

Diploma in Discipleship

COURSE I

Gospel Truth Ministries'
Prophetic Voice Institute



By Joseph Kostelnik, Ph.D.

**The Gospel Truth:
Doctrine & Discipleship**

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Diploma in Discipleship

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**All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible, unless
otherwise noted.**

Other Common Abbreviations Used in This Course:

Gk. = Greek text

Heb. = Hebrew text

LXX = The Seventy, or Septuagint, an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures

WEB = World English Bible

AT = The author's translation from the Greek text

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Preface

This volume is the result of nearly 25 years of my study in the Word of God. It originally appeared in eleven separate books. Recently, I was impressed to combine these lessons into one, handy volume. The teachings contained in the following pages have borne much fruit, not only in the lives of believers in America, but in numerous other countries. It appears that several “foreign language” editions will also be forthcoming.

It is our prayer that you will consider the information in this course carefully, prayerfully and with a sincere desire to make your Christian life count for the Lord.

The following material is arranged in two sections: ***Doctrine: Knowing What You Believe*** and ***Discipleship: Living What You Believe***. Each section is comprised of ten lessons and includes a 100 question, true-false exam. Although you are encouraged to proceed at your own pace, the material is designed to be studied over ten weeks (one lesson on ***Doctrine*** and one lesson on ***Discipleship*** weekly). In this way the theoretical and the practical are combined regularly making your journey through the lessons at once instructional as well as inspirational.

This course is the first of three in our ministry’s Prophetic Voice Institute curriculum. It is our prayer that you will decide to continue on in your study of God’s Word.

And now, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Dr. Joseph Kostelnik (White Oak)
Cincinnati, Ohio
August, 1992

Doctrine: Knowing What You Believe

By Joseph Kostelnik, Ph.D.

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Introduction

Why a course on doctrine?

Is there really a need for the layman to study the major doctrines of the Christian faith? Isn't this pursuit more suited to the theologian or Bible teacher? Is it not a waste of time to get too "bogged down" with such overly intellectual endeavors?

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

The scripture speaks directly to the minister of the Gospel and his responsibility to *preach doctrine*.

*"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to **doctrine**"* (I Tim. 4:13).

Again, this verse stresses the need for the minister to first understand "sound doctrine," himself, and then to "exhort" his flock with the same.

But what of the layperson?

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"* (II Tim. 3:16).

Certainly, this text speaks to all "people of God."

The Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to "teach all men." This is precisely what doctrine **is**: teaching or instruction in the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Doctrine, or teaching, is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Let us not forget, it is the Word of God which brings saving faith and all of the blessings of God (Rom. 10:17).

What we believe (and live by) is determined by what we are *taught* (and obey). This is why Paul cautions Timothy:

*"Take heed unto thyself, and unto **the doctrine**; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee"* (I Tim. 4:16).

Is there a danger in believing the wrong doctrine? What is the source of such erroneous teaching?

The Apostle Paul provides illuminating insight regarding these questions:

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits**, and **doctrines of devils**;"* (I Tim. 4:1).

Notice that this verse indicates the possibility of Christians willingly leaving "the faith" (the established body of orthodox—Bible based—Christian doctrine), and deliberately *giving heed to* (obeying) not only *wrong teaching*, but, in actuality, *seducing spirits* (demons). This illustrates the fact that *bad doctrine* actually brings one into contact with malevolent (evil) spiritual beings who can then gain a foothold in one's life and so further their ruinous work in other areas.

False doctrine, then, must be shunned just as any other sin or traffic with evil spirits. The understanding of, and obedience to, *sound doctrine*, is nothing else than submission to the real God rather than the pseudo-god, Satan.

We live (obey) what we believe, and we believe what we are taught (doctrine). Hence, we must strive to know the Truth, believe the Truth, and teach the Truth. Only in this way can we truly serve God instead of the Devil.

We truly can avoid being tossed to and fro by "every wind of doctrine."

A Guide For The Path

We propose to study in this section, ten, basic, foundational doctrines of the Christian faith.

During the course of the development of the Christian faith, several statements of the Body of Christ's *fundamental beliefs* emerged. As I sought the Lord concerning the outline for this book, it became clear to me that I could do a whole lot worse than to use the well-known **Apostles' Creed** as a lodestar for our studies. Not only does it epitomize—succinctly—the major beliefs of the historic, evangelical (Bible-believing) Christian faith, but it has enjoyed widespread acceptance by all orthodox (Bible-believing) Christian communions (denominations) for nearly 2,000 years.

With this in mind, we shall utilize the Creed as an outline to our brief studies. There is a tradition (affirmed by Ambrose) that the Twelve Apostles assembled together and made a key to this common advice (the Creed), by which the darkness of the Devil is disclosed and the Light of Christ may appear. Another ancient writer—St. Austin—alleged that each particular phrase was added by each apostle.

Peter: "I believe in God the Father Almighty;"

John: "Maker of heaven and earth;"

James: "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;"

Andrew: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;"

Philip: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;"

Thomas: "He descended into hell, the third day He arose from the dead;"

Bartholomew: "He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;"

Matthew: "From whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead;"

James, son of Alphaeus: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church;"

Simon Zelotes: "The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins;"

Jude, the brother of James: "The resurrection of the dead;"

Matthias: "Life everlasting. Amen."

Read, memorize and believe these words and the truths they convey, firmly supported by the teachings of the scriptures: your spiritual welfare and that of those with whom you come in contact, depend upon it!

Author's note:

We wish to express our appreciation to others whose work has benefited us in the preparation of this volume (scripture references, outlines, quotes from authorities). Any exact reproduction is purely unintentional.

We recommend for your study:

1. ***Bible Doctrines***, P.C. Nelson. Radiant Books (Springfield, MO 65802).
2. ***Outline Studies in Christian Doctrine***, George P. Pardington. Christian Publications (Harrisburg, PA).
3. ***Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible***, Myer Peariman. Gospel Publishing House (Springfield, MO 65802).

Theology (The Study of God)

“I believe in God the Father Almighty;” “*ye worship ye know not what*” (Jn. 4:22).

These words of the Lord Jesus Christ to the woman at the well of Samaria could be addressed to the average “Bible-believing” Christian of today. There is a lamentable lack of knowledge of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith among believers. One of the major sources of confusion and misunderstanding centers around the knowledge of God. We must strive to get an accurate conception of the God of the Bible, *from the Bible*.

The Titles of God

What follows are some leading facts about the Deity.

One way to better understand the nature of the God we worship is to explore His titles. Although we have already touched upon some of them in the *Discipleship* series of lessons, we will include some additional information for your consideration.

The first title of the Deity is El (אֱלֹהִים). This Hebrew title means strong or first. It occurs about 250 times in the Old Testament, often in connection with another descriptive title such as: Almighty God (Gen. 17:1), Everlasting God (Gen. 21:33), Jealous God (Ex. 20:5), the Living God (Jos. 3:10), etc. El Shaddai (אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי) means “Almighty God” or “the All-Sufficient Mighty One” (Gen. 35:11).

“The Persons of the Godhead are Three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but in nature and essence God is One. Each attribute of God is infinite. One infinite eternal Love, one infinite eternal Power and so on; hence the attributes are connected generally with the singular name for God, El.” (Newberry).

A similar title used of God is **Eloah** (אֱלֹהִים; Job 3:23), or **Elah** (אֱלֹהִים; Dan. 6:7), which occurs over 50 times and sets forth God as One worthy of praise and worship. **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים; plural of Eloah) occurs about 2500 times, the first being in Gen. 1:1, “In the beginning Elohim created the heaven and the earth.” The plural name here connected with a singular verb denotes the Trinity acting in unity.

Adon (אֲדֹנָי) is the term used to express God as “Lord, Master, Possessor or Proprietor.” It occurs about 30 times as in Ex. 23:17. Two related titles are **Adoni** (“my Lord”) and **Adonai** (אֲדֹנָי; Lord, plural). They occur about 290 times as in Gen. 15:2, 8.

‘Ehyeh asher ‘Ehyeh (אֲהִיֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיֶּה), meaning **I AM WHO I AM**, or also, **I CAUSE TO EXIST BECAUSE I CAUSE TO EXIST**, explains God’s distinct essence as revealed to Moses in the burning bush (Exo. 3:1-14).

The Name of God

God’s Revealed and Chosen Name for Himself, **Yahweh** (יְהוָה), is a form of the name above, yet puts it into the third person for us to call upon as His children, as seen in Exo. 3:15; it comes from an ancient Hebrew word for “to exist” and means: **HE CAUSES TO EXIST** or **THE EXISTING ONE**. In ancient paleo-Hebrew it was written (from right to left), אֱוָה. In English, this Name is transliterated: **YHWH** or **IAUE**. It is pronounced “ee-ah-’oo-eh,” and is commonly written **Yahweh**. “Jehovah,” “Yehovah,” and “Yehowah” are used today instead, which come from inserting the vowel points (a

Jewish scribal system introduced 7th-8th century A.D.) for Adonai into JHVH, YHVH or YHWH. These replacements still exist due to tradition.

Yahweh is God's Eternal Name which He has chosen as a Memorial for Himself unto all the earth: Exo. 3:15, 9:16, 34:5, 6, Psa. 83:18, 135:13, Gen. 4:1, 26, 22:14, 27:20, 28:16, Isa. 12:4, 42:8, 52:6, Jer. 16:21, Mt. 6:9, Jn. 17:6, 12, 26, etc. Many promises are made concerning this Name: Lam. 3:55, Psa. 5:11, 9:10, 52:9, 91:14, 119:132, Isa. 52:5,6, Zec. 13:9, Zep. 3:9, Mal. 1:11, 4:2, Jn. 17:11, Rev. 3:12, etc. It occurs over 6500 times.

Yah (יָה) is a shortened form of Yahweh, also denoting God as Eternal, seen in Psa. 68:4, 102:18. It carries with it the idea of vehemence as well (Songs 8:6 KJV, "most vehement" is literally "Yah," i.e., "flame of Yah"). This Name is also embedded in the word **HalleluYah** (HalleluYah/alleluia) (הַלְלוּ יְהוָה), a command or call to action, meaning "All of you, praise Yah" (Psa. 149:1).

The New Testament

We can receive additional information about the nature of God from the Names given to Him in the Greek New Testament.

Theos (Θεός), meaning God, corresponds to El/Elah/Elahh/Eloah/Elohim.

Patera (Πατερα), meaning Father, can signify that which Yahweh does in the O.T.

Despota (Δεσποτα), meaning Sovereign Lord, is used of both the Father and the Son.

Kurios (Κυριοξ) means "Master, Owner, Ruler, Lord" and corresponds to Adon/Adonai, which refer to lordship, authority and Yahweh in the First Covenant.

Ieesous (Ιησους), Jesus, corresponds with the Hebrew **Yahushua/Yehoshua** (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), meaning "Yahu (Yahweh) saves," as well as the Aramaic **Yeshua** (יֵשׁוּעַ), meaning "He will save."

A final term, **Christos** (Χριστοξ), means "the Anointed One" and signifies the Old Testament concept of the Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ, "Mashiach," Dan. 9:25, 26).

The Nature of God

Not only can we understand God's character from the Names He has revealed in the Bible, but we can also discern much of His eternal Nature from that which the scripture says of Him.

1. God is One. (Dt. 6:4).

This scripture says "Yahweh our God (Elohim) is one (unified) Yahweh." Here we see the Trinity in Unity. Though there are Three Persons in the Deity, there is only One Divine Essence. Hence, God is One (Essence).

2. God Is Three. (Gen. 1:1).

This verse—and many others like it in the Old Testament—signifies that there are Three Persons in the One Godhead.

"In the beginning God (Elohim, plural, Heb.) created the heaven and the earth."

Again, in Gen. 1:26 we read, "*And God (Elohim) said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'*"

In Isaiah's vision (6:8), we read, "*Also, I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai) saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'*"

Certainly, the New Testament is replete with examples of the existence of our God as a Trinity. Indeed, the baptismal formula depicts the Triune Godhead (Mt. 28:19). Our Lord clearly indicated a plurality in the Members of the Godhead when He made the promises of the "other Comforter" sent from the Father (Jn. 14:16).

3. God is Spirit. (Jn. 4:24).

The Bible clearly demonstrates the nature of God as *Spirit*. In our Lord's discourse with the woman at the well He said: "God is a Spirit" (Jn. 4:24).

This simply means that God is—in His very Nature—without physical parts or bodily properties. He is infinite and eternal, beyond the limitations of space and time. Indeed, He created space and time and stands apart from them, giving them life and meaning. The word "spirit" comes from Greek and Hebrew words meaning "wind" or "breath." Hence God is—in His Essence, a "heavenly materiality" which is beyond and behind every created being.

4. God is Light. (I Jn. 1:9).

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I Jn. 1:5).

This verse points out that our Lord is absolutely beyond any moral flaw or inequality of any kind. Paul tells us in the Book of Titus that God is One who "cannot lie" (Ti. 1:2).

5. God is Love. (I Jn. 4:8).

Closely aligned with the notion that God is Light is the statement in God's Word that God is Love. This means that God—in His very Essence and Being—is Divine, Self-giving, Self-sacrificing Love. The Greek word is "agape" which is rendered "charity" in the KJV. We are given a full disclosure of its attributes in I Cor. 13 (see my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry* in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

Indeed, Light and Love are closely interconnected in the mind of the beloved apostle. "*He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him*" (I Jn. 2:10).

Thus, to walk in the Light is to walk in Love. God is Light and God is Love. When the Lord Jesus forgave the woman taken in the act of adultery. He told the onlookers to stone her *if they were without sin*. Immediately after His lesson on mercy and non-judgmentalism. He spoke of Himself as the "Light of the world."

6. God is a Fire. (Heb. 12:29).

This verse sets forth the Divine purity and power of the Godhead. It is from Dt. 4:24, "*for Yahweh thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*"

The context of this verse sets forth the justice of God and His wrath against idolaters. The prophet Isaiah described the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:4). This illustrates again the moral purity of God and His destruction of all that is unlike Him in His creation.

There is yet another aspect of the "fiery nature" of our Lord. This involves the

purging and purifying of His People by the Holy Spirit. For example, Jesus was prophesied as One Who would “baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Mt. 3:11).

Malachi prophesied of Him:

“For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver” (Mal. 3:3).

Certainly, this refining is not punitive but purgative.

Thus we see—from the Bible—varying aspects of our God’s nature. He does not want us to “worship we know not what” but rather, to intelligently worship Him, the *Almighty God*, in “spirit and truth.”

The Attributes of God

There are yet additional descriptive statements in the Word of God concerning His character and personality.

1. Omnipresence.

The Bible teaches that the Godhead is omnipresent; that is, the Members of the Trinity are everywhere present at once. Scriptures illustrating this fact include: I Ki. 8:23; II Chr. 6:18; Isa. 43:2; Jer. 23:24; Am. 9:2; Psa. 139:7-12; Acts 17:27, 28.

2. Omniscience.

The Word of God also describes God as being omniscient, or all-knowing. Bible texts illustrating this include: I Sm.16:7; I Ki. 8:39; Psa. 44:21; 94:11; 103:14; 139, etc.

3. Omnipotence.

The scriptures also present our God as omnipotent, that is, the Trinity is all-powerful. Many Bible verses depict this characteristic, including: Gen. 17:1; 18:14; Job. 42:2; Isa. 26:4; Mt. 19:26; Acts 26:8; Rev. 19:6; 21:22.

4. Holiness (Righteousness).

Dr. Strong has described holiness as “self-affirming purity.” Many verses in the Bible illustrate this trait of God, including: Ex. 15:11; Lev. 11:44; Jos. 24:19; Psa. 22:3; 30:4; Isa. 5:16; Hos. 11:9; Hab. 1:12; Mt. 5:48; Jn. 17:11; Rev. 4:8.

5. Justice.

The justice of God refers to His dealing with both the individual and nation for sins against His Law. Many scriptures indicate this attribute, including: Mt. 22:12-14; Am. 1:1-5; Rev. 20:11-15.

6. Mercy.

The mercy of God counterbalances His justice. That is, God is at once both just and merciful. He Who authored the Law which condemns the sinner, also provides the Sacrifice which redeems him from the penalty of the broken law. It has been referred to as, “that eternal principle of God’s nature which leads Him to seek the temporal good and eternal salvation of those who have opposed themselves to His will, even at the cost

of infinite self-sacrifice.” Many texts make this characteristic clear, including: Ex. 15:13; 20:6; Nu. 14:18; Psa. 136:1; Isa. 14:1; Jer. 33:11; Dan. 4:27.

7. Truth.

The Word of God also describes God as being Truth in its essential nature, it is entirely impossible for God to be anything less than absolute Truth in His Essence, Nature and Word. Numerous verses speak of this fact, including: Dt. 32:4; I Sm. 15:29; Psa. 25:10; Isa. 25:1; Jn. 17:17; Ti. 1:2.

8. Independence.

This attribute rightly points out the fact that our God is absolutely independent of His creation for His own sustenance. His existence is absolute (He is uncreated). Ex. 3:14; Jn. 5:26. His knowledge is likewise (Heb. 4:13). His actions, too, are unhindered (Gen. 1:1; Acts 17:24). His happiness, likewise, is unimpaired (Eph. 1:3; I Tim. 6:15).

9. Immutability.

This characteristic refers to the *unchangeableness* of God. As Dr. Farr has written, “God always remains what He is without development or change. He cannot change for the better for He is best; nor for the worse, because He would thereby cease to be perfect.” Scriptures depicting this include: Psa. 102:27; Isa. 40:28; Mal. 3:6; Ja. 1:17; Heb. 1:12.

10. Eternity.

One final topic for discussion refers to the eternal existence of God: namely, that He is without beginning or end. The Word of God is abundantly clear on this subject: Psa. 90:2; Dt. 32:40; Isa. 41:4; I Tim. 1:17; II Pet. 3:8; Rev. 10:6. Eternity has been described by theologians as “infinity in duration.”

An Awesome God

Even from this short discussion, a picture of our God emerges which impels one to fall on one’s face and exclaim, “How great Thou art!” The scriptures have provided more than a glimpse into the infinite perfections of the character of our God. How they inspire us with holy awe and love, as well as trust in this Invisible One with Whom we have to do! Let us humbly surrender our hearts and wills to Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood. Let us commit ourselves to “willing His will” in all of our lives’ pursuits, that we might live to the praise of the glory of the wonderful God of the Bible.

Christology (The Study of Christ)

“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;”

The entire Christian faith is centered upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a very real sense, Christianity is Christ. Our religion could not continue to exist and thrive were it not for the fact that we serve a living Savior. It is the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-existence, incarnation, life, ministry, death, burial, resurrection and ascension Who makes possible our lives as believers in Him.

Following are some of the leading facts which we must understand and believe in order to be committed Christians (for a detailed study, see my book. *The Lord Jesus: the Christ*, also in my third course, *Diploma in Ministry*).

1. The Pre-existence of Christ.

The Lord Jesus did not make His appearance as a living Being 2,000 years ago. Rather, He enjoyed eternal existence as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity before His incarnation as a Man.

*“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, **and that he was come from God, and went to God**” (Jn. 13:3).*

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1).

Prior to His becoming Man, the Lord Jesus Christ existed as a Member of the Godhead: the Word, the eternally-begotten Son.

“And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6).

Thus, the Bible teaches the “eternal generation of the Son.” That is, there was never a time when the Lord Jesus was not begotten of the Father. It is a mystery to our finite, human minds, but a fact clearly depicted in the scriptures. The Lord Jesus Christ is Divine in the fullest sense of the term. He came “from God.”

2. The Deity of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus shares all the attributes of Deity which the other Two Members of the Godhead possess, including:

A. Omnipresence.

*“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man **which is in heaven**” (Jn. 3:13).*

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20).

B. Omniscience.

“But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (Jn. 2:24-25).

“Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any many should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God” (Jn. 16:30).

C. Omnipotence.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mt. 28:18).

“And thou has given him power over all flesh” (Jn. 17:2).

The Lord Jesus was also active in creation: *“all things were created by him”* (Col. 1:16).

He is the Judge of all men:

“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (Jn. 5:22).

He is the Source of all life:

“I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

The Lord Jesus is plainly called the Son of God in many scriptures (Mk. 1:1; Rom. 1:4).

3. The Humanity of Christ.

If the Bible plainly teaches the Deity of the Lord Jesus, it equally discloses His full Humanity. That is. He is a true Man. The Savior is not “partly God and partly Man,” but “fully God and fully Man.” That is, there was a perfect union in the One Person of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Divine and Human natures, but with no “third” nature being formed thereby.

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

This verse illustrates the fact that the pre-existent Son became Man through a miraculous birth.

*“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child **of the Holy Ghost**”* (Mt. 1:18).

The Bible portrays a very human Christ Who was hungry, tired and involved in all of the experiences which we entertain as members of the human race (Heb. 2:18, 4:15, Phil. 2:7-8).

4. The Work of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is intimately involved in all phases of both the creation and salvation of mankind and the material universe.

A. Prophet.

The Master was a Spokesman for the Heavenly Father, being the Summit of prophetic revelation (Heb. 1:1-2; Jn. 3:34).

B. Priest.

Not only was our Christ a prophetic mouthpiece for Almighty God, but He was also a priest of the Most High. As Prophet He represented God before man; but as Priest, He represents man before God (Heb. 5:5; 7:24-25).

Our Lord offered Himself—Priest and Sacrifice—upon the altar of the Cross for our

sins (Heb. 9:14).

C. King.

Our Blessed Savior is not only a Prophet and a Priest; He also serves as King. He Who once served as a Lamb, will one day rule as a Lion.

“And Pilate asked him, art thou the king of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, thou sayest it” (Mk. 15:2).

As King, our Lord will rule and reign over the entire cosmos with the redeemed of all ages (Rev. 12:10).

D. Christ (Messiah).

The Lord Jesus Christ is also the Messiah. This word is the Old Testament title for the “Anointed One.” It corresponds to the New Testament appellation, “Christ,” from the Greek noun, “Christos,” meaning, “anointed.” When the Master was 30 years of age, He was baptized in the River Jordan and immediately, upon coming up out of the water, received the Anointing of the Holy Spirit to enable Him to carry out His messianic tasks (Mt. 3:16; Lk. 4:18).

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

Jesus Christ never preached, worked a miracle, healed the sick, raised the dead, cleansed the lepers or taught the multitudes before He was 30. It was the Anointing of the Spirit which accounted for the power and authority of both His words and His works (Lk. 4:18; Jn. 3:34).

E. Savior.

Our Lord Jesus was sent into this world to be our Savior.

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (I Jn. 4:14).

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21).

His Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14), His incarnation (Gal. 4:4), His Anointing (Mt. 3:16) and His death, burial and resurrection (I Cor. 15:3-4), were all planned by the Mind of God to eventuate in our salvation from sin and eternal judgment. Christ died *for* us to save us from the penalty, power and presence of sin (see my book, *What Price, Freedom?*).

F. Redeemer.

Closely aligned with the notion of Jesus as our Savior is His role as Redeemer. He Who took our sins upon Himself also “redeemed” or “purchased” us from the bondage of:

- The curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13).
- Satan (Heb. 2:15).
- A sinful life style (I Pet. 1:18).
- A fallen kingdom (Gal. 1:4).

G. Lord.

The Bible also makes it abundantly clear that our Risen Savior is Lord of Heaven and Earth.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

As Lord, He is Sovereign and Master of all creation, exercising authority in the three worlds: Heaven, Earth and Hell (Phil. 2:9-11).

Thus, the Holy Scriptures present a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ which gives us an insight into the wonder of His Personality. He is eternally One with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead. However, He has also assumed human nature nearly 2,000 years ago and will now forever be the God-man. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, disclosed the Mind of God in His teaching and preaching, demonstrated the compassion and power of God in His miraculous healing and delivering works, and then died upon the Cross as the Atonement for our sins. He was raised again from the dead and today sits at the Right Hand of Majesty on High, from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

May we bow in humble adoration before the Lord’s Christ, owning Him as our “all in all!”

Pneumatology (The Study of the Holy Spirit)

“I believe in the Holy Ghost;”

One of the most misunderstood of all Bible doctrines today is that of the Holy Spirit. There is much confusion in the Church world concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. However, the Bible gives us all the information we require to understand the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

1. The Deity of the Holy Spirit.

The teaching of the Holy Bible clearly sets forth the Deity of the Holy Spirit. Numerous texts point out His Divine attributes and activities. Some of these characteristics ascribed to Him include:

A. Eternity.

Heb. 9:14 as well as other verses indicates that the Holy Ghost inhabits eternity and, like the Father and the Son, is unconfined by .space or time.

B. Omniscience.

Again, like the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit is said to “know all things” (Isa. 40:13; I Cor. 2:10-11).

C. Omnipotence.

Being co-equal and co-eternal with the other Two Members of the eternal Godhead, the Spirit, too, is declared to be “omnipotent” or “all-powerful” (Lk. 1:35).

D. Omnipresence.

Omnipresence, or the Divine ability to be everywhere present at once—an attribute of both the Father and the Son—is also spoken of in the scriptures as being true of the Third Person (Psa. 139:7-10).

In addition to these attributes which clearly identify the Holy Spirit as being fully Divine, He can be lied to, which according to the apostle Peter’s declaration recorded in the Book of Acts, is equivalent to lying to God (Acts 5:3-4).

He can also be blasphemed (Mt. 12:31) and worshiped (II Cor. 13:14), two activities which could only be understood when viewed in terms of a Divine Person.

2. The Personality of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible also teaches the distinct “personality” of the Holy Ghost. That is. He is *not an abstract, impersonal influence or force* as some believe, but *a Divine Personality*.

