentially this: “Without the instruction provided by the Holy Spirit, no man can understand Scripture; so, if believers are without the teaching presence of the Holy Spirit within them—they cannot grasp the knowledge of God.” But we know believers *have* the Holy Spirit within them, so what else is needed? We have seen it many times: They must be “spiritual”, which means “in fellowship” with the Spirit that lives within them, so He can teach them.
- Skipping to verse 1 in chapter 3, we see this: “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.” They were babies, and were not spiritual, even though they were believers. Verse 2 says, “I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.” They are not ready, because they are not spiritual; they are not “spiritual men” (chapter 2, verse

15), and cannot discern “spiritual truths” (chapter 2, verse 13)...even though they are believers.

- Verse 3 brings it home. “You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” They were worldly...this is why they were “not ready” to receive Paul’s teachings. These were *believers*, but carnal ones.

The point is that the Holy Spirit indwells each believer, and through Him Scripture can be learned. But the believer must be *in fellowship* for this to occur. Then all the parts can work: we will be in fellowship so the Spirit can teach us, and this will help us mature.

We still have the question, “Does the Holy Spirit teach us directly?” We cannot find clear justification for this in the Bible, since we now have the completed Scripture. In fact, the passage we just cited seems to indicate the opposite. Verse 10 in chapter 2 (1 Cor.) says, “...but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.” It *has been revealed*. ‘Sdone, as Shakespeare would say. Paul was the recipient of these divine, “spiritual” truths. They had been given to him in their entirety. To get what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us, we look to Paul...and Peter...and John...and so on. They finished the writings of truth given to them by the Holy Spirit. A claim today to have this same kind of revelation is highly suspect. To believe that these giants in the faith finished the work and closed the book under the direction of the Holy Spirit is much more believable.

Conclusion. The Holy Spirit teaches us through the Word. But the Word alone is not enough, since—without the Spirit—we cannot understand the Word. So the work of the Spirit inside of us is to interact directly with our spirits (more accurately, our “hearts”), taking the words from the Bible and causing them to become spiritual precepts and truths within us. Our hearts provide the place where the Spirit infuses His nature, the thoughts of God, through the truths of the Word. But without the Holy Spirit *in you* (meaning you are saved), and *controlling you* (meaning you are in fellowship), you’ll be in the dark and will learn NOTHING, no matter how many hours of “seat-time” you log in Bible class.

What We are Told to Do Regarding the Holy Spirit

Commands in Scripture Regarding the Filling of the Spirit. The Bible gives us direct orders concerning the Holy Spirit. The first is that we must be “filled with the Spirit”; the second is that we should “walk by the Spirit”. There is a great deal of confusion concerning the Holy Spirit, because we are sensory creatures, and we want to rely more on “experience” than on faith in God’s Word as the criterion for truth. The flesh tends to track toward sensory stimulation and emotional titillation, not toward spiritual stability and focused faith. Experiences in the body and highs in the emotions fade quickly from memory, but the Word of God sticks with you and sustains you, when all is quiet and you face the world and the ever-present forces of evil.

I will not say that “experiences” with God do not take place. I believe they do. And they can be powerful and life-changing. But these experiences cannot be our basis for determining truth or defining our destiny. Truths and insight into God’s will come from the Word of God, illuminated by the Spirit of God. The filling of the Spirit is not a flood of emotion and excitement, though these may accompany the filling. The filling of the Spirit is spiritual control and empowerment coming from God, Who lives within us. We will have much more to say about this “filling” later. Right now, we want to acknowledge that we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit...as believers.

First of all, the filling of the Spirit is not the same as the “indwelling” of the Spirit. We are indwelt by the Spirit at salvation, and that is permanent. We do not ask for it; it comes to us as one of the provisions of salvation. We are told to be “filled” with the Spirit. We will see two instances when we are directed to be “filled” or “walk by” the Spirit. These are really the same, except that “being filled” has the connotation of an event that initiates a restoration of the Spirit’s control, whereas “walking” is an ongoing condition of that control.

Here are two verses that articulate these commands, with comments about each:

1. Eph. 5:18 says, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” This analogy helps us understand what it means to be filled. When we are “filled” with wine, the alcohol controls our behavior. When we are filled with the Spirit, our behavior is directed by the Holy Spirit. Sin removes that control in an instant, so we must maintain it to enjoy the good effects of a Spirit-filled life.
2. In Gal. 5:16, Paul told the Galatians, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Living by the Spirit is a continual walk whereby the Spirit guides us as we move through life. Verse 25 says, “Since we live in the Spirit [we are in Him and He is in us as a result of salvation] let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Keeping in step is “marching”, or “walking” by the power of

the Holy Spirit. This is the life we are meant to live, in the power we are meant to have.

Commands in Scripture Regarding Alienation of the Holy Spirit. The wonderful thing about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is that we can *access* Him. The troublesome thing is that we don't do it all the time. We have our own agendas, which often omit God and God's will and plan. So we go our own way, and trust ourselves to build and live good lives. This doesn't work, which is why we have specific commands against it. We will look at two of these commands, as they relate to our walk as believers, in the following:

1. 1 Thess. 5:19 commands this: "Do not put out the Spirit's fire." Fire is energy; the energy of the Holy Spirit is His power. We are told not to kill the power of the Holy Spirit. And how do we do this? By not trusting, not praying, and not studying, or by committing any act which goes against the commandments of God. In short, sin cuts off the power. We know we have a sinful nature, and we know this makes us "wretched", like Paul. The solution for removing sin, and thus not halting the flow of power and grace into our lives, is confession of our sins, as we see in 1 Jn. 1:9, which we have cited many times. Then, by praying and studying and building our faith, we can spend more time with the "lights on", and live in the energy of the Holy Spirit.
2. Eph. 4:30 says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Once again, sin is the condition that brings grief to the Holy Spirit of God, and puts us at odds with Him. When He is grieved, He is quenched, which means that when our behavior does not please Him, we are creating a barrier between Him and us, which stops His empowerment of our inner being for love and divine service.

Expanded View of "Grieving the Spirit". By expanding the reference above in Ephesians to verses surrounding verse 30, we will see clearly what it means to grieve the Spirit, and what *we* will look like when we are *not* grieving Him. Eph. 4:22-32 gives us the following:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along

with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

There is nothing like Scripture to speak for itself. We see clearly the “good” and the “bad”. What we are establishing from our studies is that good comes from God, and bad comes from our sinful natures, encouraged by Satan and the world. We cannot avoid grieving the Spirit, unless we follow the steps God has given us for avoiding sin and producing righteousness in love.

We want to get into the actual process of the “filling of the Spirit”, but first we want to flush out those things that prevent it, beginning with...the flesh.

Faith in the Flesh...and Such

What is the True Circumcision? In Philippians 3:2-3 Paul is talking about legalistic men who were relying on cutting the flesh to get God's approval. But the true circumcision is in the heart of believers who are honoring God in their inner parts. Here is what this passage says:

Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh....

The "mutilators of the flesh" are those who operate at a fleshly level to achieve spiritual purposes. It doesn't work. To get things done spiritually, you have to operate at a spiritual level. The body in motion, without the Spirit behind it, is simply running in place. The true circumcision consists of believers, to start with, but the true circumcision is more than that. Even believers can act like "mutilators of the flesh", which means that they count on themselves to impress God, or simply ignore God and walk through life trying to solve their own problems and operate in their own power. They count on the flesh (and the world) to take care of them.

The "true circumcision" among believers is identified by three qualities, as we see in verse 3. These things are, as follows:

- We worship by the Spirit. This means we are spiritually prepared (mature) and worship in Spirit and in truth.
- We glory in Christ. The light of Jesus that we acquire from "knowing Him" shines from our faces into a dark and dying world. (See "Fighting Sin", and "The Gospel After Salvation", in *Getting Closer to God*.)
- We have no confidence in the flesh...either to please God or to solve our own problems...apart from God's grace and provision.

The true circumcision involves the things we have isolated as pillars of our Christian life: confession of sins, prayer, study, and a growing faith.

Jn. 6:63 says, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life." As we see again and again, the Spirit and the flesh are presented in contrast. The Spirit gives life and the flesh is useless, because it is apart from the Spirit. Only the Spirit can produce spirituality. Jn. 3:6 confirms this: "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." From the flesh you get fleshly behavior and attitude; from the Holy Spirit, you get spirituality.

From the flesh you get nothing. Jer. 17:5 says it well: “This is what the Lord says: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord.’” Plain enough.

Friends of the Flesh. The flesh has many friends, consisting of the world and its ruler, Satan. There is no question about the evil in the world and its traps and siren songs, but there is some dispute about how much Satan can influence our thoughts and behavior. We have to be careful in dealing with this topic, because we have established that man has free will and that not even God will direct us without our permission. But on the basis of our giving permission, it is possible that Satan or his demons could be given direct access to our inner parts.

In Acts 5:3, Satan was said to have controlled the minds of two believers. This verse says, “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?’” “Filled” has the connotation of “control”. Satan actually controlled the hearts of Ananias and his wife. They received the ultimate divine discipline for their heinous dishonesty.

In 1 Jn. 2:12-17, we see the world, the sinful nature (flesh), and Satan teaming up to overpower our inner parts and keep us operating in a sinful pattern. In verses 13 and 14, we see the “evil one”, or Satan, who has to be overcome. In verse 15-17, we see the world, and in verse 16, we see the sinful nature wedged into the world with “the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does...” And, any time one “loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (v. 15). This applies to unbelievers and to carnal believers. When believers give in to, or depend on, the flesh, the world, or Satan for meaning, purpose, provision, or protection, they allow evil to control their lives. The harder we chase after or depend on these, the less we have of the things they seem to promise. There is no joy or security in any of these.

Demons are not thoroughly described in Scripture, but Luke provided a disturbing picture of the way they operate. Lk. 11:24-26 gives this description of their activities:

When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, “I will return to the house I left”. When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.

This would suggest that a believer can possibly be occupied by a demon. The demon leaves and goes to the desert to rest, but finds no rest there, so he comes back to the believer. If the believer is filled with the Spirit and has furnished his inner house with understanding of Scripture, the demon will see the “No Vacancy” sign and move on. But if the place is empty, i.e., no Spirit and no understanding, he will go get the really bad demons to come back with him, and they will move in with a vengeance. The poor guy who is occupied by these demons is in real trouble. Good reason to stay in fellowship and learn Scripture.

Carnality. Being “carnal” means “controlled by the flesh”. This is not the same as “skin”, meaning the body, although the body can play a big role in the operation of the “flesh” when flesh is in charge. We will be either carnal or spiritual at any given time. We cannot be some shaded blend of the two, though there are many who claim that spirituality is not an “absolute” concept. They see us as operating in an analog, where spirituality is experienced in “degrees”. But, as we shall see clearly before we finish this study, spirituality and carnality are exclusive sets, with no cross-over. We are controlled by the Spirit, or we are controlled by the flesh. There is no in-between.

The thing that confuses us the most is that we “mostly” do the right thing where God is concerned, yet we never seem to get ahead spiritually, or find the grace and peace we know God is supposed to give us. This is because almost all of our time is logged in the “flesh”. It is extremely rare and difficult for a believer to consistently maintain the control of the Spirit, and it takes a total commitment to growth and maturity to achieve it.

Rom. 8:6 says, “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” There is no “shade” of death, or state of being “partially alive”. We are controlled by the flesh, or by the Spirit. We are carnal, or spiritual...spiritually “dead” or spiritually “alive”. Unfortunately, too much of our time is “dead time”.

When we are controlled by the flesh...meaning when we are carnal...here is what we can expect:

- Loss of the control of the Holy Spirit. He is neutralized within us.
- Divine discipline. (Heb. 12:5-11; Ps. 32:4)
- Loss of rewards in heaven. (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

Different translations of Scripture use different terms to translate the word, “fleshly”. In translating the word as it is used in 1 Cor. 3:3, where Paul assesses the Corinthians as “fleshly”, the KJV uses “carnal”; the NET uses “influenced by the flesh”; and the NIV calls it “worldly”. The term actually means “controlled by the flesh”. Flesh is also known as the “sinful nature”, which is often used to translate the word “flesh”. Here is the flesh: totally self-serving, self-dependent, and world-focused. It is the *worst of humanity* when it is chasing sin, but the *best of humanity* when it is trying to do and be good. Notice the catch word, “trying”. Is God impressed with the “best” of humanity? No. Nothing done “in the flesh” will please God, or—as Rom. 8:8 puts it—“Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”

Matt. 26:41 says, “Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Endnote 14) This quote of the words of Jesus is quite interesting. The Spirit is always willing to overcome sin and temptation, but the weakness of the flesh gets in the way. A believer controlled by the flesh has no resistance to temptation, and the more mature and committed you become, the greater the trials and temptations will

be. This is why we must ALWAYS watch and pray. We are watching our own behavior, so we can confess and keep our fellowship “fresh”, and we are praying, to come closer to God to draw on His strength. We must tap into the power of the Spirit to override the persistent and powerful influence of the flesh.