Personal qualities, characteristics and activities are ascribed to Him, including:

1. **Will power** (I Cor. 12:11).
2. **Knowledge** (I Cor. 2:10-13).
3. **Love** (Rom. 15:30).
4. **Speech** (Acts 13:2).
5. **Intercession** (Rom. 8:26).
6. **Guidance** (Acts 16:6).

7. **Teaching** (Jn. 14:26).

Additional emotions are spoken of in connection with the Spirit of God. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), quenched (I Thess. 5:19) and insulted or done despite to (Heb. 10:29). All of these notions clearly indicate a Divine Personality.

3. **Names of the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit of God is referred to by many different appellations in the Bible, including:

1. **The Spirit** (Jn. 3:6)
2. **The Spirit of God** (I Cor. 3:16).
3. **The Spirit of Holiness** (Rom. 1:4).
4. **The Comforter** (Jn. 14:26).
5. **The Spirit of Christ** (Rom. 8:9).
6. **The Holy Spirit** (Lk. 11:13).
7. **The Spirit of Grace** (Heb. 10:29).
8. **The Spirit of Burning** (Isa. 4:4).
9. **The Spirit of Truth** (Jn. 15:26).
10. **The Spirit of Glory** (I Pet. 4:14).
11. **The Eternal Spirit** (Heb. 9:14).
12. **The Holy Spirit of Promise** (Eph. 1:13).
13. **The Promise of the Father** (Lk. 24:49).

An understanding of the various titles of the Holy Spirit gives us a more accurate comprehension of His Divine Personality.

4. **Symbols of the Holy Spirit.**

In addition to the various Names given to the Spirit of God in the Bible, there are at least six chief symbols of His Presence disclosed in the scriptures. By attempting to see beyond the symbols to that which they are meant to convey, we can gain an insight into the character of the Spirit of God and be more prepared to receive His operations and manifestations in our lives.

A. Dove (Mt. 3:16).

This symbol displays both the purity and the gentleness of the Holy Spirit. Shall we not openly welcome these Divine Personality attributes into our lives?

B. Water (Jn. 4:14; 7:38-39).

This picture indicates both the cleansing and refreshing properties of the Spirit.

C. Fire (Mt. 3:11).

This type indicates both the power and purging characteristics of the Spirit as prophesied in Psa. 1:4.

D. Wind (Jn. 3:3-8).

The symbol of wind, while not directly attributed to the Holy Spirit, Himself, but, rather to those to whom He has given birth, does indicate His life-giving activities.

E. Wine (Eph. 5:18).

This symbol of the Holy Spirit refers to His stimulation and exhilaration of the redeemed, human personality. Dr. Pardinton quotes Dr. Farr as saying:

“In Eph. 5:18, two possible sources of stimulation are indicated—drunkenness and Deity; full of wine or full of the Spirit. Satan was called by Augustine ‘Simius Dei,’ the ape of God, because He counterfeits the work of God. Human nature needs a stimulus of some kind. Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was intended to be the only original stimulus of humanity, but Satan invented alcohol as a substitute, stealing the nomenclature of the truth to mask the lie.”

How profoundly astute an observation! While the devil’s intoxicants tear down and destroy the human personality, the invigorating Presence of the Spirit of God builds us up (I Cor. 14:4; Jude 20, see my book, *You Must Be Drunk!*).

F. Oil (Isa. 61:1; Gal. 5:22; Ja. 5:14; I Jn. 2:20, 27).

A final symbol of the Spirit is oil and speaks of the gifts of power for service as well as graces or character fruit for living and healing for the body along with illumination of the mind. Paul, in this connection, reminds Timothy of the indwelling Spirit’s attributes of power, self-giving love and a sound mind (II Tim. 1:7).

5. The Work of the Holy Spirit.

The activity of the Holy Spirit is many-sided in both the Old and the New Testaments.

A. Creation (Gen. 1:2; Psa. 35:6; Job 33:4).

The Holy Spirit was the active force in both the original creation and subsequent recreation of the physical universe.

B. The Virgin Birth (Mt. 1:20).

The Bible clearly indicates that it was the personal agency of the Holy Spirit Who placed the pre-existent Life of the Eternal Son in the womb of the Virgin, Mary.

C. The Anointing of Christ (Lk. 4:18; Acts 10:38).

It was the Spirit of God Who empowered the Son with all that was necessary to fulfill His messianic tasks.

D. The Temptation of Christ (Mt. 4:1ff.).

It was in the strength and power of the Holy Ghost that our Lord overcame Satan in the wilderness.

E. The Death of Christ (Heb. 9:14).

Presumably it was the Spirit, Himself, Who enabled the Master to make the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

F. The Resurrection of Christ (Rom. 1:4).

The apostle Paul declares that it was God's Spirit Who was instrumental in raising our Lord Jesus from physical death (see my book, *The Lord Jesus: the Christ*).

G. The Inspiration of the Scriptures (II Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:16).

Peter and Paul both affirm the Bible truth of the Holy Spirit's Authorship of the sacred scriptures.

6. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

There is a difference in the activity of the Holy Spirit In the Old Testament, compared to His operations in the New Covenant.

At times He *clothed Himself* with individuals (Jdg. 6:34). He also *came upon* men to equip them for a particular service (Jdg. 15:14). In addition, He would temporarily *indwell* chosen servants, giving them wisdom and understanding for specific tasks (Gen. 41:38). There was also His *anointing* of men for special services and duties (Ex. 31:1, see the book, *All About the Anointing*, in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

In the Old Testament period, the operation of the Spirit was both *temporary* and *exclusive*. That is, His indwelling or infilling were not abiding or continuous experiences for the children of God; and it was not the lot of *all* of God's People to enjoy the experience of either the Holy Spirit's Presence or Power, but, instead, was relegated to only: prophets, priests, kings. Judges and special servants.

7. The Holy Spirit in The New Testament.

The chief differences In the operation of the Holy Spirit upon God's People in the New Testament are that His Presence is *continuous* and is available to *everyone*, not just a select few.

His activities are many and varied, including:

A. Conviction of the unsaved (Jn. 16:8).

It is the Spirit of God— through the Word—Who prosecutes the unsaved, showing them their lost condition and also the saving work of Christ.

B. Regeneration of the sinner (Jn. 3:5-8).

The same Spirit Who convicts the sinner is also the One Who imparts to him the Life of Christ upon His repentance and faith, producing "a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17).

C. Indwelling the believer (I Cor. 3:16).

It is the Spirit of God Who makes the Life of Christ real in the heart, life and experience of the believing sinner.

D. Sealing the believer (Eph. 1:13; II Cor. 1:21).

The Spirit of God, Whose Presence in fullness, marks the child of God as one of His own, furnishes him with confirmatory "signs" of His attestation (Mk. 16:17ff.).

E. Filling/Anointing/Empowering the believer (Eph. 5:18; I Jn. 2:20, 27; Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit—God’s Promise—“fills” the saint, furnishing him supernatural power to live and witness the Christian life, anointing him with guidance, and confirming his testimony with “signs following.”

F. Sanctifying the believer (I Pet. 1:2).

Peter tells us that it is the Spirit of God Who sets us apart *from* sin, *unto* God for time and eternity.

G. Witnessing our sonship (Rom. 8:16).

It is the testimony of God’s Spirit within our hearts that assures us of our position as children of God.

H. Inspiring worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Paul reminds us of the Spirit’s ministry, prophesied by Isaiah, of inspiring the worship of Almighty God.

I. Interceding in prayer (Rom. 8:26).

The Spirit is our Divine Comforter (Gk. “counsel for the defense”), representing us before the Throne of Grace.

J. Manifesting God’s Personality (Gal. 5:16, 22).

The Spirit of Christ dwelling within enables us to manifest the Christ-life to others.

K. Revealing God’s Truth (1 Cor. 2:9-14).

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is the Great Teacher, commissioned by God to take the things of Christ and show them unto us. He, the Author of the Word, is its own Interpreter.

L. Guiding the Church (Acts 13:2-4).

The Spirit of God takes the place of the glorified Christ as He leads us into all truth in our service for the Master.

M. Translating and resurrecting the believer (Rom. 8:11).

God’s Holy Spirit will give our mortal bodies new life at the Second Coming of Christ, as well as resurrecting the bodies of the dead “in Christ” (Phil. 3:20). These descriptions by no means exhaust the ministries of the Holy Spirit in the earth today, but certainly help to give us an insight into His great work on behalf of mankind. Let us pledge to be led by Him, obedient to His every command, as we seek to bring glory to our God!

Angelology (The Study of Angels)

“Maker of heaven and earth;” “who maketh his angels spirits” (Psa. 104:4).

Perhaps some of the most mysterious beings in God’s creation are the angels. I say *creation* because angelic beings are just that, a special Divine creation of Yahweh. Whereas man was created directly, woman was *made from man*; and the first human beings were given the power of procreation and told to multiply and replenish the earth. Indeed, the animal and vegetable kingdoms, likewise, were created and then gifted to “bring forth, after their kind.”

Not so for the angels, however. They possess no powers or commands related to procreation. Apparently, the angels are each and all direct creations of God.

While it is beyond the scope of this brief study to exhaust all that the Bible says of the spirit world, we do include the following information:

1. The nature of angels.

According to the scriptures, angels are non-corporeal, finite, celestial (heavenly) beings, formed of a heavenly materiality called “spirit” (Psa. 104:4).

They are superior to man in intelligence and power (Mt. 18:10; Psa. 103:20; II Pet. 2:10-11).

They were created prior to the creation of man in the unknown, dateless past (Job. 38:7).

They are best described as a host or company rather than a race (being unable to procreate), and, unlike God, are *not* omniscient, omnipresent or omnipotent. The Bible divides the angels into two distinct classes.

2. Elect angels.

Elect or unfallen angels are those who have remained true to God and are called “holy” or “elect” angels, being sinless, spiritual beings (Mk. 8:38; I Tim. 5:21).

Although their home is the third Heaven (the personal dwelling place of God), they have frequent intercourse with earth, fulfilling the Divine will.

They are infinite in number (Dt. 33:2; Psa. 68:17), and are apparently organized into:

1. archangels
2. angels
3. principalities
4. authorities
5. powers
6. thrones
7. might
8. dominions

Two elect angels are referred to in the Bible as archangels: Michael (protector of Israel, Dan. 10:15) and Gabriel (messenger of God who brought the Virgin, Mary, word of the coming of the Christ; Lk. 1:19).

3. The work of angels.

It is clear from the Bible that angels are involved in a number of different ministries,

including:

A. Worship.

They behold God's intimate Presence in worship and rejoice in His works (Mt. 18:10; Job 38:7).

B. Performing His will.

They minister on behalf of the Heavenly Father in nature (Psa. 103:20). They influence the nations (Dan. 10:12). They minister to and for the redeemed of the Lord by guiding, protecting and assisting them in the carrying out of God's will (Psa. 91:11; Mt. 4:11; 18:10; Acts 12:15; Heb. 1:14). They also assist the Lord in administering justice to His enemies (II Kngs. 19:35; Acts 12:23; II Thess. 1:6ff.).

C. Related facts.

1. As already mentioned, they do not marry (Mt. 22:30).
2. They can assume human-like form and eat, etc. (Psa. 78:25; Gen. 18:8).
3. They are not to be worshipped by believers (Col. 2:18).
4. They will gather together the elect at the Second Coming of Christ (Mt. 24:31).
5. They escort the souls of the righteous dead into the glory world (Lk. 16:22).
6. They are responsible to God, alone, not the believer (Psa. 103:20).

4. The Angel of the Lord.

The Being identified in the Old Testament variously as: the Angel, Angel of Yahweh, Angel of the Presence, Angel of the Covenant, etc., is to be understood as a "Christophany," or a visit of the pre-incarnate Son of God during the Old Testament times (Gen. 16:7ff.; Ex. 3:2; Jos. 5:13ff., Isa. 9:6; Zec. 1:11; Mal. 3:1).

5. Seraphim and Cherubim.

Two other ranks of elect, spiritual beings appear in the Books of Genesis, Exodus and Ezekiel: seraphim and cherubim. It is not certain whether these are literal descriptions of yet another order of angelic beings, or whether they are, instead, symbolic of redeemed humanity, etc. Some scholars believe the cherubim are symbolic of the Divine attributes or of God's ruling over creation. We see the "four living ones" in the Book of the Revelation; they appear to be the same beings seen by Ezekiel the prophet, bearing up the platform on which sat the Throne of God (Ezek. 1:26ff.).

We also see the cherubim in the Garden of Eden, after the fall of man, holding the 'flaming sword' (Holy Spirit, see my book, *The Perfect Weapon*), protecting the way to the Tree of Life.

6. Fallen angels.

In addition to various ranks and orders of *elect* angels, the Bible also describes another group of beings who have fallen from grace and are under voluntary allegiance to a principal fallen spiritual being, Satan.

Unlike *elect* angels, these beings are sinful (Mt. 25:41; Acts 19:15). Although their number is limited, they are myriad. Just as the elect angels are well organized, so, too,

these fallen ones are grouped into a well-oiled machinery of evil (Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15).

Their fall was, no doubt, in the dateless past, apparently paralleling that of Lucifer (Rev. 12:4). There appear to be two classes of fallen angels: those free and those bound.

One rank of fallen angels has access to the 'heavenlies' (the first heaven, i.e., the atmosphere around us, Eph. 6:12). It is with these beings that the saints wage spiritual warfare.

The second group of fallen spirits are presently incarcerated in a compartment of the underworld called, 'Tartarus' (II Pet. 2:4). It appears that this group committed a specific sin besides rebellion: cohabitation with earthly women, whose union produced the *giants* of the Old Testament period (Gen. 6:4; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6-7, see my book, *The Dark World of Demons*, in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

The work of all fallen spirits is to oppose the work of God, damn the souls of men and thwart the plan of God for this planet.

A. Demons.

A related term used of fallen angels is demon. The root meaning of the word is not known. Some scholars note the term was used among pagan Greeks of an inferior deity, whether good or bad (Vine). Others quote Plato as saying the word's root means 'knowing' or 'intelligent,' illustrating the fact that the knowledge of demons is superior to man, although inferior to God.

One possible explanation of their origin appears in the non-Canonical book of Enoch, chapter 15, verses 8-10.

8. Now the giants, who have been born of spirit and of flesh, shall call upon earth evil spirits, and on earth shall be their habitation. Evil spirits shall proceed from their flesh, because they were created from above; from the holy Watchers was their beginning and primary foundation. Evil spirits shall they be upon earth, and the spirits of the wicked shall they be called. The habitation of the spirits of heaven shall be in heaven; but upon earth shall be the habitation of terrestrial spirits, who are born in earth (I Cor. 15:40).

9. The spirits of the giants shall be like clouds, which shall oppress, corrupt, fall, contend, and bruise upon earth.

10. They shall cause lamentation. No food shall they eat; and they shall be thirsty; they shall be concealed, and those spirits shall rise up against the sons of men, and against women; for they come forth (from them) during the days of slaughter and destruction (Lk. 4:33, 36; Matt. 8:28-34).

Regardless of their origin, like other fallen angels, demons are personal, spirit beings (Mt. 8:29), and can be: unclean (Mt. 10:1), etc.

They are the agents of Satan, extending his evil influence throughout the habitable world (Mt. 12:26; 25:41).

They are often (not always) behind sickness and disease (Mt. 9:35; Mk. 5:4-5). They can enter man as well as beast (Mk. 5:8; 11-13). They know their future judgment is eternal torment (Lk. 8:31).

Demons understand their power to be limited and overruled by Christ and the Spirit-filled saint (Mk. 1:24; Lk. 10:17-20; Acts 19:15).

According to the parable of the Lord Jesus concerning the 'rich fool,' just as the elect angels escort the souls of the righteous to Heaven upon death (Lk. 16), so, too, the demons drag the souls of the lost down to 'hell.'

“Fool, the night—this one—they are demanding the soul—yours—of me” (Lk. 12:20, Gk.).

The demons exercise authority over man in at least two ways: possession and influence.

In the first case, the entire person (spirit, soul and body) is under the control of the evil entity.

In the second instance, any aspect of one’s being may be attacked or influenced, yet with the individual still retaining control of their will (Lk. 13:16).

Dr. Pardington sees at least seven primary forms of demonology disclosed in the Bible:

1. **Divination** (Gen. 44:5; Hos. 4:12).
2. **Necromancy** (I Sam. 28:8).
3. **Prognostication** (Ez. 21:21).
4. **Magic** (Ex. 7:11).
5. **Sorcery** (Isa. 47:9-13; Acts 19:19).
6. **Witchcraft** (I Chr. 10:13; Gal. 5:20).
7. **Ventriloquism** (occult-type, not “trick;” Isa. 8:19).

All of these occult practices involve trafficking with evil spirits or demons.

B. Satan.

According to the scriptures, the angelic being closest to God, Himself, was named “Lucifer” (Heb. “light-bearer”). Although not a great deal is said of him in either testament, from the Books of Ezekiel, chapter 28, and Isaiah, chapter 14, we learn:

He was in Eden, perfect in beauty, had access to the “mountain of God,” led in the worship of Yahweh, and eventually became corrupted because of pride in his beauty. The picture Ezekiel paints for us is that of Lucifer being a worship leader of God, on earth (Ez. 28:15-19).

Who was he leading in worship? Very possibly, this angelic being was chief of many others, leading them in the praise, worship and service of the Triune God.

Isaiah’s prophecy tells us that he apparently led a rebellion against God—with the help of other angels who joined him in allegiance—and stormed the very Throne of God. He was summarily dispossessed from the celestial realms, degraded in position, debased in power and damned for eternity.

According to the late Dr. Glenn E. Tyler (founder and president of International Seminary, Plymouth FL), after the fall of Lucifer and the angels, God created man to “fill the depleted ranks of the fallen spiritual beings.” After the fall of man, God then began His plan of redemption to fill up, again, the depleted ranks of angels with an elect group of obedient followers (i.e., the saved of the Old and New Testaments).

There is certainly something to be said for this theory. Indeed, if, in fact, Satan was originally the ruler of planet earth, and this responsibility has been given to man, his rage and hatred toward the human race is easily understandable.

C. Names of Satan.

He is called:

1. **Abaddon** (perdition) & **Apollyon** (destroyer), Rev. 9:11.

2. **The Great Dragon**, Rev. 12:9.
3. **The god of this age**, II Cor. 4:4.
4. **Prince of the power of the air**, Eph. 2:2.
5. **The old serpent**. Rev. 12:9.
6. **Prince of this age**, Jn. 12:31.
7. **The wicked one**, Mt. 13:19.
8. **Belial** (vileness), II Cor. 6:15.
9. **Beelzebub** (prince of demons), Mt. 12:24.
10. **Satan** (adversary), I Pet. 5:8.
11. **Devil** (false-accuser), Mt. 4; 1.
12. **Liar & murderer**, Jn. 8:44.
13. **The tempter**, I Thess. 5:5.

D. Activities of Satan.

He is the author of sin, sickness and death (Gen. 5:1-6; Lk. 17:16; Acts 10:38; Heb. 2:14). He ensnares, tempts, blinds, harasses, hinders, accuses and resists mankind (Mt. 4:1; I Tim. 3:7; II Cor. 4:4; 12:7; I Thess. 2:18; Rev. 12:9; Dan. 10:13; Zec. 3:1). According to the apostle John, he holds the world, "like children asleep in his arms" (I Jn. 5:19). He, and those he motivates, also take away the good seed of God's Word from the human heart (Mk. 4:15) and sow tares among the wheat (Mk. 13:25). He will give authority to the antichrist (II Thess. 2:9), has the ability (along with his cohorts) to transform himself into an 'angel of light' (II Cor. 11:14-15).

E. The end of Satan.

The Devil will eventually be cast into the Lake of Fire, to be tormented (along with the demons and unsaved humanity) forever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

Although Satan is a supernatural, spirit being, he is not all-powerful. Though wiser and more powerful than fallen man, yet, he is subject to the saints of God who resist him with the full armor of God (Ja. 4:11; Eph. 6:10-18). He is unable to tempt, inflict sickness, death or any affliction upon us apart from the direct permission of the Heavenly Father (Job. 1:10-12; 2:6; Lk. 22:31; I Jn. 5:18; I Cor. 10:13).

Satan and his hosts (armies) were legally defeated two thousand years ago in the Cross of Christ (Col. 2:15), and the Spirit-filled Church has been given the commission and authority to enforce that victory through the Name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 10:17-19; Mk. 16:17; Mt. 12:28; Acts 1:8; I Cor. 12:8-10). It is up to us to take our place.

Anthropology (The Study of Man)

“Maker of heaven and earth;”

Certainly, the very height of God’s creation is Man. It is Man who was created “in His image;” indeed, it was Man that the Triune Godhead dignified in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the Second Person of the Trinity *condescended* to become one with humanity through the Incarnation. As John says, “the Word became Flesh;” that is, the Son of God joined His preexistent Divine Nature with a human nature, for all eternity. How great is God’s love for us!

“What is frail, mortal man, that thou art mindful of him?” (Psa. 8:4, Heb.)

We will never understand—this side of eternity—the reason for God’s care of us. We must simply believe it! Psychiatrists, psychologists, philosophers and others have speculated about what makes men “tick” for centuries. The only sure and certain description of the creation of man is found in the Bible.

“And Yahweh Elohim formed the adam of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives; and the adam became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7, Heb.).

Here, as in other places, the scripture declares the threefold nature of man.

He was a direct creation of God, apart from any type of “evolution.” Man (and woman) were created directly by God, as full-grown adults. Man’s body was formed from the dust of the ground. Into that corporeal frame the Trinity breathed “the breath of lives.” That is, man received both natural and spiritual life. The union of spirit and flesh produced the soul. That is to say, the soul is the nexus or catalyst between the spirit (inner man) and the flesh (outer man). The soul is not an independent entity, but is, rather, the result of the spirit acting through the flesh. God is said to be “the Father of spirits” (Heb. 12:9).

Paul tells us of man’s triune nature in I Thess. 5:23. There, he reminds us that God will sanctify us wholly: spirit, soul and body.

1. The Divine Image.

“So Elohim created the adam in his image, in the image of Elohim created he him-him; male and female created he them-them” (Gen. 1:27, Heb.).

In addition to being created a “triune” being like God, man is said to share other attributes with the Heavenly Father. Probably the most significant is a self-conscious will. Man is made in the image of God in natural likeness or personality, and moral likeness or holiness.

In terms of personality—like God—man has intellect, emotion and will. His spirit gives him God-consciousness, his body gives him world-consciousness and his soul gives him self-consciousness.

In terms of holiness, original man was pure, free from sin, and capable of communion with the Deity.

2. Innocence versus Righteousness.

It is important to remember at this juncture that Adam and Eve were morally neutral, or innocent, human beings. That is, they were created *sons of God*, not partakers of the Divine Nature of God as we are, and as we normally understand that term.

By way of example, if we consider the spiritual life of man in terms of a bank account, Adam and Eve had a zero balance. That is, they did not have positive righteousness (the indwelling Divine Nature, Eternal Life), nor did they have a negative balance (sin nature). They were *innocent*. They were free from bondage to Satan, had access to communion with God, but were morally neutral or untested in terms of acquiring *positive* morality.

3. The Fall.

In the Garden of Eden, all of mankind's creaturely needs were met (Gen. 2:8-9). The original couple were given only one prohibition: Do not eat of the fruit of the knowledge of Good and Evil. In addition, they were given a marvelous opportunity: to eat of the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:9). This Tree symbolized God's own, uncreated Life which is Love. They were offered the "mystery of the Gospel," Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Had they partaken of that Tree, they would have moved from *innocence* (zero balance), to *righteousness* (positive balance), becoming actual sons of God, possessing the Divine Nature, Eternal Life.

To eat of the other tree would bring *death* (Gen. 2:17). Genesis, chapter three, details the account of Adam's fall from grace. Needless to say, the first human beings didn't die—physically—the day they ate of the tree (Adam lived to be 930). Therefore the *death* was spiritual, meaning separation from God due to sin. They went from *neutral* (zero balance) to *sinful* (negative balance).

Lest it be thought that God was unfair in His allowing Man to be tempted (knowing he would fall), we must hasten to add that all Adam and Eve would have had to do—in the very moment of temptation—was to *call upon God!* He would have met the temptation for them and they never would have fallen from grace!

4. The Curse.

The result of sin was a three-fold curse; upon the serpent and the devil who used him, ignominy and defeat, upon the woman, pain in childbirth and submission to the man, upon the man, a curse upon the earth, imposed hard toil and physical, spiritual and eternal death.

From other scriptures we gain additional insights into the total ramifications of the Fall. Paul states that the whole creation "groans" waiting for complete redemption from the effects of Adam's blunder (Rom. 8:22). Moreover, the "death" visited upon humanity is, indeed, three-fold: spiritual (separation of the spirit of man from communion with God), physical (separation of the spirit of man from his body), and eternal (eternal separation of the total person from God in conscious torment).

It is this highest creation of God that Christ died to redeem.

The same God Whose Law mankind spurned, refused to leave him in his bondage to the world, the flesh and the Devil. The Love of the Trinity triumphed over sin, sickness, Satan and circumstances and death in the redemption promised and accomplished in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Truly, the "Seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15) came and did that which man was unable to do for himself: effect a complete and total deliverance from all the effects of sin and the Fall. To God be the glory for the great things He hath done!

Bibliology (The Study of the Bible)

“Maker of heaven and earth;”

What is the Bible? What is the importance of the Bible in the Christian life? These questions, and several others, will be discussed in this lesson.

The word, Bible, comes from a Greek word meaning “the books.” The Holy Bible is one Book composed of 66 books written by more than 40 authors over a period of about 1600 years. It is a library of history, poetry, prophecy and doctrine. In it, the Mind of God is disclosed to man.