Flesh Fails. Flesh is inadequate to get us through the Christian life. Jer. 10:23 says, “I know, O Lord, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.” We cannot do the things we are supposed to do, because the flesh, though it is more than happy to take charge and direct our behavior, is weak when it comes to spiritual matters. There are many things we would probably do, if we could...all by ourselves. But we can’t. Many preachers are setting their parishioners up for failure by convincing them that they can do certain things on their own, such as: surrendering to God’s will, avoiding sin, being holy, producing righteousness, honoring God with their bodies, walking in faith, praying according to God’s will, exhibiting God’s love, and so on. These are things that we SHOULD do. So why don’t we? Because of the flesh...the flesh either prevents it, or attempts it on its own! The flesh drags us into sin, or convinces us that we can do “right” all by ourselves. Either way, if the flesh is involved, whether we are doing right or wrong, we will be WRONG!

The flesh fails on two fronts, as we see here:

1. The failure of legalism. This is the attempt of the flesh to follow a code, seeking to establish its own spirituality through ritual, emotion, and/or good behavior.
2. The failure of sin. The sinful nature pulls us into all kinds of sin—some *subtle*, operating below the radar—and some *severe*. We are a “glance-at-a-dream-car” away from coveting, and when it happens, the flesh is off to the races. When we sin, however minor it seems, we *cut the power*...and we will get no work done in the dark.

Later in this study, we will see these two aspects of the “flesh” in detail, when we study Gal. 5, which captures them well.

The Way the Flesh Views Things. J. Hampton Keathley aptly describes the view of the flesh in his excellent Christian primer, *ABC’s for Christian Growth: Laying the Foundation*:

There are a number of crucial lust patterns through which man typically seeks to find happiness in the form of satisfaction, significance, and security—desires for position, possessions, wealth, power, praise, and pleasure. These are the killers. But they are also idols—gods of man’s making that he thinks will meet his needs and satisfy his longings. Each of these desires represent false sources of faith, things we depend on rather than the Lord, and the ministry of the Spirit. They are the products of Satan’s and the world’s delusions—the lies people believe. (Endnote 15)

These sound like the normal operations of any man trying to make it in the world: make money, succeed, and enjoy life. It’s tricky, because life that begins with these will end with

these; they are not worthy beginnings for the believer. We must start with God, not the flesh or the world.

Ps. 62:10 says, “Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” We may be successful, the way the world sees it, but our value of things in the world must not be stronger than our faith in God...and our wanting Him more than success. If success *does not* come, God is still our focus. If success *does* come, God is still our focus.

There is no better passage in the Bible, in my view, for distinguishing what is truly important, than Matt. 6:19-33. This message should “haunt” believers as they make choices and determine what they value most. We quote verses 31-33 to give us the idea intended in this passage:

So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

The earth-view (view-point of the flesh) is seen here in contrast with the heaven-view (view-point of the believer in fellowship with the Spirit). We see a similar message in Ps. 37:4, which says, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Delight in Him first...then He will provide. The *proviso* precedes the *provision*. Keep your eyes on God...let this be your view-point, rather than the view given by the flesh.

When we maintain the divine perspective by walking in the Spirit, we will fulfill 1 Tim. 6:6-19, which calls on us to be content with what we have and maintain a divine perspective. We will quote here verses 6-10 from this passage:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

The contentment we feel when we walk in the Spirit overrides preoccupation with the things of the world. When we have the heavenly view point we will “take hold of the life that is truly life” (v. 19). *This* is really living: being focused on God. Then we will be walking by faith, and God will “provide everything for our enjoyment” (v. 17). A desire to be rich for its own sake, based on the flesh’s “love for money”, will produce only evil, which is the opposite of what the Spirit produces (“fruit of the Spirit”). In verse 11b, we are challenged to pursue spiritual good: “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.” But here is what the flesh would give us: 1) instead of righteousness, sin; 2) instead of godliness, cursing God; 3) instead of faith in God, faith in self; 4) instead of love, hatred; 5) instead of

endurance, impatience; 6) instead of gentleness, violence (v. 11). Such is the **real** work of the flesh.

The Filling of the Spirit

Living in the Spirit and Walking in the Spirit. We began earlier a discussion about the difference between “living in the Spirit” and “walking in the Spirit”. Gal. 5:25 sets up a continuation of this discussion: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” The *Interlinear Translation* and the NET Bible translate the NIV’s “keep in step with”, as “walk by”. Since we “live” in the Spirit, we should also “walk by” the Spirit. Here is the difference between “living” and “walking”:

1. “Live in (or by) the Spirit” refers to the indwelling of the Spirit, and our being “in Christ”, while He is in us. Once we accept Christ, we are permanently indwelled by the Holy Spirit; therefore we “live” in (or by) Him, or have eternal life through Him. We get our spiritual life from Him. This is our eternal *position*.
2. “Walk by the Spirit” is what we do when we are 1) filled with the Spirit, and are 2) walking by faith in the Spirit. We are walking under the power of the Holy Spirit. This is our temporal *condition*, when we are in fellowship.

Since we *live* by the Spirit, let us also *walk* by the Spirit.

Filling of the Spirit vs. Walking in the Spirit. Here is the difference between these two:

1. “Filling of the Spirit” is the instantaneous occurrence of restoration of fellowship through the honest confession of our sins. We move from control of the flesh to the control of the Spirit, when this happens.
2. “Walking in the Spirit” is the condition of being under the influence of the Spirit...in an ongoing state of “being filled by the Spirit”...whereby sin is controlled and the fruit of the Spirit is produced. Our walk is sustained by faith; the consistency of our walk depends on the level of our faith.

We confess our sins to get them forgiven and restore the influence of the Spirit in our lives. Then we retain that influence by trusting in the resurrection power of Christ, the provision of the Father, and the enablement of the Holy Spirit. In other words, our walk in the Spirit is sustained by *faith*. And please note: Babies “crawl”; mature believers “walk”. This is more than a single step forward...walking is putting one foot in front of the other, and *moving forward*. Super believers like Paul can actually “run”, as in “running the good race”.

Faith is the key component in this walk. The more mature we are, the stronger our faith will be, and the longer we will walk in the Spirit before sin halts our progress. Behind faith are all the techniques we have studied for getting closer to God. We have built a long list of these, and have developed a shorthand protocol to encapsulate them. The shorthand terms for all the techniques we have studied that build and sustain faith are these: confession of

sins, prayer, study of Scripture, and—basically—enduring God’s training program for building our faith.

What it Means to be Filled or Full. Eph. 5:18 instructs us, as follows: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” The term “filled” has to do with the power of something that is in us...to direct us or control us. It is not just filling ourselves up, like drinking a lot of water, but it is the ability of the thing that fills us...to influence us. By saying, “Do not get drunk on wine”, the command is for us *not to be controlled by wine*. This is an example of something that fills us and controls us.

There can be other things that control us: greed, lust, envy, hatred, anger, pride...and drugs/alcohol. If any of these, or a myriad of other things, control us, and cause us to sin, we will not be controlled by the Spirit. We will be giving the wheel to that scurrilous character: the flesh. Paul is saying, “Avoid the control of the flesh!” On the other hand, we can be filled with the Spirit, if we qualify (meaning sin is taken care of), at which time the Holy Spirit will control us.

The issue is not getting the Spirit *into* us, but putting what is *already inside of us* in charge. Otherwise, the power of the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit, and cause the love of God to flow through us, *will be neutralized*. If sin takes place, it is certain that the flesh will lead the way, and our decisions, desires, and plans will be driven by tendencies to sin or practice some form of legalism. When we are “filled” continually, which means that we are “walking by the Spirit”, we will fulfill Gal. 5:16-17 (NET), which says the following:

But I say, Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another; lest whatever you may will, these things you do.

When we are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, the sinful nature will be under control. But if we sin, the sinful nature is right back in charge, however hard we may try to prevent it. The thing we have to admit is this: We will sin. Sin prevents the control of the Spirit. The only way for the Spirit to control us is for our sin to be removed, and this is done by confession. If you plucked this paragraph out and asked, “Which of our books did this come from?” you would be right to answer, “Every single one of them.” This concept has been repeated many times, because it is at the center of all the resources God provides for us to live the Christian life with meaning and purpose.

Why the Filling of the Spirit is Important. It is vital that we find a way to acquire and sustain the filling of the Spirit. The Spirit gives us the power to do the things that bring glory to God and earn rewards for us in heaven. The Spirit produces love in us, and this translates into an alertness for opportunities to share the gospel, and motivates us to build each other up (contribute to each other’s maturity).

When the Spirit fills us and directs us, we produce “divine good”, as opposed to “fleshly good”, and the character of Christ is put on display. In Gal. 4:19 Paul describes the process

of developing that divine character within us, saying, “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...” Paul was agonizing and doting like a new mother over the growth of the Galatians, because he knew that—if they grew and matured—the character of Christ would be formed and shown to the world. The character of Christ is exactly the same thing as the fruit of the Spirit. It begins on the inside through purity and prayer and knowledge and faith, and comes to the outside as love and joy and peace...honest caring for others, and willingness to sacrifice to bring the fruit of spiritual gifts to bear.

For us to achieve the kind maturity that Paul wanted for the Galatians, we will have to rely on the controlling and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are perfected by the Spirit, and not by the flesh. Gal. 5:5-6 describes it this way:

But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is faith working through love.

The righteousness we expect to see produced (“for which we hope”) comes from waiting and trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit. This passage should be compared with Heb. 5:11-6:3, which says that we grow by feeding on the Word of God. The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, encased in the Book given as our guide, will bring us to maturity. The key indicator for this maturity is seen in verse 14 in this passage (Heb. 5), which says, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good and evil.” By learning and applying Scripture, coupled with God’s training program, a believer learns to see what is good and what is evil. Then the “good” can be chosen. This is why sin becomes less of a problem for the mature believer...because 1) he knows what to avoid, and 2) he knows what to confess. With sin reduced and controlled, spiritual production can soar...in the power of the Spirit.

Or we can do it on our own, which is the most common choice. Gal. 1:3 says, “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?” We will see this again when we study the Law vs. the Spirit.

So we want to be filled with the Spirit to produce the character of Christ, to see the fruit of the Spirit borne in our lives, and to exhibit the righteousness of God in our thoughts and behavior. Gal. 2:20 links this filling with the life of Christ. This verse says, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” The Christian life is designed so that the only real “living” we do is when His life is lived through us. When His life is suppressed (by the “quenching” of the fire of the Holy Spirit), we are “dead”, controlled by the flesh, and living in some form of sin or legalism. But when we are restored by the Spirit, we come alive, body and soul, and good things can happen. Righteousness is achieved by the Holy Spirit when we have confessed and are walking by faith in Him. The

life of Christ...the fruit of the Spirit...is the result of our maturity and faith, a product of the Holy Spirit.

The Fruit of the Spirit. Many passages delineate the things produced by the Spirit through the prepared and willing believer. None is quite so compact as Gal. 5:22-23, which says the following: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” We could spend a book on each one of these qualities, because they clearly demonstrate the kinds of thoughts and behaviors that line up with God’s standards. These also remind us of our failings and weaknesses, and convince us that we cannot do what only the Spirit can do, and we are much better off to let Him do it. We will revisit the fruit of the Spirit later in this series of studies.

Trying to Boil it All Down...the Spirit and the Flesh. Immature believers can be filled with the Spirit, but their faith is too weak to hold them there. They can be “king on the mountain” for a second, but they will be quickly dislodged by forces more powerful than they are. This pattern is repeated over and over, until they begin to mature through prayerful study and by enduring God’s training program. If they continue, they will spend more and more time walking by the Spirit. That’s the objective.

We have learned quite well that we will be led by the flesh or by the Spirit. We can’t be controlled by both at the same time. This seems odd, because God is so much stronger than our flesh, but remember that God has given us *choice*, so that the hinge-pin for our walk is not God’s power and sovereignty, but our *choosing* to use the techniques He has given us. Get this: No spiritual assets operate when we are out of fellowship. Step one for any spiritual event or act is CONFESSION! Ignore this and you will go nowhere. This country is full of believers going nowhere spiritually, because they have not used 1 Jn. 1:9, and are living in either sin...or legalism. Both are opposed to Christ.

We saw that *faith* is the means for sustaining a walk in the Spirit, once fellowship is restored, and this faith grows with study and training. But weak faith is easily overshadowed by the flesh, and will not sustain us and keep us in fellowship. We are *justified* by grace through faith at salvation, and we are *sanctified* in life by God’s mercy through confession, but we will only be *sustained* in our walk in the Spirit by an ongoing faith. Conclusion: When we are purified, then we can *walk in the Spirit...if our faith is strong*.

Have you noticed that Paul deals in dichotomies...either/or conditions...over and over? We are saved or lost, in fellowship or out, controlled by the Spirit or the flesh, pure or depraved. Many conditions in the Christian life are *absolute*, meaning that you do or you don’t...you are or you aren’t.

It is interesting how many things that are clearly black or white have been placed onto a gray-scale continuum by short-sighted scholars or pastors, with very few concepts rendered with definition and clarity. Certainly, there are some things that exist in levels or degrees, such as maturity, faith, love, etc. But many of the *techniques* that produce these variable

states are themselves *completely polar*. We will have much more to say about this when we discuss Law and Grace (or the Law and the Spirit).