Most evangelical (Bible-believing) Christians readily subscribe to the statement that the Bible is our ‘sole rule of faith and practice.’

But why? Paul gives us the answer in unmistakable terms:

“For the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Here we see the Word of God is *alive* and full of dynamic energy. It, alone, has the capability of *seeing through* us. We are told in the scriptures to “test the spirits” whether they be of God (I Jn. 4:1), “judge” prophets and prophecies (I Cor. 14:29; I Thess. 5:20-21); but this Book Judges us!

There are a number of facts which we must possess a knowledge of regarding the Bible and its importance in our lives.

Facts About the Bible

1. The Bible is inerrant.

This statement simply means that our Bible is totally without error of any kind in the original autographs. Not only is it trustworthy in matters of faith and piety, but it is also infallible in all other matters to which it addresses itself, including: astronomy, anatomy, biology, finance, education, medicine, etc. In the words of Jesus, “Thy Word is truth” (Jn. 17:17).

2. The Bible is inspired.

By this statement we mean that our Bible did not originate in the Mind of man, but in the consciousness of Almighty God. The Bible is a distinct revelation from God to man, giving wisdom, insight and understanding to us which we are totally incapable of receiving independently of God.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

The Greek word rendered, “inspiration of God,” in the text quoted above means, literally, “God-breathed.” Hence, our Bible—all of it—is the direct result of the activity of the Holy Spirit of God.

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Pet. 1:21).

The Greek verb translated “moved” in this verse means, “to be moved, carried along,

or borne along.” That is to say, the writers of Holy Scripture did not originate their prophecies, but were moved along by the current of the Holy Spirit, being vehicles of His expression.

Thus, we can see that the Bible does not *contain* the Word of God, but, rather, the Bible *is* the Word of God. Make note: the Bible is *not* God (as some overly zealous preachers seem to imply by identifying God with His Word), but it emphatically is the Word of God.

3. The text of the scriptures.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with portions of Ezra, Jeremiah and Daniel being written in Aramaic.

The New Testament was written in Greek, not the classical Greek of the scholar, but the common Greek of the people of the day.

About 285 BC, a Greek translation of the Old Testament was produced to aid the worship of the Greek-speaking Jews. Since Greek was the lingua franca of the day, it is interesting to note that the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament—almost without exception—are from this version, not the original Hebrew. Thus the Septuagint (LXX) plays an important part in the background of biblical history and our understanding of the original texts of the scriptures. It was certainly in the wisdom of God to provide the wonderfully precise Greek language in which to preserve the revelation of His Word. Perhaps this fact needs to be stressed today when some modern “scholarship” attempts to build a case for Hebrew or Aramaic being the language of the New Testament, originally, with Greek being a translation. There is not a serious shred of scholarly evidence to substantiate this theory. Rather, it would seem to be only a means of some “drawing disciples after themselves,” making them dependent on them and their “original translations,” when in actual fact they are making “much ado about nothing.”

A. The Peshita.

This is a Syriac version of the entire Bible, used by the Syrian church and dating not later than 150 a.d. It is a faithful translation of the Hebrew Old Testament and often follows the Septuagint (LXX).

B. The Vulgate.

This version was done by Jerome about 385 AD direct from the Hebrew and Greek originals into Latin. It replaced the “old Italic” version and soon became the Bible of the Western world.

4. The authority of the scriptures.

The Holy Bible is the complete and authoritative rule of faith and practice for all believers. Christianity has been called, “a religion of the Book.” John Wesley (founder of the Methodist denomination), as he lay dying, said, “Bring me the Book.” The Bible is the absolute and final arbitrator in all matters of faith and piety. It is imperative that we “rightly esteem” the Word of God for exactly what it is; a revelation of the Mind of God and the will of God for man.

As we have already noted, Peter ascribes Divine inspiration to the writings of the prophets. In addition, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His full sanction to the authority of the Word of God (Mt. 5:18). In remarking about Paul's writings, Peter gave them equal rank with the Old Testament texts (II Pet. 3:16).

We are dealing, then, with the Bible, as a Book of Divine origin. It is not the product of man's reason or will. It originated in the Wisdom of God. It, alone, is able to describe Reality for us, even explaining our own natures (Heb. 4:12).

5. The books of the Bible.

As we have mentioned in our study, the Bible is one Book composed of 66 books. They are divided into two main sections; the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There are 39 books in the Old Testament. They may be arranged in several ways, one of which is:

1. **The Pentateuch** (Genesis to Deuteronomy) 5 books.
2. **The History Books** (Joshua to Esther) 12 books.
3. **The Poetry Books** (Job to Song of Solomon) 5 books.
4. **The Major Prophets** (Isaiah to Daniel) 5 books.
5. **The Minor Prophets** (Hosea to Malachi) 12 books.

Thus, in the Old Testament, there are five foundational books, 12 of history, five of poetry and 17 of prophecy, making 39 in all.

There are 27 books in the New Testament which can be arranged in the following manner:

1. **The Biographical Books** (Matthew to John) 4 books.
2. **The Historical Book** (Acts) 1 book.
3. **The Doctrinal Books** (Romans to Jude) 21 books.
4. **The Prophetical Book** (Revelation) 1 book.

The amazing fact about the scriptures is that despite the number of writers, the time span between writing, and the variety of subjects discussed, the Bible remains *one book!*

6. The purpose of the scriptures.

Why has Almighty God given us the revelation of His Word? Why has He so jealously guarded its inspiration and preservation?

Again, Paul speaks eloquently to the subject in his letter to Timothy:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16).

Notice in this text, the purpose of the Lord in giving us His Word. Certainly, the final result is that we shall be *perfect* (mature, Gk.), and *thoroughly* (completely, Gk.) *furnished* (equipped) unto all good works.

It is the Bible which gives us the required knowledge to effectively serve God and glorify Him with good works done unto others in His Name.

Why are there so many immature believers in the Body of Christ? Could it be that they are not nearing *perfection* (maturity) because they are not desiring to learn the Word of God?

This verse tells us a number of things the scriptures do in our lives:

A. Doctrine.

Doctrine means teaching or instruction. We have stated in our introduction to these lessons the importance the Bible places upon us learning the correct doctrine. It is teaching which influences our believing, believing our obeying, and obeying our pleasing either God or Satan.

Where are we to discover the true doctrine and teaching of God? In His Word!

B. Reproof.

This word has reference to *conviction*. That is, the scriptures are God's means of alerting us to error of life style or belief. Without the illumination of God's Word, we wander in the darkness of disobedience and unbelief.

It is the Word of God which has the power and authority to *bring us back* to the right path once we have strayed through either disobedience or ignorance.

C. Correction.

Again, this word describes for us the ability of the Word of God to change our wrong thinking, believing and acting through its Divinely inspired teachings and precepts. The Word of God is Life unto those who find it.

D. Instruction in righteousness.

This word actually refers to *discipline*. All believers are called to be "disciples" of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I said in the series of *Discipleship* lessons, to be a "disciple" is to *imitate* the teachings and life style of the Lord Jesus Christ. This we cannot do without understanding the Truths which He preached and commanded us to live by.

Where do we find the Master's teachings? In the Word of God!

Through the understanding of the Word of God, we can be "disciplined in righteousness," or the nature of being *right* or *just* in the sight of God. It is the teaching of the Bible which enables us to understand what God would have us know, believe, practice and teach others.

7. The ministers of the scriptures.

Certainly, all believers are to *teach* or admonish each other with the life-giving Truth of the Word of God (Heb. 5:12). However, beyond this fundamental level, God has set in the Church ministry gifts to unfold the revelation of His Will in His Word. Not everyone in the Body of Christ is called into this full-time, public ministry of the Word. However, some definitely are so called. It is the responsibility of these ministers to:

"...perfect the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith" (Eph. 4:12).

We have seen that *perfection* (maturity, Gk.) comes from the Word (II Tim. 3:16), as does edification and understanding of the faith. It is only as the various members of the Body of Christ meet regularly for the ministry of the Word that the true maturity can come to the Body of Christ and the Church escape from being, 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine' (Eph. 4:14). Let us praise God for His wisdom and grace in providing and preserving, propagating and proclaiming His Word, in order that we might truly know Him, Whom to know aright is Life Eternal (Jn. 17:3)!

Soteriology (The Study of Salvation)

“*The forgiveness of sins;*” “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (I Tim. 1:15).

The word “Gospel” (Gk. *evangel*) means “good news.” The “good news” is the declaration that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever would believe in Him in saving faith, would not perish everlastingly in hell, but have Eternal Life, here and hereafter.

Although man was created in God’s image and placed with his help-meet in a garden paradise with all of his creaturely needs met, the scriptures record his miserable fall from the grace of God into sin and servitude to Satan. Far from abandoning man to his plight, the Heavenly Father announced at the very beginning, a plan of redemption.

1. The Need of Salvation.

The Bible declares that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they incurred God’s death penalty, not only for themselves, but for their progeny. Adam—as the federal head of the race—plunged all of his descendants into the same bondage to the world, the flesh and the Devil. God had promised that to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would bring forth *death*. As we have seen, Adam and Eve *died*, spiritually, the very day they sinned. Physical death followed centuries later and the Lord Jesus and the apostle John speak of a third death—the Second Death—which is eternal in its experience (Mk. 9:43-44; Rev. 20:14).

Death, then, is separation: physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (Ja. 2:26), spiritual death is the separation of the spirit of man from fellowship with God (Eph. 2:1ff.), and the Second Death is the eternal separation of man from God in conscious torment (Rev. 20:14).

Man desperately needs salvation because he is a sinner; by nature and action.

Sin is the transgression of the law (I Jn. 3:4). All human beings are guilty of transgressing the Law of God (either their conscience, Rom. 2:14-15, or the written law, Rom. 2:12-13).

Sin is also a nature or fallen spiritual condition, placing man’s inner being in bondage to the spirit of the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2-3).

In order to be truly *saved* man requires redemption from this two-fold condition. His sin-debt must be paid to God; and he must be freed from Satan’s dominion.

2. God’s Provision of Salvation.

“*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*” (Gen. 3:15).

This verse of scripture illustrates God’s promise of redemption immediately following man’s fall from grace. The God-man would ‘bruise the serpent’s head.’

In order for man to be saved, he must receive God’s appointed Alternative to his spending eternity in hell.

Beginning with the sacrifice of Abel, on throughout the Old Testament’s priestly and

sacrificial system, Yahweh made clear the biblical concept:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).

Here, the scriptures declare God’s Divinely prescribed Alternative to man bearing the penalty of sin: the blood sacrifice of a sinless substitute. All of the unblemished sacrifices of the Old Testament Levitical system pointed to the final sacrifice of the God-man, *the Just for the unjust*, that He might bring us to God (I Pet. 3:18).

Just as in our current legal system, a judge may render the sentence, “two years in prison, or \$10,000.00 in fines,” so, too, the Eternal Judge has decreed His acceptance of the Sacrifice of His Son on the Cross for our sins. Just as \$10,000.00 is *not the same* as two years in prison—but *can be accepted* by our justice—so the physical death of the Son of God is *not the same* as our spending eternity in the Lake of Fire, but, nonetheless, *is accepted* by God’s Justice.

It is His Blood—not our sacrifices, good works or religious rituals—which is the atonement for our sins. This is the miracle of Christianity, not man reaching up to God, but God coming down to man in Love and sacrifice (see my book, *The Lord Jesus: the Christ*, also in my third course, *Diploma in Ministry*).

3. How Salvation is Received.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8).

The Bible states that the gospel is the *“power of God unto salvation”* (Rom. 1:16).

That is, the declaration of the saving act of God in Christ, is the means whereby man is redeemed in his experience and saved for time and eternity.

The facts of the gospel are simple:

1. **Man is lost** (a sinner by nature and action, Eph. 2:3; Rom. 3:23).
2. **Christ has purchased our salvation** (I Cor. 15:3-4, Christ died for our sins and was raised again for our justification).
3. **This salvation is a free gift** (Rom. 6:23).
4. **It is received by faith** (Rom. 10:9-10).

There are two steps (from man’s point of view) in receiving salvation: repentance and faith. Repentance (a turning of the intellect, emotion and will *from sin to God*) is produced by the preaching and hearing of the gospel (Acts 11:18).

Faith (the other side of the coin) is the positive embracing of Jesus Christ as Lord, Sovereign, Master and Ruler, surrendering one’s heart and will to Him in living faith, Rom. 10:9-10.

In a very real sense, real New Testament *repentance* is one and the same as saving, Bible faith.

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God even faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21, Gk.).

That is, real Bible faith is counted as repentance. To turn to Christ, upon hearing the gospel, necessitates turning *from sin*. Salvation is by faith: plus nothing, minus nothing.

5. The Results of Salvation.

A genuine salvation experience brings about certain, definable spiritual blessings in

our lives, including:

A. Justification (Rom. 5:1).

Justification is a change in our legal standing before God, from guilty to innocent, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

B. Regeneration (I Pet. 1:23).

Regeneration is being born “again,” or “from above” (Jn. 3:5, Gk.). It is receiving Eternal Life—the Nature of God—into our hearts, producing “a new creation” (II Pet. 1:4; II Cor. 5:17).

C. Sanctification (I Cor. 6:11).

Sanctification is the act whereby we are “set apart” (root meaning of the word) *from* the world, the flesh and the Devil, *unto* God. It is both instantaneous (occurring at the moment of the new birth) and progressive, as we are daily conformed to the image of Christ in our experience (Rom. 8:29).

D. Glorification (Rom. 8:30).

Just as our salvation experience gives us Life now and hereafter, so even our bodies are included in our redemption (Rom. 8:23). We shall be ‘saved,’ physically, at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and given a body like unto His glorious Body (Phil. 5:20).

E. Sonship (Gal. 3:26).

Through salvation, we become adopted children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17).

F. Redemption (Eph. 1:14).

We have also been *redeemed* by Christ. The meaning of the various Greek words is to “purchase, buy back, rescue out from under bondage to.” We are redeemed from:

1. Sin (Rev. 1:5).
2. A sinful lifestyle (I Pet. 1:18).
3. The world system (Gal. 1:4).
4. The fear of physical death (Heb. 2:15).
5. The curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).

Certainly, salvation includes a whole host of blessings beyond the scope of this brief study, but we have presented at least an overview of the leading benefits provided for us by God.

Praise God for the riches of His grace!

Ecclesiology (The Study of the Church)

“I believe in the holy catholic (universal) church;”

Certainly, this line from the Creed does not refer to faith in a particular Christian denomination (such as the Roman Catholic Church), but rather to the concept that the Church, the Body of Christ, is “holy” (Gk. sanctified) and “catholic” or “universal,” embracing the entire race of man, regardless of skin color or national, cultural or geographical distinctions.

The Greek noun rendered “church” means “called out.” The Church, then, is the body of persons *called out* from bondage to sin, sickness, Satan and death, into the Kingdom of God.

1. The universal (catholic) Church.

The Church universal (“catholic” being an older and other way to mean the same thing, not referring to any man-made denomination) refers to the entire company of redeemed souls made one with God through faith in Jesus Christ, whether on earth or in Heaven (Eph. 1:3; Heb. 12:23).

2. The local church.

The local church refers to a visible congregation of believers who are united to God by faith in Jesus Christ. The phrase can be understood in at least three ways:

A. An individual congregation.

This could be a company of the redeemed meeting in a house, or as some of the early churches, in synagogues (Rom. 16:5).

B. The Christian population of a city.

This would refer to the entire body of believing persons (dispersed throughout numerous individual “churches”) inhabiting one city or town (I Cor. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1).

C. A group of churches in a nation or country.

Paul makes mention of such a designation when he speaks of the church of Galatia (Gal. 1:2).

The local church, then, is an individual congregation of believers in Jesus Christ, associated for the purposes of worship, edification, instruction and equipping for evangelization.

3. Organization of the local church.

The Early Church originally met for worship and instruction in the temple and from house to house, daily. Later, this regular meeting came to be held weekly—on Sunday—to commemorate the Lord’s resurrection from the dead. This celebration included:

- **Praise and worship** (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- **Corporate prayer** (Acts 4:24ff.; 13: Iff.).
- **Spiritual gifts** (I Cor. 14:26-27).
- **Preaching and teaching** (Acts 20:7).

- **The Lord's Supper** (Acts 20:7).
- **Collection of tithes and offerings** (I Cor. 16:2).

4. Ministry in the local church.

The local church depicted in the New Testament had two primary officers: elder and deacons.

The term "elder" refers to one of experience and maturity in the faith. A word used synonymously for it is "bishop" which means "overseer." "Pastor," another related term for the same office, has reference to shepherding or feeding the flock of God the true Word of the Almighty.

The second office is that of deacon. The word means "servant," "minister," or "helper." The deacons were to assist the elder (pastor, bishop) in the ministry of the local church; the deacons handling many of the temporal matters, thus freeing the elder for concentration upon prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4, see the discipleship lesson, *The Power of Positive Praise*, my book *The Miracle of Ministry* in the third course, and my book *The Empty Office* in the second course).

Paul reminds us that when Christ ascended up on High, He gave gifts unto men: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11, I Cor. 12:28, see my book, *Gifts Unto Men*, in the third course, *Diploma in Ministry*). The first three ministries are not necessarily confined to one local congregation; the last two are (unless the individual holds other ministry offices as well, i.e.. Peter and John).

5. Sacraments of the local church.

There are two primary sacraments practiced by the local church of the Lord Jesus: water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Bearing in mind that a sacrament is an "outward sign of an invisible grace," baptism of believers by immersion is the outward, public symbol of the Christian 'dying with Christ' to the world, the flesh and the devil (Rom. 6:3-4).

The Lord's Supper is that memorial wherein the saints publicly "show forth the Lord's death until He come" (I Cor. 11:26). The sacrament provides the Church with the opportunity to look in three directions; inward (examining its present walk with God), backward (remembering the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus), and forward (in anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ).

Passover or Lord's Supper?

There is some controversy in the Body of Christ about the theological significance of the Lord's Supper. Some (including messianic believers) contend the Lord's Supper is actually a continuation of the Jewish Passover Seder, and, actually, incomplete if celebrated apart from it.

In actual fact, we discover quite another picture from a close inspection of the Bible in this regard. A careful reading of the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) as well as the Greek text of the New Testament shows us that all bread during the observance was to be *unleavened*. However, in all of the gospel accounts of the Last Supper, when Jesus instituted the "Lord's Supper" He used *not the unleavened bread* of the Passover meal, but a loaf (Gk. artos) or ordinary leavened bread. This underscored

His declaration of a *new* covenant, not a continuation of a Jewish, Old Testament observance.

The Passover meal was strictly Jewish, observed with *unleavened bread* (Gk. *azeemos*), and commemorated that nation's deliverance from the plague of the death of the firstborn.

The Lord's Supper is celebrated with a loaf (Gk. *artos*) or *leavened bread*, commemorating our Lord's suffering and death for the sins of the *whole world*, not just the Hebrew Nation.

Perhaps one may even press the symbol and see in the addition of leaven a picture of the resurrection of the Master. In any event, this observance stands on its own—part and parcel of the *New Testament*—and is *not* an abbreviated Passover; nor are Gentile Christians, second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God.

Meaning of the Supper

Christians throughout the centuries have ascribed different depths of meaning to this observance, ranging from an “un-bloody sacrifice” (Roman Catholicism) to a mere symbolic memorial (Baptist). In the author's opinion, the Lutheran view best approximates the biblical teaching. “Consubstantiation” contends that after the consecration prayer by the officiating minister (I Cor. 10:16), the Presence of Christ is “in, with and through” the elements of His Body and Blood. As Spirit-filled believers, if we believe God's Spirit can anoint a cloth, oil or minister through the laying on of hands or the spoken “word of faith,” can we not also allow for God's special anointing to be upon the very emblems of our Lord's Body and Blood?

For more on this sacrament, see my book, *The Lord's Supper: The Miracle, Mystery, and Majesty of “Real Presence,”* also part of the *Diploma in Ministry* course.

The sacraments, then, are visible, tangible representations of God's grace bestowed upon us in Christ.

6. Titles of the church.

The Church universal is given many appellations in the New Testament. It is interesting to note that the name “church” only appears twice in the gospels, both of them referring to the future.

The Church is called:

1. The Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12).
2. Church of the Living God (I Tim. 3:15).
3. Church of God (I I Cor. 1:1).
4. Church of Christ (Rom. 16:16).
5. Church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12:23).

The idea is, the Church is the invisible, mystical Body of Christ, seen visible in the organization of each local church and the activities of its members.

7. Activities of the local church.

The functions of each and every local church include: edification and evangelization.

A. Edification.

As already noted, the local church meets together regularly (at least weekly) for the purpose of mutual edification in the faith through praise and worship, manifestation of spiritual gifts, exhortation in the Word, corporate prayer and giving, and administration of the sacraments (I Cor. 14:26-27). However, this is not by any means an end, but, rather, *a means to the end*, the evangelization of the world (Mt. 28:20).

B. Evangelization.

As we have seen, the ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11) are placed in the Church universal for the purpose of “equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.” This ministry is chiefly that of reconciliation. In other words, each and every member of the Body of Christ, in addition to blessing the other members through the operation of his natural and supernatural gifts and ministries (I Cor. 12:8-10; 28; Rom. 12:8-10), has been given the mandate of sharing his faith (witnessing) with all those within his sphere of influence.

Thus, he is decidedly *saved to serve*.

What a privilege to be a part of the “called out ones” rescued from the “world system,” and commissioned to share the message of redemption with a lost and dying world.

Thanatology (The Study of Death)

“He descended into hell;” “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14)

As with many other doctrines of the Bible, the whole concept of life after death is much misunderstood by a great many persons, including Christians. Such a situation should not exist, especially not when the scriptures supply such clear teaching on the subject of man’s after-life.

The statement from the Creed quoted above describes the saints’ belief that even our Lord Jesus descended into hell after His physical death upon the Cross. The word rendered “hell” is the Greek noun, “Hades.” It is the New Testament counterpart of the Old Testament, Hebrew word, “Sheol.” Both words simply refer to the underworld of departed spirits. When Christ’s inner Man left His Body, He descended into “Hades.”

1. Man is eternal.

In order to arrive at an accurate understanding of death and what follows, we must first remember that man—in terms of his inner or non-corporeal nature—is eternal. That is, he is an eternal spirit being, created in the image of God, who will live on after physical death *forever*. This is true of both sinner and saint; all will live someplace; forever.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus makes it abundantly clear that *eternal life*—in terms of continued existence—is the lot of every human being. What differs among human persons is *where* they will spend their eternities. In the story given by Jesus, Lazarus found himself in a place of rest following physical death, described as “Abraham’s bosom.” The rich man, however, opened his eyes in “torments.”

A second fact to be observed is that one’s eternal state is determined by one’s relationship to God in this life. That is, all spiritual preparations for our eternal home must be made prior to physical death (see Luke 16; Heb. 9:27). Paul tells us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that it is given unto man once to die (thus blasting the lie of reincarnation) and after this, the judgment.

2. The two resurrections.

Not only does the Bible speak of the intermediate state following man’s physical death, but it can safely be said that Christianity is the only world religion which clearly promises a *physical resurrection* of the body. This promise appears in what many consider to be the oldest book of the Bible, Job.

“For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25-26).

The Bible teaches a resurrection of the bodies of both the saved and the unsaved.

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection

of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (Jn. 5:28-29).

The Bible also reveals that these two resurrections are separated by at least 1,000 years. The resurrection “unto life” will occur at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:13ff.; I Cor. 15:52). The resurrection “unto condemnation” will occur at the end of the millennial (thousand year) reign of Christ (Rev. 20:5). The first resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous; the second resurrection is the resurrection of the unrighteous (Rev. 20:5, 12-15).

The righteous will receive a glorious body, like unto Christ’s, fitted for the celestial realms of glory (Phil. 3:20ff.). Although the scripture does not speak specifically concerning the bodies of the unsaved, we must assume that they are raised ‘in corruption’ (Rev. 20:13), since the new body is part and parcel of salvation (Rom. 8:23).

What is it that ‘sleeps in the dust’ and will be raised? The body: both of the saved and the unsaved individual.

3. The intermediate state.

What then of the interim?

Where does the inner man of the saved and unsaved individual go upon physical death, prior to the resurrections?

Again, the experience of one after physical death is dependent upon one’s relationship to God prior to that occasion.

The Old Testament

Although similar, there is a slight difference in the afterlife of individuals, depending upon whether they lived on earth before or after the Cross-work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we have seen, the Old Testament believers had the promise of a bodily resurrection in their hearts. However, the concept of the intermediate state was not as well developed during that period. We owe our source of information to the Lord Jesus Christ. As already noted, the Master described the interim as a place of rest (i.e., Abraham’s bosom) or torments (i.e., hell). Both of these places were located in the heart of the earth. If there were no other scripture on this subject, the Old Testament story of the rebellion of Korah and his followers against Moses would be sufficient. The Judgment of God upon these rebellious sinners was:

*“...a new thing, and the ground upon up her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go **down living into Sheol**” (Nu. 16:30).*

Their grim end is described thusly:

*“They-they and all that appertained to them **went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed upon them:** and they perished from among the congregation” (Nu. 16:33, Heb.).*

Could anything be clearer? Sheol/Hades is *down* beneath the ground, in the heart of the earth.

Before Christ’s Sacrifice, then, the soul of the righteous went *down* to Sheol/Hades to a compartment Jesus termed, “Abraham’s bosom,” which was a place of rest. The unsaved, however, went *down* to a torment compartment of Sheol/Hades called “hell.”

The New Testament

Jesus promised the penitent thief, “Today, shalt thou be *with Me* in the paradise” (Lk. 23:43, Gk.). Here, Jesus promised the dying thief a place with Him in “rest” in the heart of the earth, following physical death. However, after Christ’s resurrection, we find the apostle Paul speaking of being “caught up to the third heaven... caught up into the paradise” (II Cor. 12:3-4, Gk.).

From these scriptures we see that “paradise” or the interim place for the souls of the saved after death was moved to the “third heaven,” the place where God lives. The Book of the Revelation illustrates this truth with scenes of the saints worshiping God in glory. This truth is corroborated by the apostle Paul in his teaching to the Thessalonians. He reminds the believers that because of our faith in Christ’s death and resurrection on our behalf, God will bring *with Jesus*, those who have died *in Him*. He also speaks of the “dead in Christ rising first.”

What does he mean? Jesus will bring the spirits of the righteous with Him from Heaven when He *descends*; the bodies of the righteous will then be resurrected from the grave and reunited with them. I Thess. 4:13ff., gives this information in complete detail. For the saint, to be “absent from the body (in physical death) is to be present with the Lord” (*in Heaven*, II Cor. 5:8).

However, it would appear that “hell,” or the torment compartment of the underworld, still retains the souls of the unsaved unto the last judgment. After this, they are cast—soul and body—into “Gehenna” or the “lake of fire,” described as “the second death” (Rev. 20:14-15). As one writer has put it, we might consider “hell” as the county jail and “Gehenna” as the State penitentiary.

There are two books that will determine our eternal state: the Book of Life and the book of works. The books (pl. Gk.) of works will determine the final degree of punishment the unsaved will undergo: their “wages of sin” (Rom. 6:23). The Book of Life is that celestial volume which contains the names of all the redeemed, those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in living faith (as well as Old Testament personages who lived by faith in Yahweh, awaiting the Coming Redeemer).

Just as there will be different rewards or *degrees of glory* for the redeemed, based upon their stewardship of the blessings of God during their earthly pilgrimages, so there will be *degrees of punishment* for the unsaved, dependent upon the amount of light of the gospel they received and spurned during their lifetime.

How glorious are the words of Jesus:

“He that heareth the word—mine—and is believing on him having sent me, hath everlasting life, and is not coming into judgment; but stands passed permanently out of the (second) death unto the (eternal) life” (Jn. 5:24, Gk.).

Praise God, forevermore!

Eschatology (The Study of Last Things)

“From whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead;”

The study of “last things” has long intrigued the careful, prayerful student of the Word of God. While we are not told everything in detail about the end of the age,” in the Bible, yet, we are given sufficient information to stimulate our hearts with anticipation of our future glory, providing a real incentive to holy living in the interim. Let us then study some of the leading facts concerning “things to come.”

1. The Return of the Lord.

The most significant future event is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Some scholars have suggested there are over 300 references to this blessed event in the New Testament. One writer has observed that one cannot read in the New Testament for more than ten minutes without encountering a reference to the Return of the Lord.

The scriptures make it abundantly certain that our blessed Lord will return: personally, visibly and bodily.

Did not the angels declare—the very day of His ascension—into Heaven—that “the Jesus—this same one—having been taken up from you into the heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him going into the heaven” (Acts 1:11, Gk.)?

It is emphatically the Second Coming of “this same Jesus” in clouds of glory which the Church awaits.

And then our Lord’s Return will be visible.

“Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

Our Lord’s Return in glory shall be seen by all who dwell upon the earth—even His enemies: *“and they also which pierced Him: end all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him”* (Rev. 1:7b).

Certainly, the Bible teaches that our Lord’s Second Coming will be bodily. That is, the very same glorified body of flesh and bones that resurrected from the tomb and ascended into Heaven shall return ‘in like manner’ as He went (Acts 1:11).

2. The Resurrection of the Righteous.

Another aspect of the “end times,” is the glorious resurrection of the righteous dead. The scriptures teach that there will be two resurrections: one of the righteous and one of the unrighteous. The first is the ‘resurrection unto Life; the other is the “resurrection unto condemnation” (Jn. 5:29).

The first resurrection (of the righteous, unto life) will take place at the Return of the Lord.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (I Thess. 4:16).

Notice, in this verse, nothing is said about a rising again of the wicked. This event takes place at least 1,000 years later.

“But the rest of the dead ones lived not again unto the thousand years were finished. This is the resurrection—the first one” (Rev. 20:5, Gk.).

“And the sea gave up the dead ones in it: and the death and the Hades delivered up

the dead ones in them: and they were judged each one according to the works: theirs” (Rev. 20:13, Gk.).

“And the death and the Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And if any one was not found having been and remaining written in the book of the life was cast into the lake of the fire” (Rev. 20:14-15; Gk.).

These verses, and many similar ones, describe the future resurrections of both the saved and the unsaved. They illustrate the eternal dividing line between the righteous and the unrighteous.

3. The Rapture of the Righteous.

As we have seen, there will be a resurrection of the righteous dead at the Lord’s Return. But what of the righteous living? What will be the portion of the living saints at the blessed time?

Paul the Apostle, speaking by revelation of the Spirit, tells us:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not indeed all sleep (in death), but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead ones shall be raised incorruptible, and we-we shall be changed” (I Cor. 15:51-52, Gk.).

He told the Thessalonian church about this same “mystery:”

“Then we-we the ones which are living and remaining shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in air” (I Thess. 4:17, Gk.).

In these verses Paul reiterates the teaching of the Master concerning His Return (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 17:21-37). This “catching up” is often called the “rapture” taken from the Latin word for “caught up” (Gk., “harpazo”). Those of us who are saved—indwelt by the Holy Spirit—will be given the Gift of Eternal Life for our bodies when Jesus Christ returns (Rom. 8:11)!

What a glorious prospect in ours in the Lord!

4. Retribution Upon the Ungodly.

Unfortunately, the “blessed hope” of our Lord’s Return, though a glorious expectation for us, will enkindle the utmost horror in the hearts of His enemies, especially those involved in persecuting His Church, those living in the immediate geographical vicinity of His Return.

“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them, the ones troubling you; and to you, the ones who are being troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power, in flaming fire yielding vengeance on them, the ones having not known and remaining ignorant of God, and them, the ones refusing to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thess. 1:6-8, Gk.).

This stupendous event will both *kill and cure*; it will bring both *wrath and rest*, depending upon the relationship we sustain toward the Lord Jesus as He returns from Heaven.

The persecutors of His people will be “punished with everlasting (eternal) punishment from the presence of the Lord” (II Thess. 1:9).

Jesus is coming again; are we ready?

5. Rewards for the Faithful.

And then this blessed event will also be the time of reward for the Church for a job well done. Again, Paul says:

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise from the (one, true) God” (I Cor. 4:5, Gk.).

The Bible speaks of a judgment of believers’ works at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, issuing in rewards for faithful service carried out in the Master’s Name. We (believers) must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive either merits or demerits according to the way we have conducted our stewardship over the various gifts and graces with which we have been bestowed (Rom. 14:10ff.; I Cor. 3:1ff.; I Cor. 4:5ff.; Mat. 25:31ff; Rev. 22:12).

What an incentive for holy and fruitful living is given to us in this precious doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ!

6. Reigning Upon the Earth.

This grand Bible truth of the Second Advent of the Lord also includes the time to come when we shall rule and reign with Christ upon the earth for a thousand years, followed by ages and ages of glorified bliss in the New Heaven and New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign upon the earth” (Rev. 5:10).

“And they lived and reigned with Christ the thousand years” (Rev. 20:5, Gk.).

“And Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29-30).

Surely, such language is unmistakably clear in its import. In a day yet future—at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ—the Master will initiate the outward aspect of His Kingdom in a period of blessedness upon earth including His ruling and reigning—with His Church—over mankind upon the earth. This period of Edenic glory will then be followed by the final judgment of the wicked dead (Rev. 20:12ff.), the renovation of the earth by fire (II Pet. 3:10ff.) and the establishment of a “new heavens and earth” (II Pet. 3:15; Rev. 21:1ff.) wherein the saints of all ages, in fellowship with the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will live in unbounded glory forever and ever.

Let us praise God for these end-time truths!

Conclusion

“*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*” (II Tim. 2:2).

As we conclude our brief study of these ten, foundational doctrines of the Christian faith, we should remind ourselves of our responsibility to not only know the Truth, but to speak the Truth—in love—to others.

Just as the ministry gifts are responsible to instruct others in the truths of the pure doctrine of God’s Word, so it is incumbent upon all of us disciples of the Lord Jesus to be prepared always to speak a word in season and be ready always to give an answer—from the Bible—to everyone who asks of us a reason for our hope of eternal life.

It is my prayer that you will commit yourself to believe and propagate these truths of God’s faith, “once for all delivered to the saints” wherever and whenever God gives you the opportunity.

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Ti. 2:1).

Discipleship: Living What You Believe

By Joseph Kostelnik, Ph.D.

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Introduction

Why a course on Discipleship...

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Mt. 28:19).

These were some of the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Needless to say, they were and are important words...to us. They include His plan for man and our responsibility regarding it. This portion of scripture contains the will of God until the Lord Jesus returns in glory to set up the physical dimension of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The word translated “teach” in our text literally reads “disciple.” Our blessed Lord has here instructed us—the Church—to “Go, and keep on going” (Gk.), and “disciple all peoples.”

The word “disciple” means “a learner...not only a pupil, but an adherent...imitator of his teacher” (Vine).

It is interesting that the Master has not commanded us to make ‘converts,’ but, ‘disciples,’ or students: people of all ages and nations who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb and who are *learning to imitate him*.

Why a course on Discipleship?

Because the Lord has instructed—yea commanded—us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all the words of the gospel. This discipling means more than instructing converts in the doctrines of the Christian faith, as important as that is, it means teaching believers to imitate the *lifestyle of Jesus Christ*, praying as He prayed, loving as He loved and serving others as He served. Discipleship is the process of learning how to manifest the Christ-life in our lives, that the Lord might be glorified and the world might be saved.

Why a course on Discipleship?

Because it is our responsibility to cooperate with the means of Divine grace by learning and doing the “disciplines” of the Christian life.

It is my prayer that the following lessons will be a great help in this process.

Let’s begin...to the glory of God.

The Right Foundation

It is imperative that we, as Spirit-filled Christians, build upon the correct foundation as we seek to be true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much lack of progress in spiritual growth can be directly attributed to a misunderstanding of basic spiritual experiences and doctrines of the faith. This lesson will outline these grass roots topics and thus give you a firm footing for future service for the Lord.

The Five Foundational Experiences

1. The New Birth

The New Birth is the first of five “foundational Christian experiences.” It is absolutely essential to discipleship for the simple reason that one cannot be a follower or disciple of the Lord Jesus without first partaking of His Life through conversion.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’ (Jn. 3:3).

Here, the Lord Jesus points out the centrality of the New Birth in the matter of entering the Kingdom of God. The Greek verb translated “born again” can also be rendered “from above.” Indeed, both ideas are true to the scriptural teaching. In order to “see” or enter the Kingdom of God, one must be born a second time: from above.

We are all born into this world spiritually “dead” or separated from fellowship with God due to sin (Eph. 2:2). We are sons of God by creation, but prodigal sons who must be redeemed. We must receive an impartation of the Life of God in order to become His children. In short, we must be “Fathered from above.” The two agents of the New Birth are the Word of God (I Pet. 1:23; Ja. 1:18) and the Spirit of God (Jn. 3:6). This experience is received by grace through faith (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 3:8-9) and results in the believing sinner receiving Eternal Life, the Nature of God (Jn. 3:16, 5:24; II Pet. 1:4).

Perhaps you are taking this course and you have discovered your need of this personal relationship with God. Maybe you have been baptized in water, observed the sacraments, said prayers, read the Bible, attended church services, etc., but never, definitely, embraced Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, trusting Him, alone, for your eternal salvation. If you would like to make this all-important decision, here is a prayer you may pray:

“Heavenly Father, I confess that I’ve sinned. But I believe You sent Jesus to the earth. I believe He lived a sinless life. I believe He died on the Cross for my sin; I believe He shed His Blood to forgive my sin. I believe He was buried and raised from the dead that I may have Eternal Life. Lord Jesus, I surrender my heart and my will to You. Come into my heart; come into my life. Make me the kind of person You created me to be. By Your grace, I’ll live for you, all the days of my life.

“Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my heart. Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul. Amen.”

2. Water Baptism

Water Baptism is an outward sign of an inward, spiritual experience. It is a public testimony to the fact that a believer has died with Christ to sin and is risen with Him to walk in newness of life through His Spirit (I Pet. 3:21).

Baptism in water does not “save” us; the New Birth does. However, water baptism was commanded by the Lord (Mt. 28:19) and was practiced by the Early Church (Acts 8:12) as well as being enjoined upon believers of all ages as a fundamental doctrine of the faith (Heb. 6:2).

3. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the third foundational experience which involves a born again child of God being endued (clothed) with Power from on High to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in word and deed (Lk. 24:49).

There are many designations for this experience given in the scriptures, including: Power from on High (Lk. 24:49), being baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), receiving Power (Acts 1:8), rivers of living water (Jn. 7:37-39), being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4), the Gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), the Promise (Acts 2:39), the other Comforter (Jn. 16:7), the Holy Ghost “falling on” (Acts 10:44), the Gift of the Holy Ghost “poured out” (Acts 10:45), the Holy Ghost “coming on” (Acts 19:6), etc.

It is an experience following and in addition to that of being born again. The New Birth brings the indwelling of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), while the Baptism in the Holy Spirit brings the infilling (Acts 2:4). The New Birth brings new Life (Jn. 5:6), whereas the Baptism in the Spirit brings new power (Acts 1:8). The New Birth gives us the Spirit within (Rom. 8:9); the Baptism in the Holy Spirit gives us the Spirit upon (Lk. 24:49). The New Birth is God’s Gift to the world (Jn. 3:16); the Baptism is the Father’s Gift to His children (Lk. 11:13). This experience, like salvation (the New Birth), is received by faith (Gal. 3:2).

If you are a child of God but have never received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, here is a prayer you may pray:

“Heavenly Father, I thank you for the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Fill me, right now, with the Holy Spirit. I receive the Holy Spirit by faith, in Jesus’ Name. Thank You, Father, for filling me with the Holy Spirit. Thank You for giving me the ability to pray and to praise You in a language I have never learned. Thank you for giving me the Power to live Your Life, and the Person Who will counsel me in all of Your ways. I receive Him now, by faith, in Jesus’ Name. Amen.”

As you are in the Presence of God, simply begin to speak forth the first words or syllables that come to your mind or that you feel prompted to say but *do not speak in your native language(s)*, as you cannot speak two languages at once. In every instance recorded in the Book of Acts where believers received the Holy Spirit, they spoke in “new tongues” (Mk. 16:17). Speaking in “other tongues” is the evidence of receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4, 10:44-48, 19:1-6); Power is the result (see my book, *Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link*, also in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

4. Entire Consecration

The fourth foundational Christian experience is one of entire, complete, unconditional and eternal dedication of one's born again, water-baptized, Spirit-filled life unto God in order that one's gifts and ministries may become manifest and the Body of Christ edified and the world ministered to in the Power of God.

This commitment of one's entire being—once and for all, forever—is the very starting point of any real service to God. It is this consecration which paves the way for the renewing of the mind of a Christian as well as his understanding of the perfect will of God for him in the area of ministry (Rom. 12:1-10, see my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry* in the second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

The importance of this complete and hearty abandonment to the will of God cannot be overemphasized or gainsaid. It is indispensable to the believer's fruitfulness and God's glory being manifested through his life. Here is a prayer you may pray:

“Heavenly Father, I thank you for the gift of Eternal Life and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. I now present you with the gift of my new life in Christ. I surrender my spirit, soul and body, past, present and future to You, unconditionally, to be used for Your divine purpose. Release every spiritual and ministry gift in my life and use me for Your glory. Reveal Your perfect will for my life. Thank You, Father, for accepting my consecration; thank you for revealing Your will for my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.”

5. The Lord's Supper

The fifth foundational Christian experience is a continuing one, that of participating in the Lord's Supper. Jesus gave this memorial to His disciples on the eve of His betrayal. According to scripture, it serves at least four purposes:

A. The Remembrance of Jesus.

As Jesus gives His disciples this commandment, He calls the Supper a “memorial” of Himself (Luke 22:19). Paul uses the same word (I Cor. 11:24, 25). This word in Greek (*αναμνησιν*), meaning “a calling to memory,” comes from root words meaning “to remain as one, unchanged,” or “to await.” This explains the second aspect of the Supper.

B. The Presence or Coming of Jesus.

This correlates to Jesus' promise that He would come to His disciples even though the world would not see Him, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (see John Chapter 14). As Jesus said, “this is My Body... this is My Blood.” Paul affirms this to the Corinthians through the revelation of Jesus to him: “*The cup of blessing which we bless, isn't it a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, isn't it a communion of the body of Christ*” (I Cor. 10:16)? It is so much so that Paul compares it to the communion with God that the Israelites had through their sacrifices on the altar (I Cor. 10:16-21). He then tells us, therefore, that the one who eats or drinks of this Supper in a manner unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of the Lord's Body and Blood (I Cor. 11:27). So, after the one serving the Supper blesses and gives thanks for the bread and the cup, something very real happens: the flesh and blood of the Son of God come to dwell in the

bread and cup, and Jesus comes to us.

C. The Communion of Jesus.

Knowing that the Lord comes to us through the Supper, we also see then that as we eat and drink we share in Him and all that He is, through His Body and Blood (I Cor. 10:16). In so doing, we also share with every member of His Body that partakes, for as Paul says, *“Because there is one loaf of bread, we, who are many, are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf of bread”* (I Cor. 10:17). To eat of this Supper is to share in the Life of Christ, and to strengthen and affirm our union with Him and His entire Church, which is His Body.

D. The Proclamation of the Death of Jesus.

Paul ends his revelation to the Corinthians by saying, *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”* (I Cor. 11:26). As we participate in this Supper, the Lord’s death is proclaimed. It is a testimony to all creation: the unsaved, the unlearned in the Church, and the heavenly realms, both evil and good. Revelation tells us that the overcomers did so through the word of their testimony and the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11). John saw the Lord standing as a Lamb that had been slain (Rev. 5:6), though He yet lives. This Supper proclaims or testifies of the Lord’s death, and this Supper holds the blood of the Lamb in the cup. Through our participation in the Lord’s Supper, we overcome the forces of darkness. Through the Supper, we graphically portray to the world that Jesus was crucified (Gal. 3:1), but also rose again and intercedes for us in heaven. His sacrifice upon the Cross has bridged the gap between heaven and humanity. As Paul once said, he would preach nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2, 15:1-4). And in this Supper, this proclamation rings loud and clear!

The Lord’s Supper is a foundational Christian experience because its center and focus is upon the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Through our participation, we obey His commandment to do so, He comes and reveals Himself to us and not the world, we remember Him and His sacrifice for us, we receive Him and His life into our bodies, we spiritually unite with our brothers and sisters in Him, and we proclaim His death to all creation.

We encourage you to share in this wonderful experience of the Lord as often as you are able.

“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer. Fear came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need. Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

Fellowship

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,

and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I Jn. 1:7).

Fellowship is one of the most wonderful blessings of the Christian life. It refers to the common participation all believers have in the one, mystical Body of Christ. It involves communion with the Father in the Son, through the Holy Spirit, and also our union and relationship with the other members of the Family of God.

The apostle John in the text we have quoted describes the position of one who enjoys fellowship with other Christians and who is a recipient of the cleansing power of the precious Blood. This believer is one who “walks in the light.” One who walks in the light is further described by verse 10 of I John, chapter two:

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”

This text makes it clear that “walking in the light” is synonymous with “walking in love.” Notice also that the KJV translates this procedure as “walketh.” This is a very accurate rendering as the Greek text indicates a continuous process, not a one-time effort.

Likewise, in I Jn. 1:9, the Greek text literally reads:

“If we are confessing our sins, he is faithful and just to have forgiven us our sins, and to have cleansed us from all unrighteousness.”

The apostle here designates a true believer as one who makes a practice of confessing his daily sins (his occasional failures to walk in the light). This lifestyle “proves” or demonstrates to the world that one “has been forgiven” and “has been cleansed,” positionally, in the New Birth. Forgiveness is based upon the *past finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross* which the believer *has already received by faith* (Eph. 2:8-9), not upon a daily confession of individual sins.

Fellowship vs. Relationship

It is vital that we understand our position in the Family of God. Although we may occasionally slip into sin as Christians, yet our *basic pattern of life* is holy and righteous. For example, just as an unsaved person may occasionally do a “good deed” without his *basic nature* being changed thereby, so the saved person may, unfortunately, occasionally commit a “bad deed” without his *basic (new) nature* being changed. Our fellowship revolves around our relationship. We maintain our fellowship with God by walking in Love towards our brothers and sisters in Christ. Should we step out of Love, we should confess (admit) our sin (conscience is our guide, I Jn. 3:20-21), and remember the Blood which *already has been shed* to forgive our sins.

Our relationship is maintained by faith (Jn. 5:24).

Healing

Divine healing is part and parcel of our relationship with God as His children. The same atonement which provided for our cleansing from sin also provided for our healing from sickness and pain.

“Surely he hath borne (carried) our griefs (Heb. sicknesses), and carried our sorrows (Heb. pains)” (Isa. 53:4).

The Hebrew words translated “griefs” and “sorrows” literally mean “sicknesses” and “pains,” respectively. The word rendered “borne” is a Levitical term denoting, not sympathy, but the actual bearing away and removal—utterly—of the thing borne.

Matthew's gospel reiterates this fact and substantiates this interpretation:

"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Mt. 8:16-17).

Although the Lord Jesus forgave sin and healed diseases while on earth *in advance* of His Cross-work, He did so only on the ground of His coming, substitutionary suffering. Just as those in His day and before were healed in anticipation of the Cross, so we are healed by looking back to the Cross. To argue that Christ's healing work was fulfilled completely then—during His earthly healing ministry alone—is false. One could just as easily argue that His forgiving (saving) ministry was, likewise, completed at the same time, allowing no means of salvation today.

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa. 53:5).

Our Lord's passion on the Cross also provides for our soul-peace. We are entitled to peace with God (Rom. 5:1) as well as the peace of God (Phil. 4:7).

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted" (Isa. 53:7).

The margin reads, "It was exacted and He-*He* becometh answerable." We could paraphrase and express it like this: "The bill came due and *He* paid it!"

To those oppressed by sickness and evil spirits there is provided a ground of atonement whereby faith can be exercised and deliverance received (Acts 10:38; Mt. 8:16-17).

Afflictions, likewise, pose no invincible threat to the child of God who lives in the light of his redemption (II Tim. 3:11).

Faith and Works

Our relationship with the Heavenly Father is based upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. These benefits are all received in the same way: *by faith*. This faith is released by words or corresponding actions (works).

When the word of this complete atonement is preached in the Power of the Holy Spirit, spiritual "hearing" results and so does *faith* (Rom. 10:17, Gk.).

There are many channels given by God to assist us in exercising our faith. They include:

1. Prayer (Jn. 15:7).
2. Anointing with oil/prayer of faith (Ja. 5:14-16).
3. Laying on of hands (Mk. 16:17-18).
4. The word of faith (Acts 14:10).
5. Anointed cloths, etc. (Acts 19:11-12).
6. Gifts of healings (I Cor. 12:9).
7. Intercession of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26).
8. Special anointings (Acts 5:15).
9. Preaching of the Word (Acts 8:5-7).
10. Acting on the Word of faith (Acts 3:6).

What is Faith?

Faith is not a nebulous concept, a synonym for religion, or an action that can be done.

Faith, as its creator Yahweh has revealed, is a thing.

Faith is something to be given; it is something to be received; it is something to be possessed.

“Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, proof of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

As can be seen here, faith and hope are intimately connected.

Faith is the “substance” of things hoped for. This word, *υποστασις* (“substance”), comes from two words meaning “under” and “to hold.” Thus, more accurately, it is the subsistence, or the foundation: that which stands under another as its base. Faith is the grounding of the things hoped for. “Things hoped for,” or “those [things] being expected.” Without this foundation, what we expect or wait for will not stand but will fall to the ground into chaos.

Faith is also “evidence.” This was a common word in the Greek of this letter’s day, *ελεγχος*. It was often used in mathematical circles as something evident through demonstration. Aristotle defined it thus: “*ελεγχος*, or Demonstration, is that which cannot be otherwise, but is so as we assert.” It is like a theorem, or something that is used as a rule because it can easily be proven to be true.

Of what is faith “evidence?” Of “things not seen.” More accurately than “things,” it is of “deeds,” “actions” or “practices” not seen. Faith is the rule, which can be proven through simple demonstration of those works which cannot be seen. It is the doorway into the invisible. It is the way of life to confront the unseen.

Faith then is not something to be conjured. It cannot be wished, nor can it accumulate. It is a tangible thing that has a specific identity and purpose. It is the foundation of that which we expect and the rule of unseen works. Once it is received, faith gives its possessor the key to the spiritual life—that beyond the natural senses—beyond what can be naturally comprehended. Faith is a thing! It is offered and has been given! And we must receive it!

Receiving Faith

Because faith is a thing, something to be possessed, and not done, it must then be received. While writing of the glorious Good Message of God’s Son to the Roman Christians, the apostle Paul explains how it arrives:

“So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Faith comes “out of hearing.” There is no verb in this sentence; it is “So, faith... out of hearing.” It is a noun sentence which is a simple definition. It defines faith’s source. It exists out of hearing. “Hearing” means an audience, the act of listening. Not just physical hearing, but the act of giving one’s ear.

Hearing comes “through God’s spoken word” (*δια ρηματος θεου*). There is no article here, showing that it is not any specific word from God, but His spoken word in general. Elsewhere this word is personified as the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:17, Heb. 1:3). The Spirit is Yahweh’s active Word, His Voice. Hearing is *through* Him.