We say that to say this: Faith is a *variable*. It is “strong” to some degree or “weak” to some degree. The thing we must understand is that faith needs nourishment. If it is not nourished, it will not grow, and will eventually collapse in a heap of doubt and fear. Faith will either grow or it will decline. To develop the faith it takes to walk in the Spirit, we have to PUSH forward...taking in and believing the Word, praying, and going through tests and trials. Then we will be doing what Paul did, as he expressed in Phil. 3:12b, “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me,” and in Phil. 3:14, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” It is time, now more than ever in this nation and this world, for us to “press on”...in the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit: Sequence and Consequence

Here is a general algorithm for walking in the Spirit:

1. A believer sins, putting the sinful nature in charge.
2. The sinful nature produces sin, legalism, and/or self-dependence in the life of the believer.
3. Divine discipline kicks in and the soul is in anguish, often without knowing why. This goes on until sins are confessed.
4. Upon confession, the control of the Holy Spirit is restored, but the sinful nature is outraged at the loss of his control over the believer.
5. The sinful nature teams up with Satan and the world to plot the overthrow of the Spirit’s control and return the believer to sin (and/or legalism). The believer can be drawn into sin, in which case the power of the Spirit is neutralized. This entire process takes about a nanosecond, but the effects may last a long time.
6. The believer confesses sins again at some point, hopefully sooner rather than later, and the Spirit moves back into authority in the heart of the believer.
7. While the believer is filled with the Spirit, he is able to grow spiritually, a process accelerated by the intake of Scripture and the endurance of tests brought on, or allowed, by God.
8. Learning and believing Scripture while in fellowship builds the believer’s faith, which sustains a walk in the Spirit for longer and longer periods of time.
9. The believer’s maturity continues to build by confessing, praying, studying, trusting, and enduring God’s training. This is also aided by edification from other believers.
10. The Holy Spirit produces righteousness through the believer, which reflects the character of Christ...and demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit.

11. Rewards are accumulated in heaven for the believer for acts done under the control of the Spirit.
12. The life of the believer glorifies Christ, satisfies the Holy Spirit, and honors the Father.

This is the path we are intended to walk. This is the “walk in the Spirit”.

Restoring and Maintaining Fellowship

Terms. We have seen several terms for the same process: walking in the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, having fellowship with the Spirit, experiencing the control of the Spirit, and so on. These characterize one condition: moving and living in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are able to do this when we have been cleansed from our sins. We know very well that this cleansing is not the justification and sanctification of *salvation*, but the forgiveness and sanctification of our *daily lives*. It is being pure, so we can have free access to the Most Holy Place, where we find grace to meet all our needs. There, we acquire the influence and power of the Holy Spirit, so that God's righteousness can be produced in us.

What we Can Do in Fellowship. We want to be empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit. But when we bring this down to a fine point, we can only explain it inductively. Being "in fellowship" means that "shop is open" to produce divine good. But even in fellowship, we have to do certain things for our condition of being "filled" to have maximum effect. Here are some things we are able to do *while we are in fellowship*, i.e., how we can take advantage of this connection:

- Pray. When we are in fellowship, we can pray "in the Spirit", but to do this, we must **pray**.
- Understand Scripture. When we are controlled by the Spirit, we can process spiritual truths into our hearts by believing them when we learn them. The Holy Spirit clarifies truth in our hearts so we can "digest" it for spiritual nourishment. But for this to happen, we must **study**.
- Exercise our gifts. When we are in fellowship, we can exercise our gifts effectively. But to do this, we must prayerfully **surrender** to God's will as to when to move, what to say, where to be, and how to act. When you are to exercise your gift, you can, for example, pray that God will give you the specific words you should use to convey God's message to listeners you are gifted to instruct. He will do this.
- Rest in God's care. We can enjoy the satisfaction of all our needs (God knows best what they are), and relax in the knowledge that everything is working together for our good, but we must continually remember and **believe God's promises**, giving thanks for everything.
- Perform service for God. The Holy Spirit works through us to produce divine good, but we must **submit** our bodies to His service, so that the resting of faith will translate as the sweat and toil of service.

The purpose of being in fellowship is not simply so we can be more powerful. It is to use the strength God offers us to honor Him and fulfill His plan and will for our lives.

Restoring Fellowship. Restoring fellowship comes by confessing our sins. 1 Jn. 1:9 (NET) says, “But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.” We confess the sins we can remember or identify, and those are forgiven, as well as all the ones we can’t remember or just don’t know yet are sins. Ps. 32:4-5 describes the process quite well, as follows:

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

When we confess, our sins are forgiven, and the guilt is removed, so there is no further cause for feeling guilty, although humility should continue, as there is no excuse for haughtiness or being “cavalier” about sin. The purpose of confession is to restore fellowship for service, and for God’s glory, not to give us an excuse to follow the temptations induced by the sinful nature.

1 Cor. 11:28-32 explains what happens when we do not confess our sins, as we see in the following:

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

This passage tells us that we are to examine ourselves before we partake of the bread and the cup (can apply to other activities, as we have seen), which means we should review our recent thoughts and behaviors to see what unconfessed sins are stored in our hearts. These are, of course, to be confessed, or “self-judged”, so that we will not be disciplined...perhaps even to the point of physical death. If we don’t confess, God’s evaluation of us will not be good, and we will be earmarked for disciplinary action. This is the way God deals with believers. Unbelievers are dealt with differently, as they fall into the category of those “condemned with the world”. Paul was teaching the Corinthians that they should be alert to confess their sins, because anything done in the “wrong” condition (out of fellowship), is *wrong*, even doing things that are commanded and that are ordinarily seen as “right”.

You see, when it comes to our function as Christians, it’s not so much “what” we do, as it is “what prompted us to do what we did”. If it is the Holy Spirit, it is good, but if it is the sinful nature, it can’t be good. Good comes only from God.

This is why Paul told the Corinthians, in 2 Cor. 7:1, “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” When we are pure, burgeoning faith and fear of the

Lord can carry us on to the “perfection of holiness”, which is the spirit-filled life of a mature believer. This begins with confession, and ends with perfection. That’s the idea.

Acknowledging Sins Means Victory, Not Defeat. Some churches teach that we are victorious over sin from the day we are saved. This is true in our eternal position, but is only “potential” in our temporal lives. Sin does not have to have power in our lives, but when we are new or floundering Christians, the spiritual means for dealing with sin is not yet understood and implemented, so we are on our own, in which case *sin wins, because it is stronger than we are*. To discount the ability of the sinful nature, the world, and Satan to jostle us around like rag dolls, is to ignore our need to access all the divine tools and weapons available to help us defeat them. We must first of all know that we NEED these weapons, and then we must go through the steps to ACQUIRE them.

By acknowledging that we are weak, and that God is strong, or that we are sinful as we stand before God’s holiness, is not to cast ourselves into some perpetual state of defeat or surrender to evil. It is the way we access God’s procedure for dealing with our weakness. This consists of the confession of our sins, whereby we acquire the power of His Spirit to keep us from sinning.

Those who preach that we live in unflinching victory over sin and claim that the term “dead to sin” means “never sinning”, are preventing their followers from employing the tactics that God gives us to deal with the wretched reality of our sinful tendencies. The lie is that we can be saved and then live forever free from sin. This is, to begin with, a dependence on ourselves to live the life of Christ, which only He can live. And it causes us to believe that we need nothing more to deal with sin than to try harder...we don’t need to confess or study or pray or build our faith, and so on. Here’s the problem this causes: It prevents us from seeing the enormous and difficult TASK (of faith, not works) that we face, and allows us to assume we are ready for battle, when we are not. This is a formula for failure. Satan wants us to believe we are strong.

We will not be victorious until we acknowledge our sins. Claiming “perfection”, or assuming we don’t sin, PREVENTS victory. This is what Scripture means in the following: “When I am weak, I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

Fellowship Allows Faith to Increase; Faith, In Turn, Sustains Fellowship. Eph. 3:16-17 tells us how we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that our faith can become strong and Christ will be “at home” or “comfortably fellowshiping with us” because of that faith.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints....

Christ is “at home” in us when we are strengthened with God’s power through the Holy Spirit...in our inner being. Christ is at home in us when *faith* exists...faith is a marker for fellowship. And when we are in fellowship, God has access to all our inner parts: mind, soul, spirit, and heart. He will not penetrate our minds (etc.) uninvited, but if we are filled with the Spirit, He will be in touch with all our immaterial components, and can directly influence and CHANGE the content of our inner selves, for as long as we are trusting in Him and choosing Him.

Love is an indicator for fellowship and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Divine love is a provision of the Holy Spirit, and will operate only when He has control. When we have His love, we have His power, and that is how we can be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” This is an outcome of fellowship initiated by confession and sustained by faith.

The Spirit Sanctifies and Cleanses Us. We have seen this already in this study, but we want to be sure we see the connection between our cleansing and our ongoing fellowship with God. 1 Thess. 5:23 says, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The sanctification, or cleansing, of the Holy Spirit makes believers “blameless”, not because there is a single one of us that goes one hour without *some* kind of sin, but because we receive forgiveness through confession.

Fellowship Prepares us For Learning the Word. James 1:21 (NET) says, “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.” We get rid of filth and evil through self-determination and self-effort. Right? No! It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are cleansed, and then live in His righteousness. When we confess, we are in a posture of humility, which is when we can accept the Word and grow. Fellowship precedes meaningful study. We see this again in 1 Pet. 2:1-2, which says the following:

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation....

As believers, having “salvation”, we need to “rid ourselves” of sins of all kinds, and cry out for the nourishment of the Word, so that we can mature and become increasingly Christ-centered and Holy-Spirit-dependent. Confession, once again, precedes study. And notice the word, “save”. With any attention at all to context, we see that this is not the “save” of redemption and justification. This is being “delivered”, only this time it is not from condemnation...it is from the domination of sin, as seen in verse 1. As we mature, through confession and studying and believing, we will see increased deliverance from sin.

Living in the Light. Eph. 5:8 directs us to live in the light, saying, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).” This has obvious reference to “living by the Spirit” of Gal. 5:16, or “walking in the light” of 1 Jn. 1, and “bearing the fruit” of the

Spirit of Gal. 5:22-23. Paul had already instructed the Ephesians in 5:3 (and following) to avoid immorality and impurity. Then in verse 10 he admonishes them to “find out what pleases the Lord”. We see the sequence: 1) deal with sin, and 2) find out what pleases the Lord. When we solve the sin problem we can learn what pleases God. Until then, we will be in the dark. Verse 11-13 tells us this:

Have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is the light that makes everything visible.

The deeds done in darkness need to be exposed, and it is the light of the Word and the penetrating view of the Holy Spirit that does this. The Word is the “critic”, judging the content of our inner parts, as seen in Heb. 4:12; and the Holy Spirit is the One who uncovers and lays bare all the things done in hiding, as seen in Heb. 4:13-14.

As it applies to us, the Word assesses our wrongful acts and thoughts, and these are exposed by the Holy Spirit, but *we are the only ones who can bring them to light through confession, so they can be forgiven*. When wrongful deeds and thoughts are exposed to the light by confession, God can send His clean-up crew to remove them. Then the believer, who has been sleeping in the dark, can wake up and live in the light of day. Verse 14b says, “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Do you see the connection? These things are strung together like a Christmas paper-chain. Rise from the death of carnality, and live in the light of spirituality. Allow the light of Christ to illuminate you in His character. This is our charge. When we do this, we will be prepared for evil times by learning the Word, as we see in verses 15-17, and we will be filled with the Spirit, as commanded in verse 18. Having done all this, we will fulfill verse 1, which tells us to do this: “Be imitators of God.”

Faith Sustains Fellowship. It is faith in God, and not in ourselves, that keeps our relationship with the Holy Spirit intact. Rom. 15:13 says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” This whole verse is loaded with the filling and fruit of the Holy Spirit, and this is happening, “as you trust in him”, which means “as long as you trust in him”. When we confess and get into fellowship, we will stay there as long as we trust in Him. Faith, then, is the cord that ties us into fellowship and holds us there. As we mature, that cord will get stronger, and the tie will be more secure. We see this many times in Scripture, and we have studied it before.

Rom. 1:17 says, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’.” We were saved by faith in the beginning, and now we are instructed to live by that same faith. We are told to live by faith, the same way we are told to “live in the Spirit”, and to “walk in Christ”. Walking by faith is actually synonymous with walking in the Spirit.

Every step we take should be by faith...every thought, every incident, every decision, and every encounter. Every moment of our lives should be executed by faith in Jesus Christ. We walk by trusting in God and His Word...every second of every day. This kind of faith can only come from intense commitment to God through prayer and study, while continually returning to fellowship through confession. More faith means a steadier walk...the walk toward maturity.

It is important to remember that faith is blacked out by sin, i.e., we have no faith when we are out of fellowship. But even when we are in fellowship, the strength and continuity of faith depend on our maturity. When we return to fellowship, the light of faith is switched back on, and the level of maturity will determine how bright that light is, and how long and how well it will illumine our pathway. We can still make headway with "dim" faith, but the way is tenuous and uncertain.

The growth of our faith in Christ is crucial in our lives in the Spirit. We must confess, but the *backbone* of walking in the Spirit is our faith. Paul told Timothy the following in 1 Tim. 1:18:

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.

The two main pillars of walking in the Spirit are faith and a clean conscience. Confession gives us a clean conscience, and holding on to faith sustains us...keeps us walking in the Spirit. We begin fellowship by confessing; then we continue spirituality by staying focused on God. This focus is an ongoing and pervasive attitude of faith toward God, which enfolds fear of the Lord, occupation with Christ, acknowledging God, surrender, submission to God's will, and God-consciousness. This is turning ourselves over to the God we trust, with all our problems, our aspirations, our dreams, our hopes, and our intentions. We relinquish control to Him, and keep on trusting Him to sustain us by His Spirit.

The Age of the Law vs. the Age of the Spirit, or Law vs. Grace

Introduction. Law vs. grace, or Law vs. the Spirit, is largely not understood by believers, except by those who sit at the feet of pastors who rightly divide and diligently teach the Word of Truth. “Law enforcement” dominates pulpits and group discussions in many churches, and great weight is given to following the code of behavior that the Law suggests. For many, Christianity is following the code, which in many cases has been localized to fit the notions and leanings of church leaders. This is exactly what Satan wants. If he can get us to focus on the “code”, and ignore the “power” (Law vs. Spirit), then he can keep us in a weakened and unproductive condition.

J. Hampton Keathley, III, said this about the Law: “The law, or any other system of ethics, while it exposes our sin, cannot make us righteous or deliver us from the power of sin.” (Endnote 16) Any system purporting to make us “righteous” that does not embrace the *real* power for delivery from sin will have just the opposite effect, as we shall see.

The Law is a mysterious and elusive thing. We are attracted to it...and it is 100% supportable and good. Yet it is a trap...a prison, from which we must be set free. We are born in this prison, and we will not be free from it until we figure out how to escape it. You will learn what this means, and why—though it is good—we must escape the Law.

This study is long and labor-intensive. For that reason, we will break it into sub-chapters to facilitate your pacing. There are nuggets of truth in this study that will help us understand the role of the Spirit, the perfection of grace, the danger of sin, the snare of legalism, and the pathway into a life of liberty and power. Our efforts (pardon the expression) are well-placed.

Sub-chapter A: Christ Brings a New Law

The New Law Focuses on Christ. The new law that Christ brings is no longer focused on external behavior and practices, or even on patterns of disciplined thought. It is focused on the person and work of Christ. Our focus will be on Him, because He is our Liberator. Col. 2:13-17 kicks off our discussion of the old and the new, presenting the following to us:

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Christ Cancelled the Old Law. Christ cancelled the written code, which is “against us” and “opposed to us”. He nailed it to His cross, and forgave our sins. So, our objective is NOT to keep the Law, which has been cancelled; our job is to be occupied with Christ, so that the Law can be diminished. But, quite honestly, many Christians rely on their own resources to generate “good” in their lives. Often, they get up in the morning, look at themselves in the mirror, and affirm that, “I can do it!” And then they march confidently out into the world and meet overwhelming problems and disappointments. Why? Because we CAN’T do it! And that is the whole contest we have with ourselves and Satan and the world: When we think we *can*, you can be sure that we *won’t*, regardless of the affirmation we get from others that we *will*. This is the delusion, the lie of Satan: I CAN. The truth of truths is this: GOD CAN!

The Tendency to Submit to the Old Law vs. Our New Identity in Christ. In the same passage we saw above (Col. 2), v. 20 says, “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules?” We will see how we are dead to the Law because of our identity with Christ, but—as believers—we have a penchant for “submitting” to the Law. There is so much to say about this...we want to say it all at once. Here’s the main thing: The Law is wonderful in fulfilling its purpose for mankind, which is to expose sin, but we *must not live there...*in the Law.

The new law is Christ. We have a new identity with Him that supplants the old Law completely. Col. 3:1-2 advances this concept, as follows:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Since we have been raised with Him under a new law, our hearts are to be focused on Him, and on things above, not on worldly things. But how do we do this? This is asking for us to *focus*. This is much harder than it sounds. We are so busy, and pre-occupied, and inundated with demands on our time and consciousness, that it is almost impossible to achieve sustained focus. Our events today are measured in microseconds, and the pace is—literally—maddening. Young people have become inured somewhat to the rapid rhythm, but even they cannot hold their focus on *one thing* for very long. Yet *the new law requires us to focus...*on things above.

Verse 3 carries this a bit further, saying, “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” What are we hidden from? The Law! (We will see later why this is so important.) Our new position is one of *freedom* from the law. The challenge we have is to bring our “condition” (in time) up to the level of our “position” (in eternity). Our hope is that we will find the way to live up to our new position.

The Old Self vs. The New Self. Verse 5 tells us that we are to detach from the law by putting to death the flesh. The flesh, as we shall see, has great affinity for the law, and by putting to death the flesh, we can get out from under the Law. “Killing the flesh”, however, involves a lot more than going out on Monday morning...after a stirring sermon on Sunday morning...bound and determined to destroy this flesh. That is the real point of this study...how to kill the flesh, get out from under the law, and walk in the Spirit. But our “resolve” to kill it will not make it happen.

The flesh wants to sin, or...alternately...to keep rules. It is confused, and we can be certain it will make a mess, whatever it does. Continuing in Col. 3, we see in verse 9 that this flesh is an “old self” that needs to be discarded. This verse says, “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.” Then verse 10 shows we have a new self to put on in place of the old: “...and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” The new self is put on at salvation positionally, but the new man in our hearts must be developed through maturity, so we can reflect the life of Christ experientially. To put the “new self” or “new man” into perspective, we offer the following, taken from our own study notes:

Note: *We don't get a new functional nature at salvation*, even though we are “a new creation” positionally (Gal. 6:15). What makes us *new* at salvation is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, and our new position in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The “new man” is the product of the new birth, wherein we are born into the family of God (Titus 3:5, 1 Pet. 1:3). This is an outcome of our “position”. Then, there is a “new man” that is the product of maturity, which is a potential outcome within our “condition” (Eph. 4:22-24). The new man is the *heart of a mature believer*, strong in faith and knowledge, and functioning in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Brings Life, While the Law Kills. The life of Christ is the new law, lived out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Verse 12b says, “Christ is all in all, and is in all.” Christ is in every believer, and focus on Him results in abandonment of the Law. When we are focused on Him (in fellowship with His Spirit), we will be out from under the Law and will be living in His power, rather than within the dark kingdom of sin and self-righteousness created and dominated by the Law. The flesh is attached to the Law, but can't keep it. This is the paradox that we want to explain before we are through.

2 Cor. 3:6 tells us that the New Covenant is NOT based on the Law, but on the Holy Spirit. This verse says, “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” What a conundrum! The Law, which gives God's standard for behavior, is...*deadly*? The Law kills, because no man can meet the standard, so God has provided a way for us to be “righteous” without our futile efforts at keeping a list of impossible rules. This list will condemn, because we cannot live up to its requirements. Thus the Law KILLS.

The ever-present weight of the Law hangs over our heads, waiting to crush us under the heaviness of its impossible demands. And if we try to support this weight by ourselves, we will be flattened. That is why the Holy Spirit was sent...to keep the weight of the Law from making spiritual pancakes of us all.

Sub-chapter B: Circumcision from the Holy Spirit Provides Freedom From the Law.

Physical Circumcision vs. Circumcision of the Heart. Rom. 2:28-29 says the following:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

The real circumcision, as we have seen in previous studies is the one that takes place in the heart, an operation performed by the Holy Spirit to permanently mark us and identify us as children of God. The Law marks us as craven sinners; the Spirit marks us as righteous. Our goal is to live up to our spiritual marking. Even physically-circumcised and zealous Jews could not keep the Law...how much less those of us who are less familiar with it. Yet Christ removed the Law as an issue to us, and gives us His Holy Spirit to help us achieve an experiential righteousness that the Law could not give.

The Law provides the “standard”, without the power to enable us to keep it...while the Spirit provides the power for us to meet and exceed the Law. The difference is in the power. Only the Spirit has the power to perform divine good—to meet the *real* standard. That is why we must stay *out from under the Law*, and *walk in the Spirit*.

Circumcision of the Heart Brings Liberty. For those who have been circumcised in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and who live their lives in the power of the Holy Spirit (living as those spiritually circumcised), there will be liberty. From what? From the Law! 2 Cor. 3:7-18 gives the full picture of the process for getting liberty through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This passage is too long to quote here, so please take time to read it, and then read the following comments. This is a phenomenal passage, with many layers of truth. We are going to take these verses up individually or in small groups, to help us compact our writing as much as possible. The following is a discussion of 2 Cor. 3:7-18:

Vv. 7-11 tells how Moses' face was glowing so brightly after receiving the Law that the Israelites could not even look at him. They had to cover their faces. But now a “new” law has been implemented, and the brightness that comes with this law is even brighter than Moses' face. The Law condemned for sin, and was still bright; how much brighter can we expect

the light of the Holy Spirit to be, since He brings forgiveness and righteousness. In other words, the Holy Spirit overshadows the Law.

Vv. 12-15 tell us the Israelites could only look at Moses when his face was covered by a veil. That veil is still being used by the Jews (and anyone else to whom this applies), only now it is over their hearts. Their eyes are still on the Law of Moses, and this covers their hearts and prevents truth from entering. Focus on the Law prevents one's seeing and focusing on Jesus Christ. This is true for unbelievers concerning salvation, and true for believers if they choose to live their lives under the Law, instead of by the Holy Spirit. Verse 14b says Christ alone can take away the veil, specifically stating, "...only in Christ is it taken away."

V. 15 says, "Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." Whenever a believer decides to accept by faith the message of Christ and the work He has completed, the veil is taken away. I believe a second application can be extrapolated from this verse, which is that the darkness of carnality will be removed whenever a believer returns to fellowship through confession.

Vv. 16-18 gives a beautiful expression of how the Christian life is supposed to work. Here is what this passage says:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit controls, there is freedom from the Law. We are soaring in the open skies of a new liberty...borne by the lifting power of the Holy Spirit. The "unveiled faces" are the hearts and minds of people who have 1) become believers and who 2) are filled with the Spirit. They are, therefore, reflecting the light of Christ and being transformed more and more into His likeness. And where does this come from? It "comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (v. 18).

The Law is Irresistible, but Cannot Produce Righteousness. The passage above from 2 Corinthians goes along with Rom. 3:19-20, which tells us that the Law cannot produce righteousness. Here is what these verses say:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

We observe or keep the Law selectively...here and there...especially in our individual areas of strength. But *absolutely no one* can keep *all* the Law, so "every mouth is silenced" and "the whole world" is accountable before God. So the Law cannot declare anyone righteous, because to be "righteous" by God's standard means keeping EVERY SINGLE LAW... PERFECTLY. Only one among us has ever done it, and now He is our Savior. The Law is

effective to show us one thing...we cannot keep the Law, not as unbelievers, and not even now as believers. Our problem is that we just can't stop trying...each of us in his own way. We all have our pet areas of self-righteousness.

The problem with modern Christianity is that we have come to see "good behavior" as intrinsically good, and worthy of our aspiration and admiration. We want to be good. And observance of rules and religious "laws" are often seen as the way to achieve this. When rules are followed, the people following them are seen as good. So when we come along, and discerning pastors see that keeping the Law is not the way to get God's best, or the best way to serve Him, they softly mention that "keeping the Law" is not the way to live the Christian life. They send out an unemphasized caution that living by the Law is not the way to go.

As we shall see, living under the Law is not just "NOT the best way to go"...it is a serious problem! This is why Paul spent so much time talking about it. Keeping the rules is bad enough, but our new angle is this: Sin lives in the House of Law. Rule-keeping gives us a connection with evil that is devastating. We will need to explore this further.

Sub-chapter C: Galatians 3, 4, and 5 Present the Law vs. The Spirit

Gal. 3 and 4. Gal. 3 and 4 provide a description of this complicated picture of the Law vs. the Spirit. As we have done previously, we will look at individual verses and groups of verses to see what these chapters say. Here, in part, are Gal. 3 and 4:

In verses 1-4 of Gal. 3, Paul jumped right out there with a charge against the "foolish Galatians" (v. 1), which was formulated as a question: "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard" (v. 2)? They had been saved by faith in Christ, not by keeping the Law. He followed with another question: "Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (v. 3) They had not been saved through the Law, yet now they were trying to become spiritual by keeping the law. As Christians they were being persecuted, and Paul said it was all for nothing, if it was being done on the basis of Law-keeping, rather than the power of the Spirit.

Verse 5 summarizes his charge and gives a concise assessment of their condition. This verse says, "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard." This is the spirituality-sustaining outcome of faith at work. Faith worked to give us the Holy Spirit in the first place, and now faith sustains fellowship and the strengthening we get from Him to enable productive living. At salvation, what we heard and believed is the gospel; in our spiritual life, what we hear and believe is the Word...which is given to us as instructions and promises.

Verse 10 tells us this: “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, ‘cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’” We can’t keep the *entire* Law, so we are cursed...without exception...if we rely on the Law to get God’s approval.

Verse 11 says, “Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, ‘The man who does these things will live by them.’” If you live by the Law, you are *under* the Law, and will be judged by its standards. Also, if you are under the law, you will not be under grace. Once again, this is true of unbelievers, but *applies* to believers. If you as a believer attempt to be “righteous” by keeping the law, you will move under the law and will be out from under grace. You will still be saved, but you will not be receiving grace to help in time of need.

Verses 13 and 14 tell us that Christ took the curse of the Law on Himself and by so doing purchased our freedom from the condemnation the Law brings. As a result, we receive the Holy Spirit, Who wraps us forever in the folds of eternal life, and indwells us to provide a way for Christ to be glorified through us.

Verse 21b-24 continues this vein of truth, saying the following:

For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

The Law was not given the power to produce righteousness, only to expose sin, of which we are all prisoners. Our only escape is through faith in Christ. The only power the Law has is to show us our need for Christ.