I (Solomon) had a dream in which I met the Holy Spirit and His message to me was, “Listen to Me.” This is the same testimony given by the apostle (Eph. 6:18). The *hearing* out of which faith comes is through God’s spoken Word, His Spirit. When we give audience to the Holy Spirit, faith has its source realized in our lives.

Therefore, faith is ultimately received by giving audience to the Holy Spirit, Yahweh’s spoken Word. Once we receive this thing called faith, we will have the foundation of the

things we are expecting, and the rule of the things we cannot see. We will have the key to living victoriously in the Kingdom of Yahweh.

Divine Health

“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Yahweh thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am Yahweh that healeth thee” (Ex. 15:26).

Here is given an Old Testament statement—not of Divine healing—but, rather, of Divine health.

It is one matter to be ill and subsequently raised up by the power of God, but quite another to *be divinely kept free from the dominion of sickness and disease!* It is this blessing that God promised His people after their deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

If we understand Egypt to be a symbol of the world system, and the crossing of the Red Sea by the Children of Israel to be a picture of our deliverance from sin in the New Birth, we can then perceive the intent of God in this promise.

It is not only Divine healing which He promises His newly redeemed people, but Divine health and preservation. The Blessed Tree not only provides deliverance from the curse of sin and sickness, but it also makes possible the sweetening of the bitter waters of our earthly pilgrimage: a life of “Heaven on earth” through the Power of God (Ex. 15:25). Thus, at the very outset of our Christian lives, the Heavenly Father announces Himself to us as “Yahweh Who (continually) healeth thee.”

The apostle John gives us the New Testament counterpart in this scripture:

“Beloved, I wish (pray, Gk.) above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (III Jn. 2).

Although the apostle’s words are directed to his friend, Gaius (“beloved” is singular in the Greek), certainly, the spirit of them can be applied to all redeemed persons.

Divine Names

It is God’s plan that we know Him as our *All in all*. He has made this desire manifest even in the Names which He has revealed in His Word:

1. Yahweh-Yireh, “the Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:13-14).

This Name depicts a Heavenly Father Who “looks ahead and provides for us,” just as He did for Abraham when he needed a sacrifice in the place of Isaac.

2. Yahweh-Ropheka, “the Lord thy Physician” (Ex. 15:26).

As we have seen, this is the Divine Doctor Who heals us.

3. Yahweh-Nissi, “the Lord my Banner (Victory)” (Ex. 17:8-15).

This Name illustrates the Lord as the One Who fights and wins all of our battles with the world, the flesh and the Devil (Isa. 59:19).

4. Yahweh-Shalom, “the Lord is peace” (Ju. 6:24).

This Name sets forth our God Who hates sin, loves the sinner, and provides a sacrifice

which makes possible peace.

5. Yahweh-Rohi, “the Lord my shepherd” (Psa. 23:1).

Here is the tender and compassionate “Pastor” of His People, guiding and watching over them in their earthly sojourn.

6. Yahweh-Tsidkenu, “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6).

This Divine title refers to our Heavenly Father, Himself, in the Person of His Son, becoming our means of “rightstanding” with Himself, by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

7. Yahweh-Shammah, “the Lord Who is there” (Ezek. 48:35)

In this Name is illustrated our Lord’s ever-present abiding with His People.

Thus, our God has made known to us His plan and desire to be *all that we need*. It is as we learn to relate to Him in all of these ways that our faith and trust in Him will grow and become vital. Only as we begin to depend upon Him in every issue of life can we receive of His bounty and thus not only have our needs supplied, but be enabled to intelligently recommend Him and His Covenant of Plenty to the world.

As believers and disciples, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places by virtue of our being *in Christ* through the New Birth. By faith, let us live there continually in our experience.

Demons

“Behold, I give unto you power (authority, Gk.) to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Lk. 10:19).

This is not a promise of dominion, but a statement of fact. Every born again believer has a legal right to cast out evil spirits; and every born again Spirit-filled believer has a legal right and spiritual power to cast out demons.

This dominion was given to the Twelve (Lk. 9:1), to the Seventy (Lk. 10:20), and to *every believer* (Mk. 16:17).

The Devil and all demon forces were *legally* defeated in the Cross of Christ (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). The Lord Jesus has given us the power of the Holy Spirit and the right to use His Name as His representatives for the purpose of *enforcing* that victory in the experience of those who are bound and oppressed.

It was by the anointing of the Spirit that the Lord Jesus cast out devils: *based upon the legal ground of his coming atonement* (Mt. 12:28).

We must, likewise, depend upon the power of the Holy Ghost and the gifts of discernment of spirits, faith and the working of miracles if we are to follow in the Master’s steps (Mt. 17:20-21).

Provision

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

The material dimension of our lives is also included in the redemption provided for us

by God through Christ. Throughout the scriptures, the Heavenly Father is depicted as One Who provides for the temporal needs of His Pilgrim People.

Under the Old Covenant, He provided bread from Heaven, water from a rock and meat in abundance during their wilderness wanderings. He Who failed not the Children of Israel will not disappoint us. It is the plan of God that all of our creaturely needs be met abundantly. Not only does He give us natural talents with which to derive gainful employment, but He has established a means whereby that which we earn may not only provide for our needs, but abound toward the furtherance of the gospel.

While it is clearly not the design of God that we actively seek for material riches—in and of themselves—(I Tim. 6:6-10), yet it is His plan that our material needs be met (I Tim. 6:17). We should seek to understand our Lord's plan for our physical necessities. Our Lord instructed us to take no anxious thought concerning the natural needs of our lives (Mt. 6:25ff.), due to the unerring care of our Heavenly Father (Mt. 6:31ff.).

Moreover, the curse of poverty which is part and parcel of the broken law (Deut. 28) has been borne for us by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary (Gal. 3:13). He became "poverty-stricken" (Gk.) *on the cross*, that through His self-imposed poverty, we might become "permanently enriched" by the abundant supply and provision of God (II Cor. 8:9; see my book, *Miracle Money*).

In addition:

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (II Cor. 9:8).

The context of this verse is clearly the giving and receiving of material benefits (II Cor. 9:1ff.). With the curse of poverty removed by the Cross of Christ, we have the God-bought redemptive privilege of having our needs met. In addition, through the ministry of giving in faith, we have the added blessing of *abounding* in material benefits promised to us, thereby making us channels of blessing to others.

Procedure for Provision

There are a number of methods for financial and material benefit given to us in the Bible. We should, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, make it our aim to become involved in all of them.

1. The tithe.

This is the oldest recorded material blessing plan instituted by God. It was practiced by Abraham before the Law (Gen. 14:20); it was Divinely commanded of the Children of Israel while under the Law (Nu. 18:21, 26); the People of God were reprov'd for disobeying this precept by the prophets after the Law (Mal. 3:8); and the Lord Jesus approved of it during His ministry (Mt. 23:23).

In addition, there are two very direct links to the practice—in principle—in the New Testament. While discussing financial support of the ministry in I Cor. 9:13-14, Paul says:

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? (cp. Num. 18: 1-15). Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Again, when discussing the financial support of the New Testament minister/teacher with the Galatians, Paul wrote:

“But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Stop being deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:6-7; cp. Mal. 3:9).

He clinches his argument in the following two verses:

“And let us not be weary in the well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we are not fainting. As we have therefore opportunity, let us be working the good unto all, but especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9-10, Gk.).

Obviously, “the well doing” and “the good” refer to the financial support of the ministry.

Melchizedek’s Order & Tithing

As noted above, tithing was not peculiar to the Law of Moses and the Old Covenant. Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High, before the Law of Moses was given, received tithes from the father of the faith, Abraham (Heb. 7:1-2). He is compared to the Son of God, as he has neither recorded birth or death, nor father or mother, nor any lineage recorded at all (Heb. 7:3-4).

As the writer to the Hebrews says, the priesthood that later received tithes paid tithes to this king, seeing how Levi, who was commanded to receive tithes from Israel, came from the lineage of Abraham (Heb. 7:5-10).

Because the Lord Jesus remains a high priest after Melchizedek’s order, so does His entire Body, the Assembly. We have been called kings and priests unto God (Rev. 5:8-10) and therefore those who minister the Good News do so as priests (Rom. 15:15-16). Because we are one with Christ, we share in His priesthood, that of Melchizedek’s order. Therefore, this testifies that those serving as priests or ministers of the Good Message, can and should receive tithes just as did Melchizedek.

As the writer of Hebrews explains, because the priesthood of Yahweh has changed from the line of Aaron to the appointment of one eternal high priest—Jesus the Son of God—so has the Law changed (Hebrews 7:12). No more are tithes due to a physical genealogy, but to those who have been joined to Christ—a spiritual genealogy with God as the Father (Gal. 3:26; I John 4:4)—to serve in Christ as His priests or ministers (I Cor. 9:7-10).

We then see the concept of tithing continue throughout God’s working with mankind. It continues even until today as the many Members of Christ’s Body continue to serve as priests unto God, receiving tithes as unto Jesus Christ Himself, the eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Those who are regularly ministering the Good Message to you—the pastor of your local assembly—should receive your tithes unto Yahweh.

Although there is no direct command for New Testament saints to tithe, yet if God’s people, before, during and after the Law ministered a minimum of 10% of their gross incomes to the work of God and His ministers, certainly, we, under the New Testament, should be doing the same and *more*.

2. Giving to the poor.

The Lord Jesus reminded His listeners that the poor would always be with us. It is our

blessed privilege and responsibility as those who are blessed of God to share with those who are less fortunate than us. To do so is “to lend unto Yahweh” Who will abundantly repay us (Pro. 19:17).

3. Giving to ministers.

Our Lord Jesus instructed His representatives to be dependent upon His people for their sustenance in their travels for Him (Mt. 10:11). He also reminded His followers that no service done unto a disciple would go without a reward (Mk. 9:41).

Paul makes it clear that those who preach the gospel should have their physical lives sustained by their hearers (I Cor. 9:14) and that those who are taught the Word have the responsibility to financially support the teacher of God’s Word (Gal. 6:6). Indeed, the apostle instructs Timothy that pastors who perform their ministerial functions well are deserving of “double pay” (I Tim. 5:17).

Some have seen in Paul’s words to the Corinthians a clear substantiation for the New Testament practice of ministers receiving tithes of the people:

“Do ye not know that they, the ones labouring about the holy things feed out of the temple? And they, the ones which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so the Lord ordained that they, the ones preaching the gospel, should be living out of the gospel” (I Cor. 9:13-14, Gk., cp. Num. 18:1-15).

4. Giving unto others.

The Lord pronounced a bountiful blessing upon those who would share of their abundance with others (Lk. 6:38). The apostle Paul, in discussing the giving of physical relief to suffering brethren, disclosed the measure of blessing returned upon giving in the following manner:

“But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (II Cor. 9:6-7).

5. Giving unto widows.

Paul set forth important guidelines regarding the care of widows who are without immediate family to attend to their needs. He pointed out the Bible truth that in such cases the Church should be responsible for them. This practice would necessitate collective giving, specifically for this purpose (I Tim. 5:9-10).

6. Giving unto the destitute.

Caring for the “down and out” is considered by Christ as caring for Him (Mt. 25:34-36). Such giving, if not rewarded here, will certainly be rewarded *hereafter*.

7. Offerings for the work of God.

Malachi, while reproofing the Children of Israel concerning their giving, mentioned: “tithes *and* offerings.” Our offerings over and above the one we give to the work of God command a blessing which we *cannot contain*.

The Bottom Line

In closing our discussion of this foundation of the faith, we should bear in mind the blessing the Lord pronounced upon the woman who gave “all she had” into the temple treasury. She was a widow and it was “all her living.” Yet the Lord did not esteem her foolish or irresponsible. Rather, He commended her (Mk. 12:41-44).

May this increase our faith and daring in the matter of giving to God first—even if out of our need—in order that we might be true disciples, seeking the Kingdom of God *first*. For it is then that we shall receive *all other things* besides! If we have a problem with money and giving to the work of God, we had better pray, study the Word and re-examine our priorities to determine whether we are truly “in the faith.” It was Jesus, Himself, Who said we cannot serve God and money (Mt. 6:24).

Prayer

As we will see in the next lesson, prayer is a key foundation stone in the life of a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a good plan to begin the day with prayer, even before getting out of bed in the morning. Spend time in communion and fellowship with God at the very beginning of the new day. Intelligently surrender your *will* to Him. Resolve to not think, feel, say or do anything this day which will grieve His Holy Spirit. Forgive (release) any person who may have harmed you in any way. Commune in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20-21), casting all your care upon Him, and thereby keep yourself in the Love of God. Meditate upon a verse of scripture which speaks to your present situation. In this way, you will feel the guiding Hand of God upon your life all through the day. Fifteen minutes spent in this fellowship with God will absolutely revolutionize your life.

Set aside another portion of the day, perhaps before the evening meal, for a longer time of prayer, fellowship and intercession before the Throne of Grace. Steal away from the cares and distractions of modern living and *commune with God*. You will never be the same. Others with whom you come in contact will sense the Presence of God which permeates your very being (see my book, *The Presence of God*).

Again, upon retiring, seek the Master’s Face in prayer. Praise Him for His goodness in preserving and sustaining you through the day. Review the happenings of the morning, afternoon and evening in the Light of the Holy Spirit. Confess any breaking of the Love Law. Renounce any tendency to sin or unbelief. Resolve to more thoroughly *lean upon the Everlasting Arms*. Purpose to allow the Christ-life the pre-eminence in your life on the coming morrow. Fall asleep while quietly praying in the Spirit and you will awake refreshed and imbued with the Power of a loving God.

The Bible

We will be devoting an entire lesson to the importance of reading, studying, meditating in and sharing the Word of God on a daily basis. See to it that you receive an infusion of Divine Truth from God’s Word *daily* which directly concerns your life. For example, if you have a healing need, do not be content with a Bible reading concerning the kings of Israel! *Also read the healing scriptures that day!* Let the Bible meet your present needs.

In Christ Realities

A final foundation in Christian discipleship is the comprehension of what we are *in Christ*.

It is a good plan to study the scriptures, especially the Epistles, in order to understand, affirm and *act upon* our new relationship with God as New Creations in Christ (see my book, *Wonder Working Words*).

The following is only a partial and suggestive list of these spiritual realities which should be read, memorized, affirmed and acted upon, daily reviewing them in the Presence of God.

1. We are born again (Jn. 3:3, 6; I Pet. 1:23; Ja. 1:18).
2. We are partakers of the Divine Nature, Eternal Life (II Pet. 1:4; Jn. 3:16).
3. We are justified, declared to be in “right standing” with God (Rom. 5:1).
4. We are sanctified, set apart *from* sin, *unto* God (I Cor. 6:11).
5. We are glorified; in the Mind of God our new bodies are already provided (Rom. 8:30).
6. We are washed (I Cor. 6:11).
7. We are redeemed, purchased by God (I Pet. 1:18).
8. We are one Spirit with Christ (I Cor. 6:17).
9. We are the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12).
10. We are the Temple of God (II Cor. 6:16).
11. We are temples of the Spirit (I Cor. 6:19).
12. We are saints, holy unto God (Rom. 1:7).
13. We have a home in Heaven (II Cor. 5:1).
14. We are delivered from the wrath to come (I Thess. 5:9).
15. We are citizens of Heaven, *in* the world, but not *of* it (Jn. 17:16; Phil. 3:20, Gk.).
16. We are ambassadors of Christ, representing Him among men (II Cor. 5:20).
17. We are new creations in Christ, a new species of being that never existed before (II Cor. 5:17).
18. We are free from condemnation (Rom. 8:1).
19. We are free from sin’s penalty and power (Rom. 6:7; 8:13, 26).
20. We are *dead*; our life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).
21. We are complete in Him (Col. 2:10).
22. We are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and will reign with Him upon the earth (Rom. 8:17; Rev. 5:10).
23. All things are ours (I Cor. 3:22-23).
24. We are filled with the Spirit, anointed by God (I Jn. 2:27).
25. We are accepted “in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6).
26. We have the “Mind of Christ” (I Cor. 2:16).
27. We have access to the gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:8-10).
28. God works with us, confirming His Word with signs following (Mk. 16:20).
29. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3).
30. We have authority over all the works of the evil one (Lk. 10:19).

Let us live within the light of these and other benefits and provisions of the gospel to the glory of God. Having been placed upon *the right foundation*, let us continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Power of Positive Prayer

“*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*” (Lk. 18:1).

The importance of the subject of prayer cannot be overestimated in the Christian life. It is our life-line to God. It links us with the infinite powers of the Heavenly Father and makes possible the channeling of His provision to those in need: ourselves and others.

Probably no area of the Christian life is more misunderstood than the prayer-life. Unfortunately, prayer has been described as a chore, a drudgery, a discipline too difficult to understand or enjoy.

The truth is, there is nothing more glorious this side of Heaven than prayer. For prayer is simply the reaching out of our inner man in love and faith to our Heavenly Father. Prayer is really a form of worship. It edifies the spirit, illuminates the mind and heals the body. Through prayer we enter into communion with the Father of spirits and enjoy the blessing of intimate fellowship with the Creator. Prayer is a source of joy, a fountain of blessing and a well of delight. It is not a responsibility so much as an opportunity. It is a privilege rather than a prescription. We want you to understand prayer.

Prayer Promises

God wants us to pray. He has given us every incentive to do so in His Word.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth... for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (Jn. 4:23-24).

Here we see “the seeking Father.” Man was created to have fellowship with God. The Lord’s plan has never changed. Today He is seeking to fellowship with you in prayer. He is waiting to commune with you—spirit to Spirit—in the sweet hour of prayer. Will you join Him?

Even under the Old Covenant God exhorted His people to come to Him in prayer.

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jer. 33:3).

Would you have the mind of Christ in your daily affairs? Do you desire to plumb the depths of Divine mystery hidden from the natural minds of mortal men?

Then begin today to answer the Call of God to come to Him in secret prayer. There He will unfold to you the depths of His Love and the blessings of His redemption (see my book, *At the Master’s Feet*).

In the New Covenant also, our Lord admonished His people to pray.

“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lk. 18:1).

It is God’s plan that you persevere in prayer, laying aside every weight, dropping every burden and casting away every care upon Him, for He cares for you with an everlasting Love.

The Lord Jesus made some staggering promises regarding prayer in the Gospel of John. Beginning in verse 12 of chapter 14, He said:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto my Father. And

whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Jn. 14:12-13).

These words were not spoken in hypocrisy, but were voiced in absolute earnestness from the Heart of the Son of God. The very miracle-working power of God is channeled by means of prayer. This promise is to you.

Our Lord did not specify in this passage that only the apostles, full-time ministers, the Early Church, or any select few or dispensation would qualify for the benefits of this promise. It is offered to:

“He that believeth on Me;” that is, Christians!

If you are a believer, this promise is to *you!*

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you” (Jn. 15:7).

Here is the promise of a spiritual “blank check” payable by the “Bank of Heaven.” Withdrawals are made by prayer.

If we are believers, if we are abiding in our Lord’s words—His commandments of Love—our will becomes His will; our voice becomes His Voice; and all of our petitions are granted!

Here is a Divine-human partnership. This verse depicts the glory at the Christian life: fellowship with God so intimate that we become His agents on earth, acting in His stead, voicing His desires, decreeing His decisions, and altering the course of history.

Such is the beauty of real, Bible prayer!

Are you beginning to catch sight of the infinite possibilities which are ours in Christ?

Has your heart been stirred with the wonder of prayer?

Prayer Power

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

This verse is commonly used as a text for world evangelization, and rightly so. But it need not be limited to that subject. The Holy Spirit is also the Source of power in prayer. It is the Holy Spirit Who makes the promises of our Lord concerning prayer a reality.

“And in that day (the era of the Spirit) ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (Jn. 16:23).

Notice in this verse that our Lord specifically qualified praying “in His Name” with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The disciples had previously voiced commands in His Name (Lk. 10:17), liberating many from the effects of demons. The intimate relationship that Jesus spoke of was to mean more than simply using His Name in service for Him. It was to be descriptive of a oneness with Him in Spirit, mind and will.

“Hitherto (up until now) have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (Jn. 16:24).

After the Day of Pentecost, the disciples would be so filled with the Spirit of Christ, that He would control their prayer lives and literally direct their petitions bringing dynamic results.

But notice the conditions of this marvelous life of intercession and communion. This prayer power is available only to *believers*; and this prayer power is operable only through *obedient* believers who are *filled with the Spirit*. To the Spirit-filled saint who is

walking in Love, the Holy Spirit is the Source of all power in prayer, leading him into a dimension of miracle-activity which brings answers to supplications and glory to God.

God wants *you* to pray. God wants to communicate with *you*. God wants to answer *your* prayers so that *your* joy may be full.

Are you a believer?

Are you filled with the Spirit? Are you walking in the Love of God?

If your answer to these questions is “yes,” then this prayer power is for *you*!

Prayer Procedure

Now that you have discovered the tremendous promises and power connected with a real, Bible prayer life, it is important to study the actual method of communion with God.

The Why

Why do we pray?

Very simply, we pray in order to bring earthly situations into line with Heavenly realities. Prayer is the means by which God’s will is done: on earth as it is in Heaven.

As God’s chosen representatives in the world, we are the instruments in the Hand of the Almighty to effect lasting changes in the temporal scene. In short, prayer originates in the Mind of God.

The When

When do we pray?

There is no hard and fast rule to this factor. It is recorded in the Book of Genesis that the Heavenly Father communed with Adam and Eve “in the cool of the day,” that is, at twilight or sundown.

Isaac “went out to meditate in the field at eventide” (Gen. 24:63).

David, the “man after God’s heart,” apparently made it his habit to commune with God at least three times daily: morning, noon and night (Psa. 55:17).

Daniel, likewise, observed the custom of praying to God thrice daily (Dan. 6:10).

The Lord Jesus rose up “a great while before day” to tarry in the Presence of His Father (Mk. 1:35). It is also recorded that He occasionally spent all night in prayer to God (Lk. 6:12). At every crisis in His earthly ministry, He prayed (see my book, *The Lord Jesus: The Christ*, also part of the *Diploma in Ministry* course). At His baptism in Jordan (Lk. 3:21), before His appointing the 12 apostles (Lk. 6:12ff.), before His sacrifice at Calvary (Lk. 22:44ff.), and even while hanging upon the Cross (Lk. 23:34) our Lord prayed to His Father, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps.

The How

A great change has taken place in the New Testament, however, and great liberties are now ours regarding the *when* of our praying.

Although we find the early Christians seeking God “at the hour of prayer,” there is no longer a set time of intercession required or even suggested by God. Since the Holy Spirit dwells within us continually, since the sin problem has been settled at Calvary, we have access at all times into the Presence of God through the Blood of Jesus.

Perhaps one of our difficulties when approaching the subject of prayer is our apparent inability to voice our petitions in such a manner that we are assured the answer is forthcoming. It is often not enough to realize God wants us to pray. It is not sufficient to understand that as His children through faith in Christ we have a legal right to approach the Throne of Grace. Often it is not even adequate encouragement to grasp the fact that our Lord has bequeathed great and mighty prayer promises to us in His Word. Too frequently—in spite of all that God has said—we are still tongue-tied in the Presence of the Almighty. We may be aware of the potential answers to our prayers; we may even know the needs which face us; we may even comprehend the promises of God which declare the provision for the requests; yet we still need *help*. We are not unlike the disciples of old who approached Jesus with the request, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Lk. 11:1).

The Holy Spirit

In order to pray effectively, we must have the assistance of the Master. During the earthly ministry of our Lord, the disciples depended upon Him consistently, continually and utterly! They brought all their problems to Jesus.

Are we better equipped for a life of prayer than they were?

Should we not, likewise, bring the prayer problem to Jesus?

Did He not promise to send us “another Comforter?”

Certainly, we need to depend as utterly upon this Unseen One Who dwells within, as the early believers did upon the Person of Christ when He dwelt here, physically.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities” (Rom. 8:26).

Thank God, we have *help* from within. We are living in a “better dispensation,” established upon “better promises.” The veil has been rent and now we all have the privilege of entering into the Presence of God. The Holy Spirit within can lead us there!

Divine Help

The word translated “helpeth” in the text just quoted is from a compound Greek verb meaning “to jointly help,” or “to join together with, in the face of.” Here is Divine assistance indeed!

Letting the Pray-er Pray

As I mention in my book, *Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link* (part of *Diploma in the Deaconate*), very often in the New Testament, Paul uses the definite article *the* before the words translated “prayer.” This indicates the apostle had a particular type of prayer in mind which he expected his readers to be familiar with.

“Stop being anxious about anything but in everything by the prayer and the supplication with thanksgivings, be letting the requests be made known unto the (one, true) God” (Phil. 4:6-7, Gk.).

Notice in this literal translation the definite articles before “prayer,” “supplication,” and “requests.” In the original language, the apostle says for us to “be letting the requests—ours—be being made known, by means of the prayer and the supplication.” The command is in the passive voice. it is as if the “prayers” and “supplications” are almost *animate* or living. Paul has reference, of course, to the intercessory ministry of

the Holy Spirit which we have begun discussing. In other words, the Divine Comforter within will all but do our praying for us: if we let Him.

As we “turn every care into prayer,” we can allow the indwelling Holy Spirit to superintend our supplications. We are not limited to our limited, finite, human minds. We can cease from our own works and allow the Spirit of the Lord to bring us into a place of rest (Heb. 4:11). Isaiah prophesied an experience of “rest and refreshing” which would be part and parcel of the experience of God’s People in the day of the Spirit’s outpouring with the accompanying evidence of “speaking in tongues” (Isa. 28:11ff.). Jesus, Himself, in the New Testament makes the winsome invitation, “Come unto Me at once and keep on coming unto Me, all of you, the ones that are laboring and remain heavy laden, and I-I will rest you” (Mt. 11:28, Gk.).