Verse 25 recaps: “Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.” But we can’t leave it alone. We often choose the Law as our ticket to human or divine approval, because we tend to have more confidence in our own abilities to *be good* than we do in the Holy Spirit to *make* us good. As we shall see, our “flesh” *loves* the Law!

Chapter 4:4-7 tells of our victory over the condemnation of the Law, saying the following:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the

Spirit, who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

We are sons, because Jesus Christ came in the flesh and was crucified for us. Because of Him, we are sons and heirs, and now have the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We are no longer slaves to the Law.

Summarizing the remainder of chapter 4, we can encapsulate it in one sentence: No good thing can happen under the Law. Paul said it well in a question, seen in v. 9: “But now that you know God—or are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles [the Law]? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?”

Gal. 5. We did a study on Gal. 5 in our last book, *Living in God’s Plan*, and we will lean heavily on that study here. But we will add a new twist to bring the content of that study up to speed with this one. Understanding is progressive, and we are moving forward. Once again, to compact the writing (and reading) of this review, we will look at individual verses or groups of verses, to frame our discussion on this chapter. Here is what we see in this chapter:

Verse 1 tells us we are free because Christ has set us free. Freedom in Christ means not having to memorize 600 plus laws or make efforts to follow them. We are liberated from having to keep the law, which was a form of slavery.

Verse 2 shows Paul giving great emphasis to a point he wants to bring home. He is saying, “This is important!” And then he makes His point: “if you let yourself be circumcised,” and are trying to be holy and righteous in this way, “Christ will be of no value to you at all.” Why? Because legalism is a *sin*, an activity of the sinful nature (the flesh), and will put you out of fellowship and bar the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Christ will not help us if we do not “stand firm” (v. 1), which means to stand fast in our liberty. Vacating our freedom causes us to lose fellowship and divine assistance.

Verses 3 and 4 tell us that—if we try to keep the law (which means, inevitably, that you keep the laws you pick because you like them)—you have to obey *every single one of them*. And of course, we can’t do that. Those who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ. They have lost fellowship with the Spirit of Christ, because they have committed the sin of legalism, and they are not receiving the grace that comes to believers in fellowship. This does not mean, of course, that they are not still saved, only that their spiritual power flow has been disrupted.

Verse 5 shows how faith in the Spirit gives us an expectation that the righteousness of Christ will be seen in our behavior. The issue is this: If we trust in ourselves to produce this righteousness, it will not happen; if we trust in the Holy Spirit to produce the righteousness of Christ, it will be done.

Verse 6 informs us of the following: Since we are believers, keeping the law will get us zip. The only thing that counts for us is our abiding faith that comes with being in fellowship and maturing through study and training. The ultimate result is divine love, coming through us.

Verses 7-12 show Paul saying, essentially, “You are being pulled aside by false teachers, who convince you that keeping the law leads to spirituality. Their ideas are false; keeping the law leads to carnality.”

Verse 13 warns us not to “use our freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” Freedom from having to keep the law does not give us license to sin. Sin, whether it is in the form of legalism...or immorality...is still sin, and truncates fellowship and the control of the Spirit.

Verses 14-15 give a summary of the whole law in one command. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” To do otherwise leads to destructive relationships and sinful behavior.

Verse 16 gives the other side of the coin. The first side was, “Okay, you can 1) commit yourself to compliance with the law, or 2) indulge yourself in sin. Both of these keep you away from the power of grace and nothing good can come from either one. The conclusion is this: “So, I say, live by the Spirit.” Living by the Spirit is the result of confession and ongoing faith, and is the opposite of living under the law.

Verse 17-24 distinguishes walking in the flesh from walking in the Spirit. “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (v. 18). These Galatians were indwelt by the Spirit because they were believers, but they had stepped away from the Spirit by trying to keep the law. Get this: the minute they tried to DO SOMETHING to please God because of rules, they separated themselves from God’s power. Will they sin if led by the Spirit? No! Will they love if they are led by the Spirit? Yes! Because the Spirit does for them and through them what they cannot do for and by themselves.

Verse 25 tells us that when we “live by the Spirit”, we also “walk in the Spirit”. One is an internal condition...the other is visible. When we are filled with the Spirit, we will walk in the Spirit.

Verse 26 shows the *external* outcome of a changed *internal* condition. We will not live in sin, but in love. That is the fruit of the Spirit, visible to all.

This analysis of Gal. 5 gives us a close look at the issue of the filling of the Spirit vs. control of the flesh. What can be added is that the slavery of circumcision, or “living by the Law”, is a condition of carnality, or being out of fellowship. If we are in fellowship, and controlled by the Spirit, we will not be “under the Law”, but “in the Spirit”, and we will not be attempting to get God’s approval by keeping rules.

Here's an important question: If we are out of fellowship and "under the Law", who is in charge of us? The obvious answer is the "flesh" (AKA, the sinful nature). So who will be directing the keeping of the Law? Oh-oh...the flesh! So what power remains to enable us to follow the code? That of the flesh! What irony...that the one most likely to violate God's law, i.e., the sinful nature, would be the one left in charge of keeping it. Why does this happen?

I believe it is because the sinful nature pays frequent visits to the camps of the world and Satan, and what they coax the flesh to do is to attach itself to something that looks good (viz., the Law, which came from God Himself), but which has *no divine power* to resist the world and Satan, and will send the believer deeper into self-dependency and sin. Anytime our sinful natures are in charge, Satan and the world are well-served, and the inexorable downhill pull of our sinful tendencies will drag us deeper into legalism or sin, and further away from God.

The lesson? We must be careful of morality for its own sake. Satan promotes systems of morality that exclude Jesus Christ. Morality that does not honor Christ as its primary cause, and does not rely on the Holy Spirit for its power, is nothing more than "human good", or rule-keeping under the Law. Such morality does not please God, and will not produce divine fruit. We cannot tell, by observing "moral" behavior, whether it comes from the Holy Spirit or the flesh. God alone knows—and will judge—our motives. We must, however, judge *ourselves* in this regard.

Sub-chapter D: The Law and the Spirit in Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8

Detailed Study in Appendix B. For greater depth and more detail on the meaning and meat of Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8, please see Appendix B. These chapters from Romans offer a great deal of insight into the distinction between Law and grace, and the Law and the Spirit.

Summary of Concepts in Rom. 5, 6, 7, and 8. The day of the Law is over. The day of grace has arrived. We now operate under the power of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 7:4-6 summarizes this nicely, as follows:

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

The written code has been supplanted by the enabling power of the Spirit. This is a new day, as we will see here, and—with greater detail—in Appendix B.

There are two realms of spiritual reality for mankind. One operates under “Law”, which has a partnership with the Flesh. The other operates under “Grace”, which is a tab for the Holy Spirit. The flesh cannot operate under grace, because it is a “sinful nature”. The law is good, reflecting God’s standards, but it has been spoiled, or sickened, or weakened, by the sinful nature (Rom. 8:23). The Law has the sinful nature attached to it like a barnacle, because the standard of the Law does not change, and the sinful nature habitually, shamelessly, and interminably violates the standards of the Law. This links the Law and the sinful nature in an uneasy symbiosis...they cannot be separated.

Jesus Christ fulfilled God’s standards, and even embellished them into more refined ones (e.g., law of love), and became a sin offering to take the steam out of the judgment which the Law brings. When we accept Christ as Savior, all condemnation is removed forever. Furthermore, we are credited with the righteousness of Christ, become the temple of the Holy Spirit, get baptized into Christ, and have a “new man” created in us. This is our *position* forever.

But now...on earth and in time...we see a rub for believers. We still have a sinful nature, with the result that our “position” will not always be reflected in our “condition”. Our sinful nature is attached to the law and its judgment. The Law no longer condemns us because of our position in Christ, but it still follows us around with a video camera and an M.R.I. to expose our inner and outer sins. We are trapped! And these sins displease God, which means that divine discipline will be scheduled, unless we get the sins taken care of.

Because the sinful nature is chained to the law, a constant interaction goes on between the sinful nature and the law...with the sinful nature *violating* the Law, while the Law pronounces judgment on each sin. The sinful nature can also try to *cooperate* with the Law by “keeping” or observing the Law, which is JUST AS BAD as violating the Law. But whether the sinful nature is breaking the Law, or operating in a legalistic system for keeping it, the person whose name is on the sinful nature will be parked “under the law”.

To get out from under the Law and stay there, the believer has two non-meritorious techniques at his disposal: 1) confession of sins, and 2) faith. By exercising the first of these to *get away* from the Law (since confession kills the sins), and by expressing the second as a way to *stay away* from the Law (since faith maintains the “walk in the Spirit”), we have a fighting chance to beat sin. But notice: The power for beating sin *cannot* come from us. It can only come from the Holy Spirit, to Whom we relinquish control by the techniques we have seen.

Here is what we are saying, and I can understand that this raises questions: Anything done *by us* that falls under the Law, whether it violates it, or serves it, is sin. Even moral behavior is sin, if it is done by *us* to honor the Law, rather than by the *Holy Spirit*, Who honors Christ. If we violate the Law, this is clearly seen as sin, but if we—independent of the filling of the Spirit—try to follow the Law, even though we “appear” righteous, we will be operating “in

the flesh”, which can NEVER please God (Rom. 8:8). We will be practicing a “form of godliness, but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5).

Under the Law, there is only sin, darkness, legalism, carnality, and hostility toward grace. The Law is not an innocuous list of guidelines that we will “probably keep if we are good enough”. The Law has been underestimated and mischaracterized in its effect on our lives, as God’s creatures who fell, and as those who have been born again.

When we are under the Law, we are attached to the very thing that will judge us before God, and prevent 1) a relationship with God for unbelievers, and 2) fellowship with God for believers. When we, as believers, get out from under the Law, and move back under grace, we have divine resources to enable us to honor Christ, satisfy God’s will in our lives, and actually *fulfill the Law* under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.

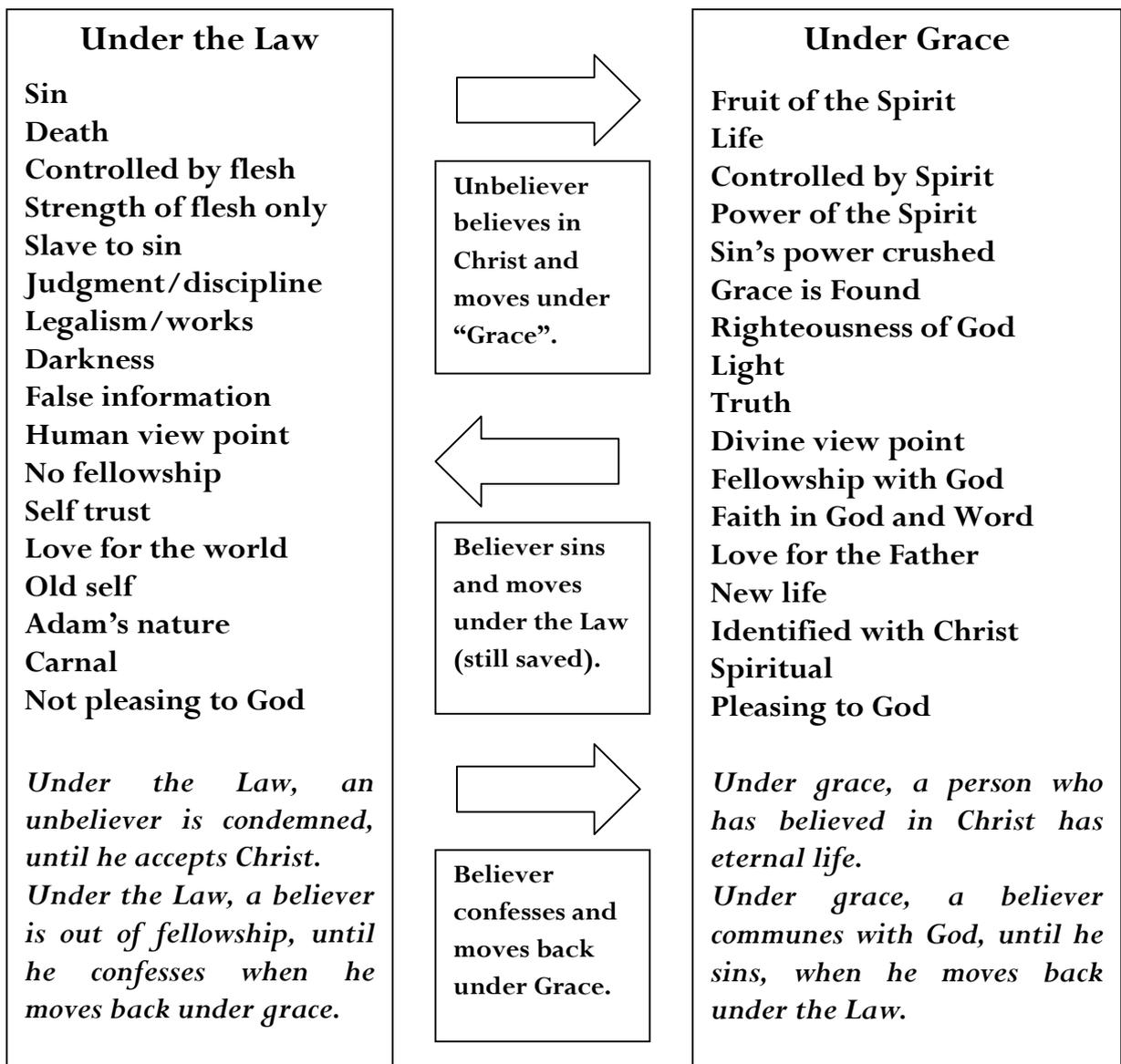
What follows below is a depiction of the relationship between Law and Grace. This chart shows as never before the distinction between conditions under the Law and those under the Spirit. Our object is to stay under “Grace”, or in the Spirit, as opposed to “the Law”, where the flesh rules. Here is the flow for events seen in the chart:

The unbeliever starts out under the Law, and remains there until he accepts Christ as Savior. When he believes in Christ, he moves under grace, which is where he will remain until he sins (and he will), in which case he moves back under the Law. Under the Law he will be dominated by the flesh, and will be scheduled for divine discipline. Discipline will increase until he confesses his sins to be restored to his place under grace. Movement back and forth from grace to the Law is rapid, at first, until the believer stabilizes by being “established” in the Word (growing by taking in the spiritual nourishment of Truth). Movement toward maturity builds faith, and this faith will sustain his walk in the Spirit and keep him under “Grace”.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Being “under the Law” as a believer, or being “carnal”, does not mean eternal life has been taken away. Our argument: If sin is the basis for *condemnation*, and “righteousness” from grace (imputed to us when we believe) qualifies us for *salvation*, then how can the righteousness we manufacture by keeping the Law *after we are saved...keep us that way?* We can’t be good enough to save ourselves, and we can’t be good enough to keep ourselves saved. Before and after...and forever...we are at God’s mercy, and are grateful that the infinite Creator God has extended Himself to us...in GRACE.