Jeremiah informs us that it is not in man to direct His steps. How much more certain is it that it is not in us to know “what we should be praying for as we ought!” For example, why struggle with the problem, “I don’t know how to pray about this...I don’t know where to get the faith, etc.” Why not pray in the Holy Ghost about not knowing how to pray?!

The possibilities for victory are inexhaustible.

As we sense our inability to *pray aright*, the indwelling Holy Spirit is ready, willing and more than able to “take hold of, together with (us) in the face of our infirmities, weaknesses or shortcomings.”

Do you realize an infirmity is a lack of strength or an inability in any realm, spiritual, mental, emotional or physical? Do you understand that the Christ Who lives within us in the Person of the Holy Spirit has lost none of His Power?

Praise God!

The Prayer Problem

“For we know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom. 8:26).

Here is our problem.

We know to pray; but we don’t know how to pray *as we ought*.

We are aware of the burden, the need, the difficulty. We know of our open invitation to come to the Father’s Throne and make our requests known. We may even be thoroughly convinced of the Bible texts promising the answers. Yet we do not know the *why’s and the wherefore’s* with absolute certainty.

We may be reminded of a similar situation in the natural realm. We may be in a legal difficulty; we may be aware of the rights which are ours in the case; we may even be thoroughly convinced of the certainty of our position in the right; yet the services of a lawyer are invariably required to ensure that we are vindicated, the law upheld and the case won on our behalf.

Praise God for the Holy Spirit!

The Lord Jesus promised us “another Comforter.” One of the meanings of the Greek word rendered “Comforter,” is “a counsel for the defense.” We have a Divine Lawyer Who is an Expert in the Laws of God: His Holy Word! It is the Holy Spirit—our Comforter—Who can successfully present our case in Heaven in such a way that all of the redemptive benefits in our “will” (the New Testament) which cover our situation become ours! And so the Bible says:

“But the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:26).

The indwelling Holy Spirit prays in us, for us and through us! The very word “intercession” means to represent someone: especially in the legal sense. HalleluYah!

But how does this ministry come to pass in our individual prayer lives?

“With groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

The word translated “groanings” means “sighings or whispers.” This Greek word was used in classical Greek literature of “love secrets.” I Cor. 14:2 says:

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth (heareth, Gk.) him; howbeit in the Spirit he speaketh mysteries.”

Rotherham’s rendering is, “Although in spirit he is speaking sacred secrets.”

All of this is accomplished by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. These “mysteries” bring God’s answers!

Unutterable Groanings

The last phrase, “which cannot be uttered,” is a bit misleading at first glance. It appears to say that this is something silent which the Holy Spirit does apart from us. However, we have seen that the Holy Spirit “jointly helps” us in the face of our infirmities. Again, we have noted the word (groanings) was used of “love secrets,” which are obviously *spoken*, although perhaps quietly. Moreover, this phrase reads, literally, “groanings unutterable.”

In what way are these groanings unutterable?

They are unutterable in our own language, because *we do not know what to pray for as we ought*: the Spirit must *help* us by making intercession for us.

Paul speaks of the Spirit “groaning” inwardly (Rom. 8:23) and we—having the firstfruits of the Spirit—“groaning” outwardly (Rom. 8:26). This is another way of describing Acts 2:4:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

Paul continues to describe the end product of this *prayer-partnership* with our Lawyer within:

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:27).

Paul tells the Hebrews that the Living Word (the Lord Jesus) is constantly discerning the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb. 4:12-13), being aware of the meaning of the “sacred secrets” which we utter in prayer when inspired by the Holy Spirit. The One Who is constantly searching our hearts is aware of the intent of the Comforter for He is inwardly making intercession for us *according to the will of God*.

Divine Solution

This is the solution to the prayer problem.

The will of God is the all-important condition of answered prayer.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (I Jn. 5:14-15).

Praying “in other tongues,” “as the Spirit gives the utterance,” tunes out interference

and brings our desires into line with the will of God. As we pray in the will of God, the assurance is dropped into our spirits—we know that He hears us—and we can then rest in the answer by faith.

A Family Relationship

Here is an area in which many believers struggle constantly. They know the will of God in a general way. They know *what is theirs in Christ* by virtue of the plain declarations of scripture. However, the redemptive facts must never be viewed apart from the fact of our relationship with our Heavenly Father, the Source of these blessings.

For example, my son's toys are *really his*—they belong to him—but that does not mean he may *have them* whenever he demands!

Similarly, in the scriptures, we truly are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ” (Eph. 1:3)—they *belong* to us—however, *claiming* (affirming) them, even repeatedly in parrot-like fashion, will not necessarily *give* them to us when we *demand them*.

Certainly, the blessing of salvation *belongs* to everyone (to be received by faith), yet how true it is that no one can come to Christ except His Heavenly Father *draw* them (by His Holy Spirit, Jn. 6:44). Ponder carefully these facts.

Can you see now what we have been missing? Who wouldn't want to pray when such a wonderful arrangement is offered to us? To be a believer and to possess the Holy Spirit, is to possess the *Pray-er!*

Someone has written, “you can pray 10 minutes without the Anointing and it will seem like an hour; you can pray an hour with the Anointing, and it will seem like 10 minutes!”

Resolve to discover the truth of that statement for yourself!

The Who

The Bible gives us several guidelines concerning subjects of prayer.

Jesus said:

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Mt. 9:38).

We see here the need for us to intercede in order that God might stir up Spirit-filled representatives of the Kingdom of Heaven to go out and declare the Gospel in the Power of God.

Paul said:

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (I Tim. 2:1-2).

Here is the admonition for the whole Church—corporately—to *stand in the gap* and *make up the hedge* for the unconverted persons within our circle of influence: government leaders and *all men*.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:18-20).

The apostle exhorts us in this text to pray “for all saints” and for the *full time* Gospel

worker who is on the field preaching the Word of God.

The world, the Church and the ministry are the chief subjects of prayer enjoined upon us.

James said:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (Ja. 5:16).

It is our privilege to intercede for each other, as members of the Body of Christ, especially within the same local fellowship.

Our prayer-lives can begin at home, touch our local congregation, the ministers of the Gospel in our area as well as around the world, the unsaved in our community, and even the political leaders of nations. Praise God for the opportunity that is ours as Spirit-filled Christians with the promises and Power of God on our behalf!

The How... continued

We have already discovered that true prayer should be done in the will of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Certainly, our prayers should find their basis in the revealed will of God given to us in the Bible. It is in God’s Word that we discover what we may expect of our Heavenly Father in prayer. Our approach to God should be one of faith, from a heart full of love and a life lived in full fellowship with Him. Our prayers should also be full of *importunity*. Jesus commended the “stick-to-it-iveness” of the friend in His parable of the “midnight guest” in Luke, chapter II. We must develop the habit of seeking until the desired result is ours.

Closely connected to this quality is that of perseverance. Paul writes:

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance” (Eph. 6:18).

Editor’s note (J. Solomon Kostelnik): “thereunto” in Greek grammatically agrees with “Spirit,” showing that as we pray with all prayer and supplication *in the Spirit*, that we at the same time *watch or look unto the Spirit Himself* (i.e., “watching unto the Spirit”)! He both inspires *and* directs our prayers which we offer with His help (Rom. 8:26), as we look unto Him while praying!

Again, our communications should be seasoned with gratitude and praise to Him, both for the privilege of prayer, and for the certainty of His answers and provision on our behalf.

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2).

We watch with an “attitude of gratitude,” because we know Whom we have believed and are persuaded that He is able to do for us exceeding, abundantly above all that we can ask or think. It is as we praise and worship our Heavenly Father that we become intensely aware of just how loving and powerful He is. This awareness brings forth faith in our hearts; and faith receives the supply to the need.

How can we not praise Him in prayer when He has told us that our Heavenly Father knows what we need before we even ask!

We cannot overestimate the importance of these spiritual qualities when we begin to enter into a life of prayer. Just as in the natural realm, static on a telephone line may make it difficult or even impossible to communicate, so the absence of these characteristics, or the admixture of spiritually “foreign matter,” such as unforgiveness, wrath, strife, jealousy or unbelief, will short-circuit our communications with God.

The Which

Which types of prayers are available to us?

The Bible discloses a number of different types of approach to God. All of them are dependent upon the *pray-er* being in a covenant relationship to God, the requests being based upon the promises of God clearly outlined in the Bible, the petitions being voiced in earnestness and faith, the will of God being the chief end desired, and the greater glory of God and the good of mankind the goal.

As we enter the life of communion with God we will discover that very often these different kinds of prayer will overlap. It is not so important that we thoroughly understand how to label the various types of prayer, but that we use them!

1. **Prayer.** The word usually rendered, “prayer,” in the Bible simply means a communicating with God, an approach to the Deity.
2. **Supplication.** This word is a stronger term meaning to beseech, entreat or earnestly desire or pray until the request is granted (i.e., Eph. 6:18).
3. **Thanksgiving.** This word refers to blessing or giving thanks unto God, “eulogizing,” or rehearsing in communion with Him His wonderful attributes and character.
4. **Intercession.** This wonderful word comes from a Greek noun meaning to “plead the cause of another;” to represent another in prayer.

Kinds of Prayer

In closing our study, we will point out some of the basic kinds of prayer-forms given to us in the Bible.

A. The Prayer of Worship.

This prayer is very basically the vocal adoration of the Heavenly Father by believers, either corporately or individually. The Psalms are replete with examples of this. In the New Testament we have the added privilege of Spirit-led praise (I Cor. 14:15-17; Eph. 5:15-19; Col. 3:16).

B. The Prayer of Consecration.

This is a prayer of heart-felt committal and dedication to the will of God for one’s life. It is extremely pleasing to God (Lk. 22:42; Ja. 4:15; Rom. 12:1-2).

C. The Prayer of Agreement.

Closely allied with the prayer of intercession, this prayer involves two or more believers *agreeing* or “symphonizing” (Gk.) on behalf of someone else in need (Mt. 18:18-19). It is the prayer of *binding and loosing*. That is, it permits that which God permits, and forbids that which God forbids. It is not that *we move Heaven*, but, rather, that through it, *Heaven moves earth*.

Mt. 18:18 reads, literally:

“Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

This is the Church *decreeing* what God has already permitted or forbade in Heaven. It is really a mighty means of causing His will to be done on earth as it is already done in

Heaven. Whence the source of such power in prayer?

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20).

It is the Presence of the Glorified Christ in the Person of the Holy Spirit (i.e., “in My Name”) which makes this possible.

D. The Prayer of Confession.

This prayer is one of repentance by a believer who has broken his fellowship (not relationship) with God (Psa. 51; I Jn. 1:9).

E. The Prayer of Intercession.

This is the prayer of love and faith on the behalf of someone else. It is the believer pleading the case of someone else before the Throne of Grace (I Tim. 2:1ff.).

The Spirit’s Help

We have noted throughout this study the importance of the Holy Spirit in our prayers and supplications. Paul makes an interesting statement in this regard in his first letter to Timothy. After denouncing those who forbid to marry and command that believers abstain from certain foods, he writes:

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and intercession” (I Tim. 4:4-5, Gk.).

The word rendered in the KJV as “prayer” is actually “intercession” in the Greek, as in my literal translation above.

What on earth is the apostle referring to?

We know that the Holy Spirit is the great Intercessor (Isa. 59:16ff.; Rom. 8:26). Paul is simply reminding us that as we bless our food “in the Spirit,” (I Cor. 14:16) we are allowing the Holy Spirit to purify our food! HalleluYah, what a Savior!

The Prayer of Faith

The prayer of faith is intimately involved in many forms of prayer. Because of its importance, we are devoting this entire section to it.

The Lord Jesus gave us the key to this prayer in Mark, chapter 11. Parallel accounts appear in Mt. 17:20; 21:21-22; Mk. 9:29; Lk. 17:6.

The prayer of faith is much misunderstood. A Bible understanding of it will pave the way for much fruit in the realm of answered prayer.

“And Jesus answering saith unto them, have faith in God” (Mk. 11:22).

This statement from Christ came in response to the question of Peter’s heart when he noticed the fig tree withered which Jesus had cursed.

The statement literally reads, “Be having the faith of God.” But just here, many make a mistake. At first glance, this appears to be a command. *It is not!* In the Greek text, this phrase is not in the imperative (command) mood, but in the indicative (statement) mood. In other words, Jesus is here admonishing the Church to be receiving God’s faith when it is offered to us in prayer.

Another point we might make clear is that Jesus is not here describing something

given to us as a permanent possession, which we are to then use at will, according to God's promises. The verb tense is simple present, not aorist or perfect which it would be if the Master meant to imply that all believers are given (permanently) "the faith of God" at the New Birth. We do not *own* the faith of God; we cannot *work up* the prayer of faith, because it *originates in God!*

Any honest person with access to the Greek text will have to admit this fact.

"For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mk. 11:23).

Here we see the absolute certainty of answered prayer when it is prayed with God's faith. But remember, the *shall believe* is actually a response to God's faith being offered and received in prayer. It is a *belief* with no doubt in the heart.

How is such possible?

It is a manifestation of *the faith of God*.

"Believing" is a verb, an act of the will.

"Faith" is a noun, a spiritual assurance in the heart (see my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry*, in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mk. 11:24).

Our part is to desire *things*. God's part is to offer His faith—when the conditions are met—and then we *believe* or agree with our will to that which God says to us.

Jesus gave one of the conditions to such an experience in Mk. 11:25:

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any."

The prayer of faith *works by love*. It is God's faith and "God is Love" (I Jn. 4:8).

Another condition is the will of God. The apostle John reminds us that, "if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (I Jn. 5:15).

Notice the similarity to the words of Jesus. We *desire* and make petitions; but it is when we pray according to His will, that we know that He hears us. When we know that He hears us, we have the answer. This *knowing* is the substance of the prayer of faith. It is the possession of God's faith imparted to us *while we pray*. When God sees the *connections* are clear, the faith is imparted and we have the assurance.

This truth is brought out in other scriptures.

What is faith?

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

The word rendered "substance" means a "ground of assurance;" it is something we can "walk out on." The word translated "evidence" means a title-deed. It is an absolute conviction of the heart.

How does faith come?

"So then the faith by hearing, and the hearing by a spoken word from God" (Rom. 10:17, Gk.).

This verse tells us that God's faith—whether for salvation or any other desired blessing—comes by spiritual hearing, and that spiritual hearing by a "spoken word from

God.”

Study carefully the story of Elijah (Ja. 5; I Ki. 17, 18) to see how the “prayer of faith” for the return of rain after a draught began with an assurance granted to the prophet by God *before he prayed!*

As we bring our desires—those things we hope for—to God in prayer, as we voice them in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20), our petitions are brought into line with God’s will. Did not our Lord Jesus tell us that the Holy Spirit would lead us into “all Truth?” Certainly, this includes the “how to’s” of effective prayer. As we commune with God, He can give us: prophecies, words of knowledge, revelations or teachings to help us in prayer (I Cor. 14:6, 18; see my book, *Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link*, also in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

There comes a time, then, when His faith or the *assurance* is dropped into our spirits and it is then up to us to believe or agree with God and speak or act accordingly that His faith might be released and manifested.

The gift of faith imparted in prayer makes possible the impossible (Mt. 17:21). A “mustard seed” of God’s faith will accomplish far more than a bushel full of our own!

Sometimes the prayer of faith becomes ours quite quickly and easily, “Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear” (Isa. 65:24). Other times may require repeated coming to God (II Cor. 12:8) before the answer comes or we are given additional needed insight about our situation or request. This is particularly true in the area of intercession and spiritual warfare.

But let us never be discouraged. Let us always pray until we enter into the peace of God (Phil. 4:6-7), and one day that peace about the situation will issue in *assurance* about it as the faith of God is given to us.

Let us pray:

**Privately and publicly, silently and audibly;
Individually and corporately, perseveringly and faithfully...**

But let us PRAY!

The Wonderful Word

“*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*” (I Pet. 2:2).

The importance of the Bible in the Christian life cannot be overemphasized. It is the Word of God which builds us up and gives us the inheritance among all those who are sanctified by faith which is in Jesus. If we are to be true disciples of the Lord Jesus, we must seek to understand and obey His Word.

Reading

The first step in benefiting from exposure to the Bible is reading it. It is profitable to read the Bible every day. However, we have found that most believers pursue a “hit or miss” course in Bible reading. Admittedly, one can derive benefit from any type of perusing of the Word; but to really receive nutritionally balanced spiritual nourishment from it, a more systematic approach must be adopted.

The writer has experimented with a number of different systems over the years and would recommend the following method. It has been invaluable during the past 16 years (as of this writing) in ministering the whole counsel of God to him.

I propose that we read one chapter from each of the following lists of Bible books, daily: 11 chapters in all.

This may seem to be an heroic assignment; in actual fact it will take only about 30 minutes per day.

- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts
- Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
- Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles
- Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews
- I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, Jude, Revelation

Putting It Into Practice

This Bible reading plan will do more for you than simply enabling you to read through the Bible in a year. Indeed, you will read it through many more times per year by doing it (i.e., Proverbs monthly, Psalms every five months, etc.). The beauty of this plan is that it exposes us to the *whole Word of God*, not just a favorite portion. It gives us access to the Divine storehouse of wisdom on a daily basis.

Simply begin by reading the first chapter of the first book on each list. Each day, read

the next chapter. When a book on a particular list is finished, go on to the next one on the list. When you have read through all the books on a list, begin again from the top.

Do not misunderstand! This reading plan by no means rules out your reading or studying in another area of the Word which speaks to your specific, daily need. Rather, this plan should be considered your staple diet, with additional reading as a supplement. Only in this way can the entire Truth of God's Word be fed into your spirit so as to build a strong and vigorous Christian life. You will be amazed at the difference in your life in just a few months of practicing this program.

Studying

A second discipline involving the Word of God which we, as Spirit-filled believers need to practice, is studying.

Much failure in the Christian life can be traced to a simple lack of knowledge of the Truth of God's Word.

In turn, this lack of knowledge is due to a lack of reading and a lack of studying the Word of God. In addition to reading the Word of God on a daily basis in our private devotions for our own edification, we need to begin the habit of studying the whole Truth of the Bible.

Tools

There are a number of tools for Bible study which we will find helpful. Following is a list of volumes which will make possible a rich and adequate study life.

- Holy Bible (Authorized, King James Version, World English Bible).
- Complete concordance (Young's, Strong's, etc.).
- Bible dictionary (Smith's, etc.).
- Bible Atlas (Baker's, etc.).
- Vine's New Testament Words.
- Wilson's Old Testament Words.
- Reference Bibles (i.e., Scofield, Thompson Chain, Dake).
- Online/computer tools (The SWORD Project: www.crosswire.org/sword/, www.biblehub.com)
- Mobile Android/iOS apps (Bible app from YouVersion, etc.)

This library, while far from complete, will go a long way towards providing a basis for the study of God's Word. While we recommend a version of the KJV (due to the superiority of the texts from which it was translated, a study of which is beyond the scope of this lesson), an excellent study aid is The Bible From 26 Translations. Indeed, often the various "one-man" translations, while not recommended for exclusive study purposes, often serve to make clear the meaning of the original texts. Likewise, the various reference Bibles, while they should never take the place of our own independent study, often help to steer us in the right direction in arriving at scriptural Truth.

Method

One method of good Bible study is simply the effort of the student to adequately ask and answer questions about the text. These questions are based upon the type of Bible study in which one is engaged.

For example, there is book study. In this situation, one chooses a particular Bible book and then attempts to understand and master its contents and teachings by studying it for about 30 minutes per day. The questions posed are then asked of the chapters, etc. For example, the study of the Book of Romans begins:

Who wrote it? When did he write it? From where did he write it? To whom did he write? Why did he write? How does it relate to us today?

What did he write, leads into the study of the book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse.

Through the use of our study tools, we will seek to answer the questions, who, what, why, when, where, how, etc., of the chapters and verses. In this manner we are enabled to master the meaning and content of the particular book being studied.

Another method of Bible study is people study. Here we seek to discover all we can about a Bible character from the various references to him in the Word of God, asking and answering questions about him, i.e.: Where did he live? When did he live? What did he do?, etc. In this way, Bible characters will *come alive* and provide valuable lessons for us today.

There are several other methods of Bible study including: topical (study of a Bible theme, tracing it throughout the entire Word of God; “justification,” etc.); chapter (analyzing a single chapter of a Bible book); geographical (studying all the references to a particular Bible place); chronological (the study of the *times* of a biblical event), etc.

Our Bible study can follow the reading of the Word daily. Indeed, it may be given impetus by a revelation received during our devotions.

Meditating

Another method of receiving grace from God’s Word involves meditating in the Bible.

The practice of meditation is thousands of years old and was utilized by such biblical characters as Isaac, the miracle-child of his parents, Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 24:63).

This spiritual discipline is enjoined upon the People of God in both the Old and New Testaments. If we desire to be true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, too, must avail ourselves of one of the most neglected and misunderstood means of grace: meditation.

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Jos. 1:8).

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

There is yet another aspect to receiving the Word of God beyond reading and studying. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we must attempt to let the Word of Christ “dwell” in us (Col. 3:16). This we can do by meditating.

The texts just quoted furnish the Old and New Testament admonitions to us to discipline our thought lives. It is unfortunate that the very word, “meditation,” carries such negative connotations in today’s world. I say unfortunate because meditation—the Bible way—is an effective means of grace for the Spirit-filled believer which cannot be duplicated by the implementation of anything else.

To meditate is to ponder, reflect upon, or concentrate one's thinking upon a particular subject. In oriental meditation, the subject is often a sound, one's breathing, etc. According to our verse from the Book of Joshua, the Word of God is the subject of the believer's meditation. We must strive to ponder, reflect upon and concentrate our entire conscious attention upon the written Word of God. Notice that Joshua says this Book of the Law was not to depart out of our mouths. That is, the Old Testament believers were to constantly *say the word*. A decided change can be observed in the New Testament, however. Now, we are simply urged to let the Word "dwell" in our hearts (Col. 3:16). Paul, in the New Testament text, says to "think" (meditate) on these things. He told the Hebrew believers that in this Age of Grace, the Law of God is *already in our hearts and minds* (Heb. 8:10).

How sad that today, even many Spirit-filled believers, are living under the Old Testament by nervously repeating—parrot-like—the written Word, as if it were their sole contact with the Heavenly Father. In this dispensation, the Living Word dwells within us!

Our written Word of God—the Holy Bible—is our resource for meditation.

The reason for meditation is, "that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." That is, we meditate in order to better obey the Word of the Lord.

The result of our meditation is, "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Real Bible meditation will result in prosperity in all the will of God.

We have given the correct procedure for Bible-based meditation in a chapter in my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry*, in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*, but we will repeat it briefly here.

Four Steps

There are, basically, four important steps to enjoying biblical meditation. They were revealed to the author quite by accident over 15 years ago (at this writing). At that time, the writer was undergoing severe attack by the enemy in the areas of fear and mental disquietude. One evening, due to a Divine Coincidence, he observed that great relief came as a result of pondering—word by word—scripture references which spoke to his situation, much more than just reading longer portions of the Word. This experience led to a thorough study of the subject of meditation, the results of which are contained in this lesson.

Rest

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psa. 46:10).

The first step to correct meditation is physical stillness.

As the Psalmist discovered, we must first be *still*—physically—before we can *know*.

Find a comfortable chair, or, better yet, a couch or bed (assuming you have gotten enough sleep the previous night) and physically relax your body. Consciously *let go* of any and all tension in your physical being, paying special attention to the muscles of the jaw, hands and stomach. This practice of conscious relaxation of the body will go a long way in paving the way for the spirit to have the preeminence in the actual meditation time to follow.

Prayer

The second step is that of prayer. Once the body is quiet and relaxed, the mind must, likewise, be stilled in the Presence of God.

“Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child” (Psa. 131:2).

Just as David of old, the Apostle, Paul, gave teaching in this regard directly before his admonition for us to meditate in his letter to the Philippians.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

It is no accident that these verses precede the apostle’s advice *to think on these things*. It is impossible to meditate (ponder, reflect upon, concentrate on) on a portion of the Word of God if a thousand and one cares and worries have our attention divided to distraction. A relaxed body must be followed by a relaxed mind. This is only possible through prayer in the Holy Spirit. Isaiah prophesied of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and praying *in other tongues*: “This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing” (Isa. 28:11-12).

We must gather up all of the trials, tests, confusion, temptations and distractions of the day and—through Holy Ghost prayer—“cast all of our care upon Him, for He cares for us.”

After a time of spiritual communion with the Heavenly Father, we will mentally, *shift gears*; that is, we will *pray through*, and the Peace of God will steal over our souls (minds).

Meditation

The third step in the process is the actual experience of meditation. With body and mind experiencing a great calm, our spirit is ready to perceive the great realities contained in the written Word of God.

How do we meditate?

Having chosen a particular portion of the Word (one or two verses is sufficient) which deals with a need in our lives, we recite the verse to ourselves inwardly and then slowly repeat it: word by word.

Meditation enables us to *“live by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God”* (Mt. 4:4).

If we are in need of healing, we might meditate on I Pet. 2:24. It is meditation that enables the Truth of the Word to burst upon our consciences, giving us the *“I see it”!* experience. This, of course, brings faith (Rom. 10:17, Gk.), which brings the supply to the need. You will be astounded to discover many portions of the Word which you have known, but have never *known*. Words are inadequate to describe the spiritual exhilaration of this experience; it must be experienced.