The Law (Flesh) vs. Grace (Spirit) Chart

The following chart shows the flow of a believer from the Law to grace...and back to the Law, if sin or legalism occurs...then once again back to grace at the time of confession. A believer “under the Law” is still saved, but He will be “out of fellowship” and will be ineffective, and likely destructive, in his demeanor. Our objective is to live under “grace”, by walking in the Spirit, rather than under the “Law” by living in the power of our sinful natures. **Compare the columns item by item.**



Fruit of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit Preserves His Word in Us. The Holy Spirit gave His Word to us in the Bible, and teaches us this Word as we apply ourselves to study it. He then preserves the words from the Bible within us, keeping them in our hearts to be applied as our faith strengthens. 2 Tim. 1:13-14 instructs us that the teachings we receive should be stored and protected within us by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we see here:

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Paul instructed Timothy to “keep” the patterns he had been taught by walking in the Spirit, as indicated in the phrase, “with faith and love in Christ Jesus”. These are flags indicating the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit. From the condition of fellowship, the Holy Spirit can keep His Word *in* us...and fulfill it *through* us. This is a product...or fruit...of His activity in us.

Listing the Fruit. The problem with any list, and we face this problem when we present lists in these writings, is that individual components in the list tend to get buried by the list as a whole. It’s a “can’t see the trees for the forest” thing, but each “tree” in the lists portraying the fruit of the Spirit is a valuable spiritual commodity. Gal. 5:22-23, cited earlier in this series, is a veritable “fruit basket”, loaded with a rich collection of qualities generated by self-determination and self-effort. Right? Of course not! These are produced by the Holy Spirit within us, though we have the privilege of being the conveyor by which the fruit is delivered. Here is what this passage says: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such there is no law.”

The fruit of the Spirit lays to rest the old code of conformity, and fulfills the new law of love.

Eph. 5:8-9 addresses this fruit as “fruit of the light”, which is the same as “products of fellowship with the Holy Spirit”. This passage says the following:

For you were once darkness [position of the condemned], but now you are light in the Lord [position of the redeemed]. Live as children of light [condition of the believer in fellowship] (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)....

Only if the Spirit is in control can this fruit be produced in believers.

Let the Rivers Flow. Jn. 7:37-39 gives the analogy of a flowing river to describe the function of the Holy Spirit, saying this:

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not been glorified.

We see here the process of receiving the Holy Spirit when we believe in Christ, and then we see that streams of “living water” will flow from within us. The Holy Spirit *is* that water. We drink that water at salvation, and then that water flows from us when we are filled with the Spirit. The water that flows from us is seen as love.

1 Pet. 1:22 says, “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for you brothers, love one another deeply, from a pure heart.” We are purified when we apply the technique God has given to cleanse us. Once we are pure, the love of God can flow from our pure hearts. But until we are purified, divine love will be squelched. Rom. 5:5 confirms this, saying, “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” When we love...in God’s way...that love comes from the Spirit. Col. 1:8 says, “...and who told us of your love in the Spirit.”

The primary “fruit” produced by the Spirit is love. It is the embodiment of all that is good and righteous. Love fulfills the law. And love is the expression of God Himself through us. This is staggering. The attitude of our Infinite Creator...coming through us! One very important expression of this love is that which occurs through the operation of our gifts from the Holy Spirit, that are designed so we can help each other understand and follow God’s plan.

Prayer, Worship, and Other Spiritual Activities Done in the Spirit

Praying in the Holy Spirit. Jude 1:20 says, “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.” This verse is calling on us to address our maturity by building our faith up. And coupled with growing faith, we are to stay in fellowship and pray while the Holy Spirit controls us. In reality, there is no real prayer apart from one done “in the Spirit”, because if we are out of fellowship, our prayers are not heard. But This is a good reason to confess our sins *before* we pray, so our prayers can be heard.

The growth of faith in v.20 portends an ongoing walk in the Spirit, which enables a close connection with God, whereby prayer is effective. Prayer is effective to the degree that spiritual preparation has been made beforehand. If a believer is out of fellowship, or is not studying consistently, or is immature because of weak faith, the prayers will not be effective, and may not even be heard at all. This is why the “building up of faith” precedes “prayer in the Spirit” in this verse...because faith sustains the control of the Spirit, keeping us out of sin and in a state of spiritual readiness.

Eph. 6:18a echoes the command to pray in fellowship, saying, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Praying in the Spirit is having the sinful nature under control, and enjoying the benefits of God’s power in our spiritual lives. The reference to “all occasions” would indicate that all prayers should be done in the Spirit, and that the time for such prayer is all the time.

Worshipping in the Spirit. Worship, like prayer, is to be done in the Spirit. Phil. 3:3 says, “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.” Earlier in this series, we cited the “circumcised” as 1) believers (positional circumcision), and 2) believers filled with the Spirit (conditional circumcision). When we speak of “worship”, that is something only believers do, so the circumcision in this verse is talking about the “spiritual condition” of the believer, and has no application to unbelievers. A believer controlled by the Spirit will not be expressing dependence on the *flesh* for anything.

Jn. 4:23-24 calls for true worshipers to worship in spirit and in truth. Worshiping “in spirit” is, of course, to worship under the influence of the Holy Spirit. For worship to be done right, the Holy Spirit must direct it. Then the “truth” aspect can come into play, whereby the Word of God is rightly divided for the nourishment of all believers, and they can worship with “understanding”.

Things That Cannot Be Done Without the “Walk in the Spirit”. The following is a random list of items we have seen from time to time in our studies, which *cannot* be done without the filling of the Spirit:

- Prayer
- Worship
- Glorifying God
- Pleasing God
- Having everything work together for good
- Loving man and God
- Producing God's righteousness
- Overcoming sin
- Fellowshiping with God
- Trusting God to supply all needs
- Submitting to God's wisdom
- Understanding Scripture
- Knowing God's will

This list could go on and on. We also cannot acknowledge God, give thanks, be content, have peace, witness for Christ, exercise our gifts to edify believers, have God's plan working for us, or get wisdom. We see from these examples, and there are many others, that IT IS CRUCIAL FOR US TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT. It's our life.

Working in God's Power

Our God. If you have already read *Living in God's Plan*, you have seen a thorough discussion on the immeasurable size and scope of our God. He is so far beyond everything we experience or know that it is impossible for us to fathom how really big and powerful He is. Usually, we see God as something abstract and elusive, or as a physical reality far above the clouds Who is looking down on the anthill of mankind. But we really don't know. We *can* know this: the God Who made all that exists, including all of time and space, must be really big, and powerful in ways that far exceed the dimensions we occupy, or even imagine.

And now we bring this unfathomably large scene back down to the limits of ourselves and our environment. We live in these bodies, see through these eyes, and assess from these limited perspectives...so we tend to see ourselves—each of us—as bigger than we really are...and God as smaller than He is. Even before we were saved, we tended to look at salvation as something to be done...particularly something *we* were to do. And after we were saved and had accepted that God is the One Who saved us, we still tended to think that our lives must be measured by *our* accomplishments and abilities. We make of the Christian life a do-it-yourself project. It doesn't have to be that way.

God offers His power to us. Again, we tend to be limited in our view of God. Often, when we think of God's power, we conjure up the image of a “booster”, like some STP product designed to increase the power of an engine and make it run with greater torque and efficiency. So we see God as an “additive” in our lives. A nice little convenience, in case we need it. Rather than the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, with complete knowledge of everything and complete control of all that happens. We are upside-down in our view. God is big, and we are small and at His mercy. When we think about living the Christian life, we CANNOT enter it with the notion that God is so limited that He will be impressed by anything we are or do. We must know that any value we have is derived from Him as a source, and does not come from us. Anything that comes from God is good; anything that comes from us as a source...is suspect.

God's Power Comes to Us. God's power is what makes the difference in our lives. Jesus Himself operated in the power of the Holy Spirit. His humanity was turned over to His divinity, which is exactly what we are to do: Turn our humanity over to the God Who lives in us. Lk. 4:14-15 tells of Christ's “walk in the Spirit” in His ministry, saying, “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.” The human Jesus depended on the Spirit to conduct the spiritual work that Jesus was doing.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, He promised that the “Doer” of God's divine work would be sent. Jn. 14:16-17a, says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.” The word “Counselor” is used to

suggest the role of the Holy Spirit. It comes from the Greek word *parakletos*, which means “summoned to one’s side for aid”. This word is often translated “Helper” or “Comforter”. These words are not strong enough, even though we use them repeatedly. Slightly better are the words, “Enabler” or “Strengtheners”, but these are still not strong enough, even though weak words can sometimes have stronger applications. Because of everything Paul and others say about the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we must make the strongest application possible of the words “Helper”, or “Enabler”.

I am presently sitting in a chair on the third floor of a building that is sturdy. We might say that the floor beneath me is “helping” me avoid crashing to the ground below. But is “helping” all that it is doing? This floor is firmly set beneath me and is my *total support*, giving me the ability to stay well above ground level, with no effort on my part. The degree of my participation in the work of this floor is ZERO. I contribute nothing to it, except to put my full weight down on it. By the same token, the Holy Spirit is more than an “Assistant”; He is actually the “Doer”. Anything substantive that is done in our Christian lives will be *done by Him, and not by us!*

Our efforts are not needed...only our faith. That is what makes the power of the Holy Spirit operational in our lives. J. Hampton Keathley, III, gives a clear statement of this principle in the following:

Is our *best* what God wants? No! He wants faith in *His* best, the Lord Jesus, and in the person of the Spirit whom God has sent to indwell us and empower us so we can experience the power of Christ and the ability to do our best, not in our own strength, but in the strength which God supplies. “And for this purpose, I work hard, struggling constantly in accordance with His working which continues to work in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:29, author’s translation). (Endnote 17)

Somehow, when we read verses that accentuate the power of God, we go straight to the *outcome* that is called for, such as good moral behavior, and bypass the *power*, which is the Holy Spirit. The best place for us to start is with the power to accomplish a requirement in Scripture, rather than the requirement itself. Perhaps there are those who say this is unbalanced and we should focus less on the outcomes of our Christian experience, and more on our “responsibilities” and initiative. But I believe that—if we focus on God and His power FIRST—the outcome will be good...exactly what God wants.

We look now at several verses that point to the “power” of the Holy Spirit as the basis for our production and lives. These are given in list form, as follows:

1. Paul said the following in Eph. 1:16-19, which gives a precise image of how we are supposed to operate...in His power:

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him

better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.

2. The Word informs us, while the Spirit enlightens us and enables us. The expression of His power is the work of *His* strength.
3. We see this again in Eph. 3:16-19, as follows (how can such passages be ignored?):

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

4. Eph. 6:10-11 tells us to be strong in God's strength. The armor we wear and the weapons we use are not from us, as we see in this passage: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."
5. Jesus told the disciples exactly how they would execute their ministries...in the power of the Holy Spirit. He told them what they would *receive* something they *did not have* which would enable them to do what they *could not do* by themselves. This statement from Christ is seen in Acts 1:8a, which says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This is power to accomplish our commission from God.
6. In 1 Cor. 2:4-5, Paul reports that his message and its results rested in the power of the Spirit, as we see here:

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

The power in Paul's message was in its ability to feed the souls of his listeners, and to strengthen them by God's Word, which was prepared for, and stored in, their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Those words then reflected back to the Holy Spirit as a summons for Him to come alongside them, not just to encourage them, but to carry them.

Can there be any question that the power of the Holy Spirit of Christ is the real substance of our Christian walk? Is there any doubt that the only way we will walk the path of righteousness and love is to walk in the Spirit? It is time to get ourselves cleaned up, have our faith built up, and step out into the vibrant life of Christ, by walking in His Spirit.