Action

The final process in Bible-based meditation is action. We meditate in order to better

obey the Word of God which is the subject of our reflection. It is when we act on the Word in the daily issues of life that meditation has achieved its purpose. It must never become a spiritual exercise completely divorced from the realities of everyday life. Certainly, it must never be used to give us a “pharisaical” spirit in which we meditate only to prove to others how much more spiritual we are than our peers. The real purpose of meditation is to receive revelation from the Bible which we can act upon in our own lives and share with others, so that all might live to the glory of God.

Sharing

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb. 5:12).

Here is the fourth area of discipleship concerning the Word of God. We must read, study and meditate, to be sure. But we must go on from these practices to sharing the Truth of the Word of God which we have assimilated with others. As we have mentioned in another lesson, not every believer will be gifted *to teach* the Word in a *formal* setting. But we may all *share* the Word, informally. Numerous scriptures affirm the Bible doctrine of believers *sharing* the Word with others: one on one. This, every Christian can and should do.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another” (Col. 3:16).

“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14).

Paul instructed the older women *to teach* the younger ones regarding the care of the home (Ti. 2:3-4).

It should be evident that our Heavenly Father does not minister the Word of God to us through our reading, studying and meditating solely for the purpose of instructing ourselves. Rather, we are to seek—by the Power of the Holy Ghost—to transmit the Word we have learned to others. Thus, by “speaking the Truth in love,” we can become channels of blessing to the entire Body of Christ and the world.

As we have said, our *teaching* of others need not be in the form of a solemn and formal discourse, as is the preaching and teaching of the Word by one gifted to minister as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher. Rather, it can simply be the informal sharing of the wisdom and knowledge the Holy Spirit has revealed to us with our brothers and sisters in small groups, prayer fellowships, Bible classes or at times of recreation, over the telephone, etc. We may not all be called to preach, but we can all strive to be possessed of the ability to “speak a word in season” to those around us in need of comfort, direction and edification.

The Bible is one Book composed of 66 books, inspired of God. Its Truth is forever settled in Heaven. It is our sole rule of faith and practice and should be read, studied, meditated upon, practiced and shared with others. It is our Rock, Lamp, Light, Bread, Water and Guide during our earthly pilgrimages.

Let us choose to live within its boundaries and blessings.

Home, Sweet Home

“*So the [triune] God created the man in his image, in the image of the [triune] God created he him-him; male and female created he them-them*” (Gen. 1:27, Heb.).

If we are guided by the biblical account of the origin of all things, it is clear that the family has been in the Mind of God from the very beginning. Man, the very apex of God’s creation, was no sooner placed upon the earth, than our Lord decided he was incomplete without one of his own kind as a companion.

“And Yahweh Elohim said, ‘it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet (as before) for him’” (Gen. 2:18, Heb.).

Certainly, not only did God desire that man should have a life-partner, but that children should be born to that union.

“And the [triune] God blessed them-them, and the [triune] God said unto them, ‘be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it’” (Gen. 1:28, Heb.).

Thus, we see the family depicted for us in the first chapters of the first book of the Bible. Clearly, God ordained the family as the foremost unit of society. Before there appeared nations, governments and political systems, before the development of clans, tribes and peoples, there was the family.

Since the family is God’s invention we must look into His Word for the principles that govern it in order that we might more fully glorify Him in this most basic of His designs for us.

Man Alone

Notice, first of all, that it is not God’s plan for man to be alone. In the Book of Beginnings, our Lord declared the incompleteness of the male without the female (Gen. 2:18). There is only one exception to this Divine directive given to us in the Bible. The apostle Paul gives us this information in his letter to the Corinthians.

“For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that” (I Cor. 7:7).

Here we see that in the Church there is a gift of celibacy. That is, there are certain members of the Body of Christ who are graced—supernaturally—with the ability to remain single in the service of the Lord. Indeed, their ministry is made more effective by the single life style. However, this is not the original plan of God, but, rather, an additional development of His dealings with us in the New Testament.

The Lord Jesus spoke of this same situation in Matthew’s gospel:

“And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (Mt. 19:12).

Notice how the words of Paul and the Lord Jesus agree on this subject. Paul refers to celibacy as a *gift* and the Lord says *only some are able* to receive it. The permanently single life style is a distinct gift of the grace of God for a specific purpose in an individual’s life. It is to be entirely voluntary on the believer’s part; indeed, to command it of the saints is forbidden by the Lord and one mark of false teachers (I Tim. 4:1-5).

Man and Wife

It is the plan of God that husband and wife live in a perfect union of spirit, soul and body. In the beginning, God created man to rule and subdue the earth. Yet, we see that the Lord God recognized the need for man to have one “like unto him.” That is, woman was created to compliment man in order that they both could fulfill God’s intention. While man was the direct creation of God (Gen. 2:7), woman was made by God, from man (for a fuller discussion of woman’s place, see my wife’s course, *Feminine and Free*).

Notice the intimate nature of the union from its very inception:

“And Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which Yahweh God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen. 2:21-22).

Someone has said:

“Woman is said not to have been taken out of man’s head to be lorded over by him, nor from his feet to be trampled on by him, but from his side to be equal with him, from under his arm to be protected by him, and from his heart to be loved by him.”

This gets to the heart of the issue. It is God’s desire that there be a perfect companionship and unity between husband and wife.

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

This *cleaving* illustrates the tender nature of the partnership which God enjoins upon all those who would become “one flesh” in His sight. There is to be a union on all three levels of existence between the man and the woman. Spiritually, they must be one in Christ and in the Spirit. Their souls, likewise, should blend in an harmonious sharing of intellect, emotion and will. And their physical oneness must be an expression of the love and commitment they hold toward each other, kept forever free from the taint of immorality.

Where this Divine ideal is understood and observed true marital bliss is experienced. Should the sharing or cleaving remain undeveloped or unexpressed in any of these areas, the joy God intends for marriage will, likewise, be diminished. It remains for us to strive for that perfect unity and companionship that God ordains for us in marriage in order that we might truly be “one flesh.”

Although man and woman are equal as regards their sharing of the common human nature, they are not the same as regards their roles in the marriage and family relationship. There is a Divine “chain of command” and a real *Divine order* within the family unit. A misunderstanding of this fact is the cause of no small amount of marital and familial unrest and disquietude.

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (I Cor. 11:3).

Here we see the scriptural line of authority set forth. Just as the Lord Jesus and the Heavenly Father are *equal* as regards their sharing of the Divine nature of the Godhead, and, yet, are *different* as regards their place in the plan of redemption, so the man and the woman have different functions in the family unit though they are *equal* in terms of their sharing of the one human nature.

“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and

glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (I Cor. 11:7-9).

When God speaks of the man being *the head* of the woman, He is simply saying that in the home—in the domestic sense—the husband is the authority figure of the family. Spiritually speaking, the Lord Jesus is the Head of both the man and the woman; but in the natural realm, the husband is the head of the house.

Husbands’ Duties

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

“So ought men to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Eph. 5:28-29).

These verses are most helpful in determining the man’s conduct towards the woman in the home. The verbs are in the present, imperative (command) tense and mood. That is, Paul is telling us to begin at once, and keep on practicing the Spirit’s commandment of Divine Love towards our wives.

The words “nourisheth” and “cherisheth” are interesting. The first refers to the tender care of one’s own body. How tragic that some husbands will fuss, fume and fret over the slightest hangnail or shaving nick, and yet remain almost oblivious to the needs of their own wives!

Once, as I was dressing, preparing for a speaking engagement, the Lord spoke to my heart:

“You will never be any happier than you help your wife to be. You are one.”

How enlightening!

The second verb, according to Vine, means:

“To heat, to soften by heat; then to keep warm, as of birds covering their young with their feathers, metaphorically, to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care.”

You say, “my wife is cold as a snowball from Antarctica.”

Have you tried *cherishing* (warming) her?

These verses show us that the husband must begin at once a life style (continual habit) of loving his wife even as our Lord loves the Church: unconditionally, sacrificially and eternally.

That is, they are to care for and cherish their wives regardless of the response of their spouses. Real love—God’s Love—gives and cares without regard for what is done in return. It is not natural; it is supernatural, given and maintained by the Holy Spirit with the consent and cooperation of our wills (Rom. 5:5; Jude 20-21).

Secondly, husbands are to love their mates *sacrificially*. That is, there will be a daily *dying to the flesh* or a sacrificing of many selfish desires in order to better provide for one’s wife and family. Christ puts our interests first; husbands must be prepared to do likewise many times.

And, finally, men must love their women *eternally*. That is, the marriage relationship must never be soiled by infidelity. It must remain “one flesh” in a mutual sharing in all

three dimensions: spirit, soul and body.

Wives' Duties

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:22-23).

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Col. 3:18).

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their own husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Ti. 2:4-5).

Here, the Word of God describes the responsibilities of the wives. They are to love, obey and submit to their own husbands. Again, the Greek verbs are in the present tense and the imperative (command) mood. Wives are to adopt and continue a life style of these responses to the leadership of their husbands.

Notice these verses declare that a wife is to submit to and obey her own husband. This text does *not* teach that *men* are to rule over *women*, but, rather, that in the family unit, the husband is the *head* of his wife, *not* women *in general*. Likewise, the wife is not to submit to men, *in general*, but to *her own husband*. Once again, we see that the subject of *headship* and *submission* is in the area of the natural or domestic situation in marriage, not ministry in the Church.

Certainly, there will be a sharing of ideas and concerns in the various decisions confronting a husband and wife. However, the Word of God makes it clear that the final decision in these matters rests with the man. Assuming such decisions do not contradict the teachings of scripture, the wife cannot fulfill God's plan for her life in marriage without such submission. To act otherwise is to upset the Divine order and foster anarchy and rebellion, leading to the Word of God being blasphemed (Ti. 2:4-5).

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (I Tim. 2:11-14).

Here is an illuminating portion of scripture which illustrates again the wife's part in fulfilling God's plan for the family. Again, the context of these verses is not the Church, but the family. Notice Paul's allusion to Adam and Eve, the first husband and wife. The wife is not *to teach* (instruct, dictate to, rule over) the man. She is not to usurp (take by force) what is inherently her husband's (authority in the home) by so doing, but rather, to submit (for her own good) to his *teaching* or leadership in the home. Notice, please, Paul speaks in the singular, i.e., *the woman, the man*, referring to the family relationship and not to Church order or ministry (see my book, *Why Not Women?*).

In this connection, Paul cites the mistake Eve made by not consulting with Adam when faced with the serpent's temptation, instead, facing it *on her own* and sinning by that action. A wife's decision to obey the Word of God in this area is *not giving up her identity*, but, rather, gaining it in God's good provision. By so doing, she frees herself from satanic deception, aligns herself with the Word of God and the Divine order, and provides herself with a safe, spiritual environment wherein she can blossom into her full potential in God as woman, wife and mother.

Cleaving: Spiritual

We have noted that it is God's intention to husband and wife to be united in their entire beings: spirit, soul and body. According to the scriptures, man is *to cleave* to the woman, and the two of them are to become *one flesh*. This term certainly cannot be limited to the physical plane alone. It refers to a bond of their common human nature. The word "flesh" has several meanings in the Bible. Here, it refers to man who is natural as opposed to God Who is spiritual.

Can husband and wife truly be one "in spirit?"

Decidedly, *yes!*

It is important that each partner be a born again, Spirit-filled Christian in order to foster a spiritual oneness. This is why the Bible admonishes us to wed believers. There can be no real fellowship—especially in as intimate a relationship as marriage—between sin and righteousness, light and darkness, Christ and Satan (II Cor. 6:14-15).

"The wife is bound by law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39).

A Christian husband and wife will naturally meet together for times of prayer and Bible study. This is the beginning of all true spiritual unity. Even their physical relationship can sometimes be interrupted in the light of spiritual ministry.

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (I Cor. 7:5).

This is by no means meant to demean the physical dimension in marriage. It does point out, however, the goal of God for the Christian husband and wife: two believers totally "in tune" with each other and the Lord on the spiritual plane.

Depending upon their ministry gifts, a married couple may even minister together. Aquila and Priscilla are New Testament examples of this (Acts 18:26).

The importance of the spiritual dimension of marriage cannot be overestimated. At times of stress or joy the believing partners can call upon God together in prayer and praise. In addition, they can minister to one another their several spiritual gifts. With God at the center, they can truly be one (Ecc. 4:12).

Cleaving: Soulical

The second aspect of marriage which must be addressed is that of the union of two souls. That is, the husband and wife must strive to become *one* in their intellect, emotion and will. This will require communication. What blessed healing, renewal and restoration can be experienced in a union of two souls *under God*. Marriage is the vehicle—or at least can be—of the most intimate and sensitive sharing of the heart of two human beings this side of Heaven. How sad that so many Christian couples neglect or ignore this most precious possibility by keeping things to themselves day in and day out. How the heart of God yearns for us to at least begin to approximate the fellowship of the Members of the Trinity in a small way in marriage. Love is the key.

"Husbands, be loving your wives with a divine love which impels you to deny yourselves for their benefit, and stop being bitter and harsh to them" (Col. 3:19, Wuest).

"That they teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands" (Ti. 2:4).

As in every relationship in life, the Love of God is to be the Guiding Light in

marriage. Our words, our advice, our consolation to our mate must be saturated in the Love of God, our desire being to minister healing and help and not criticism and condemnation. How exciting to conceive of marriage as a means of soul-healing instead of personality destruction as it so often is. Husband and wife can be counselors to each other—through word and deed—each bringing the other closer to the Divine ideal. One need not carry unfulfilled emotional or psychological (soulical) needs to the grave. There can be sharing, caring and healing: *in marriage!*

Let the Christian couple desiring God's best in marriage be open—totally—regarding their deepest and most intimate needs and desires. Let there be a real sharing of the soul, one with the other. There, in the presence of accepting Love, old wounds can be healed, present problems solved and future goals conceived: *together*, to the glory of God. Certainly, such a profound blending of souls cannot be experienced overnight. But we can begin today and continue on throughout the voyage through time which God has allowed us together, assisting each other to become all our Lord created us to be.

Key to Communication

We have mentioned the importance of really communicating with one's spouse in the area of *soul-cleaving*. How can we bring this about?

By listening and speaking with love.

That is, we must first listen to what the other person is really saying—not what we think is being said—and respond to that, not our preconceived notion. One way to do this is to simply repeat in your own words (audibly or inaudibly) what was actually said. It is amazing how often we can carry on two separate conversations together!

Do this listening with Love. That is, allow the healing, redemptive compassion of God to *filter* your experience of the conversation. As your partner voices troubles, needs or desires, simply allow yourself to ponder, “how would I appreciate being responded to if I shared that?”

Again, our response needs to be voiced in Love. Is this possible? What about the natural responses of anger, impatience, etc., which are engendered by your mate's sharing?

These natural, but potentially sinful, responses must first be dealt with in private prayer. Should the communication become, at times, a confrontation of some kind, postpone your response until you have had an opportunity to *unload* the negative reactions in your person in private prayer through the Holy Spirit. Rather than speaking unkindly to your partner, vent such emotion in private prayer—tell God what you feel like, what you would like to say (in the flesh), etc.—and continue in prayer in the Spirit until the emotion has been dissipated and swallowed up in the Love of God (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16; Jude 20-21).

In this way you can still *speak the truth* to your life's partner, but in love.

It is not the *unpleasantness* of the subject—no matter how touchy it may seem—which causes arguments, unhappiness and communication breakdowns, but the spirit and attitude in which matters are discussed.

The key is Love.

Cleaving: Physical

“It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (I Cor. 7:1-2).

We have already noticed that Paul recommends the physical relationship between husband and wife never be interrupted, except by mutual consent for the purpose of prayer and fasting.

It is illuminating to discover that the Bible is far more concerned with sex than Freud ever was. When one examines the scriptures without the coloring of denominational or familial spectacles, it is quite amazing to notice the importance God places upon the physical dimension of the marriage bond.

For example, apart from the additional detail given by Paul concerning the desertion of a believer by an unbeliever, fornication, or the physical aspect of infidelity is the only biblical basis for divorce (Mt. 5:31; 19:7; Lk. 16:18).

In the Book of First Corinthians, Paul gives much information concerning the place of sex in marriage. First, marriage is desirable in order to avoid fornication. Second, both husband and wife are to render to each other “due benevolence,” that is, needed physical and sexual interaction.

The apostle goes so far as to say that the partners’ bodies are not “their own,” but, sexually, the property of the spouses (I Cor. 7:4). He continues in the same vein by issuing a command:

“I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn” (I Cor. 7:8-9).

“...let them marry, for it is more advantageous to marry than to continue to burn (with the heat of sexual passion)” (I Cor. 7:9, Wuest).

Surely, one cannot miss the point of the apostle’s directives regarding the importance of the physical aspect of marriage. It is as if marriage is God’s ordained means of satisfying the sexual needs of man and woman.

“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

Here again, marriage is seen within the context of its physical implications. The biblical model of the sexual relationship in marriage is certainly far from the puritanical ideal.

Solomon counseled:

“Let her be as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love” (Prov. 5:19).

These verses, and many others similar to them, illustrate the fact that God intends the physical aspect of marriage to not only provide a means for the procreation of the race, but also for the pleasure of the husband and wife. How sad that many cults and false religions today either forbid marriage or impose unscriptural guidelines upon the sexual relationship within it, thereby violating God’s Word (I Tim. 4:3; Heb. 13:4).

Children

While procreation is clearly not the sole, nor even primary purpose of the marriage

bond, yet the Bible does emphatically teach the desirability of a godly husband and wife bringing children into the world. God spoke to the Children of Israel through the prophet, Malachi:

“And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth” (Mal. 2:15).

Children are a distinct blessing from God:

“Lo, children are an heritage of Yahweh: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psa. 127:3-5).

“Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: they children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth Yahweh” (Psa. 128:3-4).

These verses indicate the goodness of God in allowing mankind to reproduce itself in the family in God’s Presence, thereby bringing more and more godly offspring into the world.

Parents’ Duties

It is the responsibility of Christian parents to minister to the little ones in the family unit, bringing them up in the ways of the Lord. Certainly, much good is done through “Children’s Church,” Sunday school and Christian schools, but you will look in vain in the scriptures for any indication that anyone other than the parents are really, ultimately, responsible for the spiritual training of their children.

“And the fathers, stop provoking your children to anger, but be rearing them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4, Wuest).

“Fathers, stop irritating your children, lest they become disheartened” (Col. 3:21, Wuest).

These verses are most enlightening. The word rendered “disheartened” in the above verse actually means to lose heart, to be crushed in spirit, to be without proper emotional motivation.

Could this be at least one cause of so much aimless, pointless and fruitless living in so many of this nation’s young people?

May God help us to take our place as the instructors of our children that God desires us to be.

These verses indicate the responsibility of the father to “train” the children with love, lest they suffer a wounded spirit from discipline minus love. Once again, the Golden Rule is applied by the apostle Paul in the Spirit’s advice here.

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

The word translated “train” in this verse literally means “to chatecise.” That is, it means to thoroughly teach and “drill” the child in the way of righteousness, not merely to suggest God’s ways, occasionally. Such loving training molds the character and the will of the child in the ways of God.

Children's Duties

The Bible also depicts the response from the children which God expects and ordains:

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour your father and your mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:1-3).

“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Col. 3:20).

It is clear that obedience to parental authority is the will of God for children. Just here, it needs to be pointed out that obedience—whether of the wife to the husband, or children to parents—must be viewed within the context of the will of God and the Word of God. It is unthinkable that a wife or child should obey a command which contradicts the Word of God. In this situation the example of Peter and the Early Church with regard to obeying constituted authority should be followed:

“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

Widows and Orphans

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Ja. 1:27).

This verse makes it clear that true Christian religion is not just *words* of correct doctrine, but *deeds* of genuine love to others in the Spirit of Christ. Even those outside of our individual homes must be cared for. How unfortunate that Christian widows and orphans must seek material and emotional support from the world when the Church should be ready, willing and able to supply that which is required. Paul makes it manifestly clear that when widows in the Church are without familial support, they should become the responsibility of the Church (I Tim. 5:3). Certainly, these godly widows should spend their time in prayers and supplications night and day, looking to God as their Source (I Tim. 5:5); but we should be *the channels* to get the supply to the need!

The fatherless, likewise, should become wards of the Body of Christ. Admittedly, the psalmist said:

“When my father and my mother forsake me, then Yahweh will take me up” (Psa. 27:10).

But how is this care to be realized?

Through the ministry of the Lord's people!

May the Lord help us to understand and live within the light of God's plan for the family.

How to Be Guided by God

“*F*or it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

“I would give anything to be sure that I am in the will of God.”

This statement is made often by multiplied thousands of Christians. There is often in the heart of every believer a desire to be fully assured that the will of God is being perceived and obeyed in their life. No little amount of frustration and uncertainty can be directly traced to the inability of a Christian to correctly ascertain the will of God.

Unconscious Guidance

There are basically two forms of guidance spoken of in the Word of God. I like to refer to them as unconscious and conscious guidance.

By *unconscious guidance* we refer to that form of Divine direction which is made manifest without our being consciously aware of it. It is simply the Mind of Christ being expressed through our redeemed personalities.

“*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*” (Eph. 2:2).

This verse illustrates the principle of unconscious guidance in the experience of the unbeliever. With the exception of cases involving actual demon possession, no unsaved individual is *consciously* aware of being motivated by the unholy spirit. Far from it! Rather, the typical non-Christian boasts himself of his ability *to live his own life*. Consciously, the sinner is simply *doing what comes naturally*. He, by nature, follows the inclinations of his intellect, emotion and will. This is all he is aware of. However, Paul’s revelation in the Book of Ephesians tells us that in actuality the unbeliever is *not running his own life* at all; Satan is running it for him! There is, in the unbeliever, a subterranean stream of corruption, a *polluted spring*, in his inner man which directs his conscious actions without him being aware of it. In short, he sets out to do *his will*, when, in actuality, he is doing *the Devil’s!*

The Saved Individual

The situation described is the exact reverse of Divine direction. Unfortunately, most believers—especially Spirit-filled Christians—have been blinded to this fact. “Charismania” (i.e., a carnal/fleshly caricature of the real) is often the substitute for charisma (true spiritual gifting), whereby the poor confused believer is too frequently plunged into a morass of *revelations, feelings, leadings, words, and dreams* in his attempt to find the will of God. The will of God is within us.

Just as the unholy spirit motivates the unsaved, *unconsciously* directing the intellect, emotion and will toward unholy purposes, so the Holy Spirit energizes the saved *unconsciously* guiding them toward the designs and plans of the Heavenly Father.

How futile then to seek some special *supernatural* type of guidance when there already exists—within—the will and desire to pursue a particular course of action which will bring glory to God.

Just here someone objects and says, “Did not Jesus say He did nothing until He saw the Father do it?”

Certainly; but this remark was in the context of His miraculous works (Jn. 5:10ff.), not the everyday experiences of His life. Surely, our Lord did not follow the example of the woman out taking a walk who prayed, upon approaching an intersection, “Which way do I turn, Lord?”

The Church needs to begin to trust that the New Birth really is a new birth; that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit really is receiving the infilling of God’s Power.

We see examples of this unconscious guidance manifested in the account of the life of the apostle Paul, recorded in the Book of Acts. He, like Jesus, followed the inclinations of his own sanctified intellect, emotion and will in the everyday issues of life. It is interesting to note that although there are many travels of the apostle recorded in scripture, only once was he *consciously* directed to a particular place by God (Acts 16). Every other time he simply proceeded according to the plan of God which was already within him, not depending upon a *supernatural* leading from above (although he often received *confirmatory* ones, while he was already in the process of doing the Lord’s will).

Many Christians have lost precious time by not following Paul’s example for fear of *getting into the flesh*. It is to be regretted that too often “Charismania” reigns in the place of *charismata*, and the will of God is stifled beneath a confusion borne of ignorance of the principles of true biblical guidance as illustrated in the life of Paul.

“*After they were come to Mysia, they assayed (attempted) to go into Bythynia: but the Spirit suffered (permitted) them not*” (Acts 16:7).

Here we see the usual method of Divine guidance in action. We do not read that God through a vision, dream, still, small voice, scripture, prophecy, etc., told Paul where to preach. Rather, the evangelistic party “assayed” (tried) to go to Bythynia, and the Holy Spirit “suffered” (allowed) them not!

In other words, rather than telling Paul what to do, the Lord told him what not to do in this particular situation. This is due to the fact that the Lord Jesus had already said to the Church: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Paul took the attitude that while he was following the designs of the Word of God he was always in the will of God, *until God showed him otherwise*.

May God help us to imitate the example of this believer!

Certainly, there were occasions when Paul received *conscious* guidance, but these were the exceptions, *not the rule*.

“*For it is the (one, true) God, the one who is continually working in you effectively, the willing and the doing of the good pleasure: his*” (Phil. 2:13, Gk.).

The Safeguards

Just here someone says, “but can we really do whatever we want?”

No; obviously, there are Divine restraints and guidelines in this life of unconscious guidance. First, it operates only in the born again, Spirit-filled believer. We have a new nature and a new power source which impel us toward the will of God. Second, the Heavenly Father has given us the Word of God and the ministry gifts of the Spirit to instruct us in His holy will. Any desires toward sin or selfishness are automatically to be denied. Again, this is *automatic* in the true Christian.

“*But the anointing which ye have received from him abideth in you, and ye need not*

that any man teach you: but as that same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (I Jn. 2:27).

This verse does not do away with the necessity of ministers of the Word in the Body of Christ. Rather, it simply points out the truth that for the individual believer, no *outside* voice is required to keep him from spiritual error in his daily walk in the world.

Third, God has placed within the Christian a Divine Umpire to arbitrate the will of God. It is none other than God’s peace in the heart (Col. 3:15).

Let us examine these safeguards separately.

The New Nature

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (I Jn. 3:9).