Endnotes

- 1) *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, by Joseph Henry Thayer, for Greek words *nous*, *psyche*, *pneuma*, and *cardia*. This reference was found online at www.tgm.org/bible.htm, under the web site listing, *Free Bible Tools—Strong's Concordance*.
- 2) *The Interlinear Bible*, ed. and trans. by Jay P. Green, Sr., p. 856. Sovereign Grace Publishers, Lafayette, Indiana, 1985
- 3) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 774.
- 4) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 873.
- 5) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 909.
- 6) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 872.
- 7) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 883.
- 8) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 876.
- 9) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 888.
- 10) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 769.
- 11) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 930.
- 12) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 948.
- 13) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 946.
- 14) *Interlinear Bible*, p. 763.
- 15) *ABC's for Christian Growth: Laying the Foundation*, by J. Hampton Keathley, III, pp. 224-225. Biblical Studies Press, 1996-2002. This book is available at www.bible.org.
- 16) *ABC's for Christian Growth*, p. 187.
- 17) *ABC's for Christian Growth*, p. 185.
- 18) *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver*, by Rene A. Lopez, pp. 162-163. 21st Century Press, Springfield, Missouri, 2005.

Appendix A

Scriptures on the Mind, the Soul, the Human Spirit, and the Heart

The Mind—*nous*: Lk. 24:45; Rom. 1:28; 7:23, 25; 12:2; 1 Cor. 14:15; 2 Cor. 2:18; 2 Th. 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:15.

The Soul—*psyche*: Matt. 2:20; 6:25; 10:28, 39; 11:29; 12:18; 20:28; 22:37; Lk. 12:20; Acts 3:23; 14:2; 20:10; Rom 2:9; 13:1; 1 Cor. 15:45; Eph. 6:6; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; 6:19; 10:39; 12:3; 1 Pet. 2:11.

The Human Spirit—*pneuma* (same word used for the Holy Spirit elsewhere): Matt. 26:41; 27:50; Acts 7:59; 17:16; 18:25; Rom. 1:9; 12:11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 6:20; 14:14-15; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 4:23; 1 Th. 5:23; 2 Th. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb. 4:12; James 2:26.

The Heart—*cardia*: Matt. 6:21; 9:4; 11:29; 12:34-35; 13:15; 15:8, 18; 22:37; Mk. 2:6; Jn. 12:40; Acts 2:37; 5:3; 7:51; 8:21; 11:23; 15:9; 16:14; Rom. 1:21, 24; 2:5, 15-16, 29; 5:5; 6:17; 10:8, 10; 16:18; 1 Cor. 4:5; 7:37; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:15; 4:6; 8:16; 9:7; Gal. 4:6, 18; Phil. 4:7; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:2; Heb. 3:10, 12; 4:12; 8:10; 10:22; 13:9; James 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 2:23.

Appendix B

Expansion of Concepts in Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8, Related to the Law vs. the Spirit

Introduction. Romans is rich in truth, but deep in difficulty, and has presented scholars and pastors with many problems in the past as they have attempted to interpret its passages. Peter himself said Paul’s writings can be hard to grasp. The problem with difficult passages is that they can be used to prove things that aren’t true, and can require great discernment, faith, and study to arrive at their real meaning. Many passages in Romans are simply bypassed, because they are difficult to understand (e.g., Rom. 2). But fools rush in, where angels fear to tread (this is not a doctrine!), so we will proceed into some of the densest of all scriptural forests to comb the mines where treasures are surely hidden.

We will look at portions of Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8, to see the treatment of Law vs. Grace and/or Law vs. the Spirit. We will exercise the liberty to skip verses or sections not directly applicable to this topic. I pray that God will give you clarity and understanding in these chapters, even if it does not come through the words written here.

As we look at parts of chapters 5-8, we will be exploring the function of the Holy Spirit, which can be encapsulated into one word: Grace. We will examine law vs. grace, or the Law vs. the Spirit, and see how grace describes the operation of the Holy Spirit as it empowers and equips us for the Lord’s “work”. When we do not operate under God’s “grace”, we move under the Law. The Law itself is good, but we cannot keep the Law. When we embrace the power of the Holy Spirit, we are freed from the Law, but—interestingly, the Spirit fulfills the Law through us.

Remember: Only God can meet His standards. When we slip into sin or legalism, we move out from under “grace”, which is the only place where God operates to cause these standards to be met. By the time we finish this study, we will be able to distinguish grace and law, and we will know which one to operate under...and how to stay there.

Romans 5. To start with, we will take a brief look at chapter 5 to prepare us for chapter 6. Here are a few features gleaned from chapter 5:

Vv. 1-2—We have been justified by faith in Christ, which now gives us access to this “grace in which we now stand” (v.2).

V. 5—Love is infused into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, “whom he has given us.”

Vv. 9-11—We are justified and reconciled (saved), and now we can be delivered (meaning “saved” in time) through His life. One of the things we are saved from, i.e., “delivered” from in life, is the Law.

Vv. 12-17—Adam brought death; Christ brings life. Those who receive the gift of grace (the Holy Spirit) by believing in Christ can “reign in life through one man, Jesus Christ”.

V. 20—Sins are exposed by the Law, and thus the sin-count will go up under its scrutiny. The condition it exposes calls for “increased grace” to overpower sin.

V. 21—Sin ruled under the Law, bringing condemnation (cf., v. 16), but grace rules through the righteousness of Christ, received by the Holy Spirit as an eternal “position” at salvation, and witnessed as the “fruit of the Spirit” in the life of the Spirit-filled believer (cf., Gal. 3:19).

Understanding the impact of the Law and the power of grace is our purpose for this study, which will fit like a puzzle piece into the larger subject of this series: Walking in the Spirit.

Romans 6. For this chapter (only) we will continue the pattern we have established in these studies for managing large chunks of scripture in a small space, discussing verses individually or in groups. The points emanating from chapter 6 are fundamental to fully understanding chapters 7 and 8. Here are the most salient points from chapter 6:

Vv. 1-2—At the end of chapter 5, Paul says, “grace increased”, as more sins were spotlighted by the Law. But does that mean we should sin more to get more grace? Paul says this is absurd. In fact, Paul asks, since we “died to sin...how can we live in it any longer?” (v.2) As Paul does so many times in his persuasive writings, he shows us the need (and also the way) to bring our status, or our “condition”, up to our “position”. Positionally, we are “dead to sin”, but we sin frequently in our lives, so our “condition” is *not dead to sin* (i.e., not unresponsive to it). In fact, we are told in 1 Jn. 1, verses 8 and 10, that our condition is constantly “alive” to sin. The question that Paul asks: “How can we live in it any longer?” (v. 2) is rhetorical, and the answer is this: We live “in sin” because it is our (sinful) nature to do so. We’re sinners...even though we have been saved by grace.

Vv. 3-4—The death we were “baptized into” in these verses is part of the actual “process” of being changed from the position of living in sin, to one of being dead to it...in Christ. Paul’s question, “Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” is—again—rhetorical. He knows they know the answer, which is “yes”. And since we “died” as a result of this baptism “into Christ”, and because He also rose from the dead, we are also alive through our identity with Him (v. 8). “Living with Him” has two implications: 1) We will live *with* Him in heaven for all eternity, and 2) we will live *through* Him in time. The latter case is the result of the power of the resurrection, which is embodied in the

Holy Spirit, Who is in us and Who also gives the life of Christ to us on a daily basis, as we cleanse ourselves and trust in Him each day.

Vv. 5-7—We identified with Christ in His death, an identity we received when we were saved, and now we identify with His resurrected life. This will be the basis for our resurrection, but it is also the basis for our accessing the *power* of the resurrection (i.e., the power of the Holy Spirit) to enable us to overcome sin in our lives. We died to sin “once for all” (v. 10), *but we still sin*, once again pointing up the distinction between *position* and *condition*. Positionally, our “old self” is dead, but the sinful nature is alive and kicking in all of us. We have been given a “way out of sin” for all eternity by the death and resurrection of Christ, which translates now as a “way out of sin” *on earth* through the filling and control of the Holy Spirit.

Vv. 8-10—In these verses (8-10), we see a strong connection between the Law and sin. Even though the Law is good, it represents a dark force that rules a dark and evil kingdom. Where the law rules, sin abounds. On the other end of the spiritual spectrum is Jesus Christ, who died to conquer death and sin. He Himself is actually “dead to sin”, and because of our new position in Christ, we die to sin, also. The Law has no jurisdiction over us. This is *true* in our “eternal” lives, and is *potential* for us in our “temporal” lives.

Vv. 11-13—While we remain in these bodies, and on earth, we are “in the world”, where we constantly violate God’s standards. The Law is good, but it produces death. When we are not “spiritual”, we will be operating in the “dead zone”, or under the Law, which is *where sins live*. God has provided the Holy Spirit, so we will have a way to stay out of this zone, but if we insist on “presenting our bodies as instruments of wickedness” (v. 13), we will be choosing spiritual lifelessness. We have been brought from “death to life” in our *position*, and so we should be “offering ourselves to God” in our lives (v. 13). We grow as Christians, so that our *experience in life* will be elevated toward the level of our *position in eternity*.

V. 14—In this verse, we see a dichotomy: Law and Grace. This verse says, “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.” Once again, we must distinguish our position in eternity from our condition in time. We can actually be “under the law”, even though we are believers, and this moves us “away from grace”. (cf., Gal. 5:4)

Vv. 15-23—The rest of chapter 6 is about the contest between sin and righteousness. We are freed from sin positionally, and must now apply all we learn from His Word to be freed from sin as believers on the earth. Notice that Paul has not mentioned the Holy Spirit. He seems to be loading up the Roman Christians with the *requirement* of living “sinless lives”, and is saving the *means* for achieving this until chapter 8.

So, we are freed from sin's domination by the death of Christ, and we now have the potential to walk in "newness of life", because of His resurrection. Christ's work is complete. It is now the job of the Holy Spirit to highlight and honor that work through us. That's the point of confession, study, prayer, and faith: to glorify Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the point of love and fellowship and unity and edification. We are to spotlight Christ so that those who seek Him will find Him through the gospel we bring. That's a strong motivation for us to mature, and a good reason to seek God's holiness: to see lost humanity come to Christ. All the rest is "process", aimed at that goal.

The Law and Grace must be differentiated. The Law cannot save; only grace can save. The Law cannot give eternal life; only the Holy Spirit has this capability. The Law cannot give us a new position in Christ; only the Holy Spirit can do this. And when He does this, our new "position" is settled. The only remaining contingency is our "condition", which now moves into the forefront. Our condition is determined by our being pure and having faith. When these are true, we have the filling of the Spirit, and our condition is classified as "clean". On the other hand, if we are operating in sin or legalism, we move under the Law, and the Law becomes a blinking indicator light for uncleanness. With the Law as our judge, we can only get a rating of "unrighteous", which will stay with us until we move back under grace by confessing our sins. The Law judges; grace forgives. This is the point of Rom. 7 and 8. We must operate under grace, and not under the Law.

Romans 7. We change now from a more "exegetical" (verse-by-verse) style back to one that is more "topical". What follows is a discussion of the doctrinal concepts that we see in chapters 7 and 8, respectively, as they apply to Law and Grace, or the Law and the Spirit. The primary source for content in this section can be found in Rom. 7:4-24 and Rom. 8:1-14. We begin with Romans 7.

Rom. 7:4-6 takes us to the core of our discussion about the Law and the Spirit, saying the following:

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Paul had said earlier that we are dead to sin. Now he is saying that we are dead to the Law. When we were unbelievers, we were alive to the Law, or living under the control of the sinful nature...that only bears fruit for death. What is fruit for death? It is sin! But we died to sin and to the Law, which gives us our "position". And now Paul wants us to "serve" in a new way...not in our flesh, or by our own devices, or in the old way of the written code, but "in the new way of the Spirit". Paul is telling us this: Now that we are believers, we have

the chance to operate under the Spirit, which has the power to enable us to serve...instead of under the Law, which only has the power to give us a negative report.

Under the Law, only sin and legalism can exist (both of these are “sin”, actually), which means we have only the flesh to guide us. This is why we produce only the fruit of death, or sin. But since we are now believers, we have a new freedom from the Law, positionally, which can also be true in our “condition”...but only through the Spirit, Who gives us the power to beat sin.

Verse 7 tells us that *the Law* itself is not sin; the Law EXPOSES sin. The “fruit of death”, which is the product of our “sinful passions”, is sin (v. 5). Don’t miss this point: The flesh can produce ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD. It can only produce sin. The Law holds a grip on the flesh, chaining it to the Law in a perpetual state of judgment. All the sinful nature can do is try to deal with the law, either by keeping it...or by defying it. Both attempts get bad results.

Verses 12-14a tell us that the law itself is not bad...it is spiritual and right. It is the flesh *introduced to the Law* that connects the Law with sin. Because of our sinful nature, the Law, albeit good, is *bad for us*. It’s good, but we’re allergic to it, because of our nature. It will only destroy us, because of our flesh. It would be great for us if we could keep it, but it is impossible for the sinful nature to follow the Law, so this means that the Law is no place for us to go near.

Here’s an interesting observation: We have established that the flesh cannot keep the Law. But there is a “law” *above* the Law, which is the law of love (the law of the Spirit) that Christ introduced and Paul described...and the flesh can’t keep that one, either. You see, the only Force in creation that can reach or accommodate God’s standards is God Himself. We can’t, because of our sinful nature. That means the only way WE can be involved in meeting God’s standards is for God to do it *through* us. For this to happen, we must be operating under grace, and not under the Law.

And who operates under the Law? Only these:

- well-behaved unbelievers
- rotten unbelievers
- well-behaved carnal believers
- sin-ridden carnal believers

All **un**believers are under the Law, and many believers are, as well. Very few Christians find the narrow path that leads to true spirituality, and escape the Law often enough and long enough to see the real fruit of the Holy Spirit produced in their lives.

Without the Holy Spirit (which is true of the unsaved), all that’s left is the flesh. And if the Spirit is not controlling us as believers...once again, all we have is the flesh. And where is

the flesh? Strapped to the Law! And what happens under the Law...slavery to sin! This is exactly what Paul is talking about in verses 14-26, where he describes his condition of being dominated by the flesh. He is sinful...a wretched man. His only rescue is through Christ, Who has given us His Spirit to bolster us against the Law, and the flesh, and sin.

Dichotomies in Rom. 7:4-6 and Rom. 8:1-14. Many times Paul separates spiritual realities into contrasting pairs. We have seen this above, in this familiar pair: 1) “position” and 2) “condition”...one is eternal, the other is temporal. We have seen others: Law and grace, the Spirit and the flesh, sin and righteousness, believers and unbelievers, and so on. These are “dichotomies”...entities, qualities, or forces that are “cut apart” or separated. They do not overlap, and are often opposites. We see dichotomies throughout Romans 7 and 8. These are presented in a chart below to help us see the role of the Spirit, as contrasted with the influence of the flesh. At stake is our fulfillment of God’s purpose in our lives.

Dichotomies in Rom. 7 and 8

(TAKE THE TIME TO SCAN ACROSS EACH ROW LEFT TO RIGHT)

| Those Affected (LOOK HERE FIRST) | Positive Toward God (LOOK HERE NEXT) | Negative Toward God (LOOK HERE LAST) |
|---|--|--|
| Mankind—two types: (Rom. 7:4-5) | Believers | Unbelievers |
| Believers—two realms: (Rom. 7:6) | Walking in the Spirit | Living under the Law |
| Believers—two life-masters: (Rom. 8:4) | The Spirit | Flesh (sinful nature) |
| Believers—two conditions: (Rom. 8:5-8) | Controlled or led by the Spirit, producing righteousness | Controlled by sinful nature, producing sin |
| Believers—two body states: (Rom. 8:10-11) | Spirit gives “life” to the body | Sin brings “death” to the body |

Notice that all conditions for believers, as seen in this chart, revolve around our relationship with the Holy Spirit. This is the core of the Christian life: making ourselves acceptable for fellowship with God, so that He can control and direct our lives and produce the character of Christ in us. Sin is the condition that prevents this. When sin is dealt with, what remains is the righteousness of God.

Romans 8. This chapter in Romans, even with all its complexity, gives us an excellent recapitulation of the concept of the Law vs. Grace. In addition, this chapter brings the Holy Spirit onto the stage with a flourish. This chapter brings suitable and powerful closure to the important distinction between forces that will destroy us, and those that will save us.

Rom. 8:2 says, "...because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." Because of the efficacious work of Jesus Christ, a new law has been written, allowing the Holy Spirit to ride into town as the new "Sheriff", releasing from jail all the "law-breakers" who accept Him. When we become believers, we are no longer condemned (v. 1), and we are "freed" from the harsh law that put us away to start with (v. 2). The irony is that the Law is a standard for good, yet the Law is actually the "law of the sinful nature", which brings death. The Law and "the law of the sinful nature" and the "law of death" are all the same thing. The Law and the flesh are inseparable. The Law was fine until the sinful nature came along, and attached itself (v. 3). We will explain this, shortly.

The good news, now that we are believers, is that the Law no longer has a grip on us *that cannot be broken*, or the power to judge us *that cannot find forgiveness...*and the Law is no longer a master *from whom we cannot escape*. The bad news is that the sinful nature loves the Law, and gravitates to it, because the Law is weak in enforcement (v. 3), even though it is strong in judgment. And whether we, as believers, *break* the Law...or attempt to *keep* the Law...we are placed *under the authority* of the Law, and no good thing happens there. Relief is in sight, however. We will see that, when we move out from under the Law, by moving back under grace, the Spirit is able to *fulfill* the Law *in us*, and the law of the sinful nature will be disengaged.

This is declared in v. 4, which says, "...in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit." This verse distinguishes living under the control of the sinful nature from living under the control of the Holy Spirit. Those who live under the control of the Spirit will see the Law "fully met"...not by their efforts or intentions, but by the Holy Spirit. Rene Lopez described this verse (v. 4) as follows (emphases are his; abridgements are mine):

Sin at the cross was dethroned (as a controlling power hindering the believer's obedience)...in order that...**the righteous requirement (*dikaioma*)...of the law might be fulfilled in us.** The term *dikaioma* refers to the *righteous* acts...that can now come to fruition *in believers*, because Christ deprived sin of its power. However, *only if* believers **do not walk according to the flesh...but according to the Spirit...** Thus, the Christian, through the life of Christ lived *in us* by means of *the Spirit*, can behave according to the standard of the Law known as love (cf. Rom. 13:8-10). (Endnote 18...Endnotes are listed prior to the appendices.)

Love is the sum of all the Law, and is a frequently-cited fruit of the Spirit. This is what the Holy Spirit produces in us when He controls us. This is the heart of everything we will ever

study or know or practice in the whole realm of Christianity, and is worth every ounce of our commitment to acquire and secure it. This is our goal: love from the Holy Spirit...flowing through us. This fulfills the old law under the written code, AND the new law of life under the Spirit.

Verses 5-8 sharpens the contrast between living under the control of the flesh vs. living under the power of the Spirit. Verse 5 says this: “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” Verse 6 adds that the mind under the sinful nature is DEATH (spiritual darkness), while the mind under grace, i.e., filled with the Spirit, is LIFE. Verse 7 says that the mind controlled by the sinful nature is hostile to God, and “cannot please God” (v. 8). As believers, controlled by the flesh, we will be “hostile to God” and unable to please Him. The point: The flesh cannot please God.

Here is where we are: When we are controlled by the sinful nature, we will be defying the Law and violating all its standards, OR we will be attempting to fulfill the law through the flesh. Either way, we will be out of fellowship, out from under the spiritual (and other) provisions of grace, under the judgment and death of the Law, and targeted for divine discipline. This is not a good place to be. This is the place of “anguish” in the soul, and where our bones waste away, like David’s did in Ps. 32:3.

The attachment of the flesh to the law is like a person who grabs a metal handle which is connected to a high-voltage electrical circuit. He is frozen to the handle, because his power to drop it has been taken away. The thing that is destroying him is also the thing that is preventing him from escaping the force of its control. No matter how hard he tries, he remains attached...he cannot let go.

By the same token, the flesh cannot escape the Law. The flesh is stuck under the judgment of the Law, and is “owned” by it, which means it has become its slave. While attached to the Law, the flesh can only produce “death”, which is sin. This is why the crucifixion of Christ, by letting us break free from the Law, allows us to operate away from the Law, not in our own strength, because we are *sinful*, but in God’s strength. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can shut the flesh down, and break the attachment it gives us to the Law.

This concept is much bigger and more important than we knew. The main point of our Christian life is to get out from under the Law by living and walking in the Spirit. If we are not walking in the Spirit, all our activity will be FLESHLY, and is characterized as sinful. Our aim is to stay in fellowship and walk in the power of the Spirit.

We see, in various translations, different phrases used for the term *control*: “walk in”, “live in”, “are controlled by”, and “operate according to”. When these phrases are applied to the flesh, they all reflect an overpowering influence that directs our lives and leaves us almost as spectators of our own errors. (Of course we are always responsible for the sins of our sinful nature...it is really just US.) In Rom. 7:4-6, we saw that the flesh is something we are

“dead” to, so that we can “serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the flesh” (v. 6). Rom. 7:6 also shows us the transition we go through, moving from slavery to the flesh under the Law, to freedom in the Spirit under grace. The flesh is seen in Rom. 8 as something that can control us, and that we can “walk in” or “live in”...as believers.

In v. 9, Paul says, “You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” If we take this to mean that the flesh can never control a believer, this will twist our understanding of all of the rest of this chapter into a pretzel. This is an impossible interpretation of this passage. So what does this mean? The best interpretation, I think, is this: The only way we will not be controlled by the flesh, thus being controlled by the Spirit, is IF AND ONLY IF the Spirit of God lives in us. If we are *unbelievers*, the sinful nature will always be in charge, and the Spirit will not be there, because it does not live within us.

If believers could NOT be controlled by the sinful nature, why would Paul say, “...but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members” (Rom. 7:23)? And why would Paul say, in 8:12, that we have “no obligation” to the flesh, if flesh is a moot concern to believers? He is saying we are not obligated to it, but we still have strong connections with it. The sinful nature undercuts spirituality, and can even destroy our lives as Christians.

For a more thorough discussion of verses 9 and 10, please see the chapter titled “Sin”, in *Getting Closer to God*. To clarify what Paul is talking about in vv. 9-10, for purposes of this study, we have to look again at v. 12, which tells us that we are not obligated to serve the flesh and live under the Law, since such a life produces death. This is crucial: “Death” is SIN, which is what is produced under the Law. We *can*, instead, be led by the Spirit, Who produces righteousness.

In Rom. 7:5, Paul had pointed out that unbelievers live under law. Believers are freed from that Law. But we still have these “bodies of death” (7:24) that are barnacled to the Law, and they—embodied in “the flesh”—can only sin. The flesh is grafted into the Law, shackled by the Law, and cannot escape. The Spirit lives in us, but will not always control us, and when He doesn’t, the flesh has free reign, with the full force of the Law behind it.

Verses 11-13 describe the death that comes to the believer with *sin*...even though the Spirit is inside of him. The term “death” shows how completely dark and empty our lives are when sin dominates. We may go through motions that reflect some form of life, and our plans may even succeed momentarily, but—if we have sin in our lives—we are dead, and this reality will dominate our souls and make of our hearts a parched and lifeless desert. On the other hand, the Spirit that is in us can also control us, and “kill death”, or “put to death the deeds of the body [or the flesh]” (v. 13). As a result, we will be alive. But notice, this

passage does not say, “by determination”, or “by hard work”, or “by moral behavior”, you will put to death the antics of the flesh. We must be clear! It is only BY THE SPIRIT that we can truly overcome the sinful nature.

Here are the “spiritual” categories pertaining to all of humanity:

1. Unbelievers are inextricably tied to the Law, which means they are chained to sin and controlled by the flesh. They have no spiritual life. This is their position.
2. Believers fall into two categories, as follows:
 - A. They are *all* freed from the Law, positionally, which means they are not a slave to sin, and they will never be condemned, even though they have sin in their lives.
 - B. They can operate either under the Law (controlled by the flesh), or under grace (controlled by the Holy Spirit). Spirituality can be restored from a sinful state only by confession of sins, and then it can be maintained as a walk in the Spirit...by faith.

Satan wants us to be shallow and maintain a flesh-driven view of spirituality. He does NOT want us to get into the deeper truths of Scripture, because that is where we find the power of God’s Word, and the ways to let the Holy Spirit work through us in *His* power. As long as Satan can blur the lines between carnality and spirituality, he will prevent us from tapping into God’s power, which is the source of everything good and righteous. Consider the following verses that confirm this:

- 1 Cor. 4:20—“For the kingdom is not a matter of talk, but of power.”
- Rom. 14:17—“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit....”
- 1 Cor. 1:18—“For the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

The Christian life is about power...not our own, but the power of the Holy Spirit. We can live under the Law, or under grace...controlled by the flesh, or controlled by the Holy Spirit. When we confess and pray and study and trust God, we will see the power of our Infinite God at work in our lives, and He will be pleased with His work...in us.

Whether believers are under the Law or under grace is determined by their being cleansed or sanctified by the confession of their sins. Once sins have been confessed, believers can walk in faith, find grace to help in time of need, know that everything is working together for good, and operate in the Law of the Spirit. And the Word will make sense and prepare them for the battering waves of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William D. Gibbs, III, spent 25 years in public service as an educator and curriculum designer. He served as teacher, principal, superintendent, and curriculum developer in the public school systems of Texas. He has now taken his skills in the area of learning-program development and is channeling them into service for Jesus Christ. Much of his career in education was spent developing programs for at-risk students. His work now is targeted toward at-risk Christians (or new ones). The same way that he built systems for filling in gaps and establishing solid foundations for student learning, he has built on the foundation of the Word to provide clear studies that facilitate Christian living and accelerate the growth and effectiveness of believers.

Gibbs began an intensive study of the Word in 2010, and initiated a practice at that time of recording his findings in writing. He has written ten books since then...and has now condensed them into a survey course: *Bible Basics for Living: Essential Foundations*. This course and the books which form the foundation for it (of which this is one) are the culmination of his experiences in life, his professional career, and—more recently—his studies in the Word.

He has been surprised to discover what the Bible REALLY says about living, and is sure that you will be surprised, as well, when you work through his studies. It must be said that the central player and point in this “work” is not the author, but God. If—and only if—God is in this writing, it will be helpful and beneficial to believers who read it, and God will be glorified by its dissemination.