This verse makes clear the Bible truth of the absolute recreation of the spirit of a Christian at the time of the New Birth. The power of sin and Satan are completely broken and a new, Divine nature is imparted. This verse literally reads:

“Whosoever stands born of God does not practice sin; for his seed continually abides in him: and he does not have the ability to practice sin, because he stands (permanently) born of God.”

This is strong language and illustrates the reality of the born again experience. The Divine nature has actually been imparted to the spirit of the believer. This makes the will of God *second nature* to him.

The Word of God

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:15-17).

Here the Bible gives us a second guideline: the written Word of God. Perhaps 90% or more of all decisions of life can be arbitrated by consulting the Word of God. It is *God-breathed* and as such is fully trustworthy for doctrine (teaching) concerning all areas of life to which it speaks; for reproof (admonishment), or calling us back into the path of God when we begin to stray due to ignorance or sin; for correction (illumination) when we have erred from its precepts; and instruction in righteousness (holiness), that lifestyle which we were redeemed to participate in and which glorifies God.

To return to the previous example of the unsaved being *unconsciously* guided by the Devil through their *natural* decisions, we should remember that we all live by what we’ve been taught, whether true or false. Just as the *natural* inclinations, decisions, etc., of the non-Christian have been molded and shaped by false information taught by a Godless, world-system, we can have our decisions shaped by being taught, believing and obeying the true teachings of God as given in the Bible.

The ministries of the Word given to us by Christ (Eph. 4:11) are servants of the Lord who also make plain to us the teaching of the Holy Book.

The Peace of God

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts” (Col. 3:15).

Here is another *internal* safeguard: the peace of God ruling and reigning in our hearts.

Peace has been described as “*tranquility in order*”. It is the peace of God. This is something more than being justified or redeemed through which we have peace with God through the Blood of the Cross by faith (Rom. 5:1). It is the experience of the deep, abiding *peace of God* received from Christ by His Spirit after prayer (Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:6-7).

Notice, also, that this peace of God is to rule. This word comes from a Greek verb meaning “to arbitrate, act as umpire, settle disputes.” This word picture is familiar to present day sports fans. Despite all the argument which may precede or follow a call, *the decision of the umpire is final!*

Our text reminds us that this “umpire” is to rule in our hearts. This is important. In any particular situation, our bodies and minds may be crying out for a certain course of action. Indeed, it may *seem* to be the appropriate decision. Yet if this deep, inward well of peace is disturbed at the prospect after prayer, it is to be soundly refused. The decision of the umpire must be final!

This inward Monitor will always agree with the Word, for it is simply the Voice of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who is the Author of the written Word (Gal. 5:22; I Jn. 2:20, 27; II Tim. 3:16-17).

Perhaps it was this *unsettling of the peace of God* which is described for us in the Book of Acts as “the Spirit suffered (allowed) them not.”

As we seek to ascertain the will of God for us, particularly in those areas not clearly revealed in the written Word (i.e., which church one should attend, whom to marry, etc.), we must take the matter to God in prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to gain the mastery (Phil. 4:6-7; Isa. 28:11; Heb. 4:9) and then see which option is attended by peace within. By following the impulses (desires) of our sanctified *new* nature, giving our personalities full expression in line with the principles of the Word of God, we will always be *automatically* in the will of God. We simply proceed and stop at God’s “red lights.”

God does not desire us to be *robots* or *marionettes* which He directs apart from our willing cooperation. Rather, He has ordained for us to be vibrant, vital partners with Him in the outworking of His plans. Under God, we are to be the “captains of our souls.”

“*For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that*” (Ja. 4:15).

Our plans should always be subject to the will of God; *but we should make plans!*

Conscious Guidance

We move now to the second type of direction given to us by God. This we refer to as *conscious guidance*. It is conscious because it arrests us and captures our attention. Most often, it is unsought, coming to us at the sovereign discretion of God. It is a *Divine interruption* catapulting us into a particular area of service or line of action.

Paul

“*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia and help us*” (Acts 16:9).

This verse illustrates the receiving of conscious guidance from God by a Spirit-filled believer already engaged in service for the Master.

Perhaps it would be helpful to remind ourselves of a Bible truth made clear in this

incident. It is highly unlikely that we shall receive specific, spectacular, supernatural Divine conscious guidance, when we are not already in the habit of obeying the will of God which is “at work within us willing and doing His good pleasure.” One has said in a wistful tone, “I wish God would give me instruction in a vision.”

Sadly, this individual would not obey it if it came!

Paul was already actively engaged in preaching the gospel when he received this direction from above (Acts 16:6-8). We shall know, if we follow on to know, the scriptures say.

The apostle Paul operated in both kinds of guidance: unconscious and conscious. However, he did not sit idle and wait *for God to tell him (supernaturally) what to do*. Rather, he did what he knew to do (from the Word, his own inclinations and the open doors of circumstance), *until God told him otherwise*. It was while he was following unconscious guidance that he received conscious guidance. In both cases his response was the same: *obedience!*

When they were “forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia” and when they “assayed to go into Bythynia” but the Holy Spirit suffered them not, they obeyed (Acts 16:6-7). Consequently, when the Holy Spirit spoke in a vision where to go, the result was:

“And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them” (Acts 16:10).

Instant and utter obedience: the secret of Paul’s success.

The writer has experienced both kinds of leading from God. In 1981 there was presented to him the opportunity of preaching the gospel in England. Although there appeared no *conscious* guidance, the door was open, he desired to go (Phil. 2:13), the plan was attended by peace (Col. 3:15), it was in harmony with the scriptures (Mt. 28:19-20ff) and the funds were provided. That three-week trip resulted in scores of persons being saved, filled with the Spirit, healed and delivered.

In March, 1976, while in deep prayer, God *spoke* to the author’s heart: “Go to Australia and build My Church.” To date three trips (five weeks, 14 months and two weeks) have been accomplished with the same kinds of results.

Which trip was God’s will? The answer is: *both trips were!*

It is not for us to choose how God guides us in a given situation; it is enough for us to obey!

We must never dictate to God how He must guide us. Our whole duty is to be faithful in performing the will of God for us, regardless of how it is made known to us.

Kinds of Conscious Guidance

There are a number of types of conscious guidance which we may expect in our life of service to God. We have already touched on three of them in another part of this lesson.

1. The Word of God.

Often, as we read, study and meditate upon the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will *quicken* a verse or portion, and through this *enlightenment* guide us toward a particular course of action.

2. The Ministry.

Again, through exposure to the ministry gifts of the Spirit, as the Word is unfolded under the unction of the Holy Ghost, revelation concerning the will of God can be transmitted.

Once a missionary was preaching upon the tremendous need for gospel workers in China. During the course of the message a Bible school student in the congregation was amazed as he discerned in bold letters above the speaker's head—as if written in the Spirit by the Finger of God—*I-N-D-I-A*. Needless to say, a missionary was born! Indeed, the offices of “pastor” and “apostle” with their enablements of “ruling and “governments,” respectively, make possible the flowing of the wisdom of God through them to those under their charge.

3. The Peace of God.

Although, as we have mentioned, this is a safeguard in the area of unconscious guidance, yet, it is *conscious* in that it interrupts the plans which we are in the midst of pursuing.

4. Dreams.

The Bible is replete with examples of God supernaturally guiding His people through dreams or night visions. Joseph, Jacob and Solomon received visions from God at night. The birth of our Savior was attended by dreams granted to Joseph, the Wise Men and others.

5. Visions.

Visions, like dreams, are given much prominence in the Word of God. They can be—like dreams—seen with “the mind's eye,” while awake, without one's conscious vision being interrupted (Dan. 5:5).

6. Trances.

Unlike some visions, trances are forms of ecstasy during which time one's natural senses and the awareness of physical surroundings are suspended and the mind and spirit are aware of only that which God is revealing. Peter and Paul were subject to trances (Acts 10:10; 22:17).

7. Still Small Voice.

Elijah the prophet experienced this form of guidance. It is the Spirit of God speaking in the form of words—inaudibly—within the Spirit of man.

8. Vocal Gifts.

Through the utterance gifts of prophecy, tongues and interpretation at tongues, God may speak forth Divine direction to His people. We read in Acts 15:2, “as they ministered (prayed) to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said...” It is not stated how the Spirit of the Lord “spoke” to the disciples; but it is not without the realm of possibility that an utterance in tongues with interpretation or a prophecy was the vehicle of communication (I Cor. 14:20-21). It is through the vocal gifts that the Holy Ghost

speaks.

9. The Prophet.

Often, the man of God anointed to serve the Body of Christ in the office of prophet will be the Voice of God in conscious guidance. Agabus was used to guide the Early Church in the summoning and distribution of relief for the saints afflicted by famine (Acts 11:28).

It should be noted here that the role of prophecy or prophet need not be limited only to confirming that which God has already revealed to an individual, though they are often used in this way. We have no record that the Early Church was already informed of the famine before Agabus arrived. Similarly, a prophet of God may foretell a ministry before an individual is even cognizant of a call himself. Such was the case of Simeon with the Baby Jesus (Lk. 2:27ff.), and, likewise, with Anna and the Child (Lk. 2:38). This, however, is not to say that all prophecies are *of God*. Indeed, the Word admonishes us to *test* and *prove* all supernatural, prophetic utterances, to see if they are of God (I Cor. 14:29; I Thess. 5:20-21). They must be uttered by Spirit-filled, God-called and sanctified persons, and their words will be *witnessed to* by the Body, even if they bring forth *new* information. They will always be in line with the Spirit and teaching of the written Word of God.

10. The Voice of God.

This is the audible Voice of God heard with the physical ears of those within its proximity. Paul, on the road to Damascus, heard the audible Voice of Jesus, speaking to him in the Hebrew language, as did his traveling companions (Acts 9:7).

Several times during the earthly ministry of Jesus, onlookers heard the audible Voice of the Heavenly Father (Mt. 3:17).

How To Be Guided By God

If we would be guided by God, we must be within “hearing distance.” As we have noted, the Mind of Christ is already within the born again, Spirit-filled believer. Every one who would seek the will of God must be: born again, a partaker of the Divine Nature, water-baptized, in public declaration of his faith, Spirit-filled, having received the fullness of God’s Power for service, entirely consecrated: completely dedicated to the will of God, a diligent student of the Word of God, obedient to the Law of Christ daily, in fellowship with the Lord daily through prayer and communion in the Holy Spirit.

If these characteristics are ours, Divine guidance is inevitable!

It should be remembered that if a reluctant and rebellious *disciple* as Jonah wound up doing God’s will—while doing everything possible to miss it—how much more certain shall we discover God’s will, who are actively seeking it?

Perhaps the most important area in the matter of guidance is the human will. Its role in the area of receiving direction from God cannot be overemphasized.

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” (Jn. 7:17).

Here, the Lord Jesus emphasized the importance of a man doing the will of God as a prerequisite to knowing the source of His doctrine. Certainly, this same principle can be applied to our knowing anything concerning the will of God for us. We must be

absolutely determined to seek God's plan and full purpose for our lives and not our own (after the flesh). This will be, not a burden, but a blessing, if we truly believe our God is a loving, Heavenly Father Who loves us more than we could ever love ourselves, and Whose thoughts for us are for peace and not for evil (Jer. 29:11).

The Word of God, the ministries of Christ and the peace of God will always serve as safeguards while we *do what comes naturally* as children of God, working out His will for us. When additional guidance of a supernatural means becomes necessary, it will be forthcoming.

For those who are consecrated and dedicated, a word of encouragement must be pressed home. Do not allow circumstances or the Devil to dissuade you from following through on a course of action or ministry which you desire to embark upon. Do not shrink back and say, "Maybe it's just me." If you are saved, Spirit-filled and consecrated to God's will for your life, if it will glorify God, if you have peace in your heart (not necessarily your mind) as you anticipate doing it, if it is not forbidden by the Bible, *it is not just you, it is Christ in you, working in you, to will and to do his good pleasure*" (Phil. 2:13)!

Delay no longer!

Immediately, resolve to implement your God-given desires!

The world is waiting!

The Power of Positive Praise

“That we should be to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:12).

Here, in the utmost simplicity, is *our reason for being* as believers on this earth. As redeemed human persons, we are to live—or exist—to the praise of the glory of God. In short, we were created to worship.

Jesus said:

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (Jn. 4:24).

God desires us to fellowship and worship Him “in spirit and in truth,” that is, from the heart and in reality, not in hypocrisy. It is worship that establishes and maintains us in an “attitude of gratitude” and a creaturely dependence upon God as our *All in all*. All those who would be workers for God must first be worshippers of God, our good works stemming from a thankful heart and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Adam and Eve had fellowship with the Father “in the cool of the day.” Certainly, God’s plan for man has not changed; His original intention will surely be fulfilled in our redemption in Christ.

“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26-27).

The apostle refers here to the original desire God had for Man to live in unbroken communion and dependence upon Him. This offer of such an intimate relationship was presented to Adam and Eve in the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden (Gen. 2:9, 16; see my book, *Light for Living*). Had they partaken of the fruit of that Tree, they would have united their human spirits with the Holy Spirit and received God’s uncreated Life which is Love. But they refused and ate instead the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This *independence* was the antithesis of the *independence* God desired them to know of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

And, so, the entire plan of redemption is simply God’s way of bringing about the fulfillment of His original intention for Man. Through the Cross of Christ and His resurrection from the dead, the sin problem has been solved, the barrier removed and Man can once again partake of God’s Life through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We have the blessed privilege of living in the dimension Adam and Eve never experienced: Christ in us, our hope of glory!

The Old Covenant

Indeed, this was God’s plan for the nation of Israel. He desired that His chosen people would be a “nation of priests.” That is, the Heavenly Father planned that His people would *stand in the gap* and *make up the hedge* for the heathen (unbelieving) nations surrounding them. Through Israel’s relationship with the true God—by His blessing them and their praising Him—others were to see the blessedness of a national union with the Divine and thus come to Him and be saved.

Unfortunately, we read of Israel’s failure to maintain this exalted position in God. After periods of idolatry and unbelief, both Israel and Judah were banished from the

Promised Land and fell from their lofty estate.

The New Covenant

And so God at last makes His plan and purpose complete in its manifestation through the Church. In this *better Testament* established upon *better Promises* our Lord has provided for a perfect relationship and fellowship between us and Himself. The Blood of Jesus Christ has made atonement for our sin (see my books, *What Price, Freedom?* and *Plead the Blood!*). The veil has been rent in two providing all believing sinners with direct access to the Throne of Grace. We have been blessed with “all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). By the Holy Ghost, we have power to praise and worship God supernaturally—in spirit and in truth—far beyond anything which was offered to Adam and Eve or experienced by the people of God at any time prior to the initiation of the New Testament. Praise God!

“And came and preached peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:17-18).

This is a quotation from the Book of Isaiah:

“I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off (gentiles), and to him that is near (Jews), saith Yahweh; and I will heal him” (Isa. 57:19).

This is the promise of supernatural praise which Paul identifies as fulfilled in the work of Christ providing redemption and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit for those “far off” (Gentiles) and “those near” (Jews).

Paul gives us the New Testament counterpart in Heb. 13:15:

“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto his name.”

How magnificent that even our praise to God, comes from God, Who actually inspires our worship and adoration of Him in this glorious New Testament Age!

Private Praise

There are two kinds of worship for us as Spirit-filled Christians: individual and corporate. There are also two expressions of worship: public and private. May God help us to enter into all that He has provided for us.

There is certainly an element of private worship available to us today.

Paul said:

“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and i will pray with the understanding also” (I Cor. 14:15).

“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church...” (I Cor. 14:18).

Here, the apostle describes his own worship life. Privately, he prayed and praised God *in other tongues*, and publicly, he did so with his understanding, or in his native language so as to be understood by others. Here is an excellent pattern to follow for those of us who desire to live the quality of Christian life Paul did. We should make it our daily practice to commune with God *in the Spirit*—in other tongues—privately, and praise and bless Him with our understanding—native language—publicly so that those round about us may hear of his wonderful works and be won to Him in saving faith.

There are many examples of this *private praise* in the New Testament. It was after

Peter *prayed through* on the housetop that God gave him a vision and call to minister to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-10; see my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry*, in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*). All of the public service for Christ administered by the Early Church was preceded by private prayer and praise to Him.

Public Praise

“We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11).

This is the first recorded post-Pentecost example of public praise of God by His Spirit-filled children. Here, in the very first out-pouring of the Holy Ghost, the Bible declares that Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 57:19) was gloriously fulfilled. The Early Church—speaking as the Spirit gave them the ability—boldly praised and declared “the wonderful works of God” publicly to others.

This so startled the onlookers that they were moved to ask:

“What meaneth this” (Acts 2:12)?

The Bible repeatedly counsels the redeemed to say so *in the presence of others*. In this way, those who do not know God may learn—through our praise of His various Divine attributes and activities—of His wonderful works on behalf of the children of men.

Put simply, if we have been saved, we must tell others; if we have been healed we must tell others; if we have been filled with the Holy Spirit, we must tell others; if God has put our marriage back together, we must tell others; and on and on it goes. Our very lives should be living advertisements of the grace and goodness of our God.

Individual Praise

Our worship lives are first of all a private experience. If we have not learned to commune with God privately, it is doubtful that we shall ever be so bold as to praise Him publicly in the presence of others. It is our privilege and responsibility as Christians to develop a private life of praise, prayer and worship of the Heavenly Father in “spirit and truth.” In this way, public praise will *come naturally* as a direct by-product of our communion with God.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6).

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2).

These verses make it clear that praise and worship should be directly involved with our prayer lives (see my book, *At the Master’s Feet*). Certainly, the infilling of the Holy Spirit will inspire us to praise God supernaturally. On two occasions recorded in the Book of Acts, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon believers, they were said to: “speak with tongues and magnify God” (Acts 2:11; 10:46). It should not seem strange, then, that this same procedure of Spirit-empowered praise should be a continuous experience in our private prayer lives. Paul said when we bless “in the Spirit” (i.e., *in other tongues*), we “give thanks well” (I Cor. 14:17). Spencer’s translation renders the phrase, “thou verily givest thanks excellently.” Praise God for the wonderful experience of praying to the Lord and praising Him privately under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost! This gives us a supernatural means of communication with our Heavenly Father beyond the limitations of our finite, human minds. It is communion Spirit to spirit by the Power of God. HalleluYah!

Corporate Praise

As important as are the private and public dimensions of individual praise, there is also a very important area of corporate worship to be considered. Some writers have described what occurs during the collective worship of the Church as *the corporate anointing*. That is, there seems to be an additional depth of the manifestation of God's Presence when the whole Church *comes together* for the worship and adoration of God.

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assented together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

Notice the result of collective prayer in this verse. Not only was *the place* shaken where they were assembled, but the then-known world was, likewise, shaken by the power of the Early Church which moved and ministered under *the corporate anointing*.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the holy ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

Here we see the revelation of the Spirit of God concerning the calling of two apostles coming as a result of the whole Church (Acts 13:1ff.) *coming together* to minister (pray) unto the Lord with fasting, prayer and praise.

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a Dwelling Place of God, a “habitation for Him” in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

As the Spirit-filled Church corporately seeks His Face at appointed times and seasons for fasting, prayer, praise and worship, the Heavenly Father makes His Presence known in power, both to bless the believers and to minister to the unbelievers.

The Christian and the Church

As disciples of the Lord Jesus, it is our privilege and responsibility to relate ourselves to a local, visible expression of His Body. The Lord Jesus established the Church and gifted it with various ministries with which to bring it to perfection and to equip the several members with spiritual knowledge and power to minister to the world (Eph. 4:11). It is vital that each and every member of the Body of Christ properly relate himself to the local church in order that the Lord's purposes can be realized and the believer edified in God. It is not to no purpose that the scriptures say:

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another daily: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

Our Lord Jesus Christ establishes local churches either through a pastor or an apostle. An apostle is a member of the Body of Christ gifted to bring sinners to a saving knowledge of Christ, perform “signs, wonders and miracles,” and establish new converts as a local Body of Christ (I Cor. 9:2; II Cor. 12:12).

The local church organization is very simple as portrayed in the Bible. Within each local body there will be *a pastor*, who is a believer of more mature spiritual experience than the rest of the flock, and one gifted by the Spirit to preach and teach the gospel (I Tim. 1ff.), as well as possessed of the spiritual gift of *governments* (I Cor. 12:28), which means, according to one Greek authority, “the ability to take the lead in a local fellowship of the saints” (Vine).

An apostle has a similar spiritual gift of “ruling” (Rom. 12:8), and it must be pointed

out that it is possible for one in the “full-time” ministry of the Word to function in more than one office (i.e., pastor-evangelist, prophet-pastor, apostle-pastor, etc.). Indeed, Dr. Lester Sumrall maintains that those called to the apostolic office are capable of functioning in all five ministerial positions (Eph. 4:11, see my book, *Gifts Unto Men*, in the third course).

The oversight of the local church is delegated by God, Himself, to the pastor (Acts 20:28; I Cor. 12:28; I Pet. 5:2-3).

In the Book of the Revelation, when the Lord Jesus addressed the seven local churches, He spoke, not to the congregation, board, deacons or committees, but to *the angel* of each church. The Greek word rendered “angel” is literally “messenger.” It is certain that the Lord Jesus does not write letters concerning church matters—including condemnations—to elect or holy *angels*. Hence, the word refers to the pastor (elder, bishop) of each congregation. Any student of Church history will quickly discover that this is the New Testament pattern.

Pastors/Bishops/Elders and Deacons

In addition to pastors (bishops, elders), a second type of ministry exists in the local church, that of “deacon.” The qualifications for this office are given by Paul (I Tim. 3:8-13). They, like the elder (bishop, pastor), must be mature in the faith, full of the Holy Spirit, and, in addition, possessed of the ministry gift of *ministry* (Rom. 12:7; I Pet. 4:11).

This gift refers to the caring for material and natural needs of the members of the body, as well as some preaching and teaching responsibilities. Philip and Stephen are examples of the office of deacon (Acts 6:5, see my book, *The Empty Office*, in the second course). The idea of a “deacon board,” composed of non-spiritually gifted laymen who make decisions regarding the leadership of the local church is foreign to the teaching of scripture and a concoction of American “Churchianity.”

It is the responsibility of the pastor (elder, bishop) to rule, feed and care for the flock. This he is to do gladly, impelled by the Holy Spirit in love, not for mere financial remuneration (I Pet. 5:2-5). He is not to rule in a “bull-dogmatic” manner, but, rather, to lovingly guide the local church into the plans and purposes of God.

There are several different designations for the office of *pastor* given in the scriptures. Often, they are used interchangeably. Much confusion concerning the local church and the believer’s responsibility to it can be avoided if we carefully study the Bible in this regard.

“*And ordain elders in every city... for a bishop must be blameless...*” (Ti. 1:5,7).

The apostle Peter tells the elders to “feed” (“pastor” or “shepherd,” Gk.) the flock (I Pet. 5:2).

Perhaps we can think of the office in this way: these persons are “elders” (mature believers) or “bishops” (overseers) and they “pastor” (feed, shepherd) the flock of God.

Some today argue that any of the five ministerial offices (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher) are automatically to be designated as an “elder” in the Body of Christ. However, this seems forced in the light of the biblical terminology used in Acts 15:2: “...should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” This would mean there were *both* apostles *and* elders (pastors, bishops) there. If an apostle is automatically an “elder,” the verse should read, “elders and elders,” which, of course

makes no sense (see also Acts 15:6).

It is interesting to note that we can speak of “elders” (plural) and an “elder” (singular) in the church. Again, Paul’s letter to Titus explains this.

“And ordain elders (bishops, pastors) in every city” (Ti. 1:5).

In each city, there would be numerous “churches” each having one “elder” (pastor, bishop).

“For if a man (singular) know not how to rule his own house, how shall he (singular) take care of the church (singular) of God” (I Tim. 3:5)?

The Book of Acts declares that Paul and Barnabas (apostles) “ordained them elders in every church” (Acts 14:23), seeming to teach a “plurality of elders” in each local church. However, when examined closely, the context speaks of the two apostles ministering in: Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, several cities, each having numerous “churches” requiring numerous elders’ (pastors, bishops), resolving this apparent contradiction.

Taken collectively, all the individual “churches” in a city would comprise the “church” of Jerusalem or Rome, etc. Presumably, each city would have a *metropolis* church serving as the chief or *representative* church of the city. It was no doubt to each of these “churches” the Lord Jesus spoke in the Book of Revelation. This is not to say that the pastor (bishop, elder) of the “head” congregation of a city exercised any *legal* control over the other *less prestigious* congregations; however, they would, no doubt, look to him for advice, example and direction.

It is imperative that each believer be properly related to the leadership of the local congregation. If the pastor is to lead the flock, it is assumed that the people must follow. If there is a shepherd, there must be sheep.

“And we are beseeching you, brethren, to know them, the ones who are labouring among you and are over you in the Lord, and are admonishing you; and to be esteeming them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (I Thess. 5:12-13, Gk.).

“Be constantly remembering them, the ones which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith be imitating, considering the outcome of their manner of life” (Heb. 13:7).

“Be constantly obeying them, the ones who have the rule over you, and be constantly submitting yourselves: for they-they are watching for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may be doing this with joy, and not with sighing: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:7, Gk.).

Notice in these verses that the burden is on the congregation, not the pastor. It is the flock which is admonished to submit to the elder. The authority of the bishop comes, not from the people, nor from an apostle who may have been used to publicly “ordain” (appoint) him to the ministry, but from the Lord who has called and equipped him for the work of the ministry. Paul clearly described this fact in his exhortation to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28). It would seem that the biblical pattern is for God to call—directly—the pastor of a local church (with or without public “ordination” by an apostle), who, in turn, would ordain (“appoint”) assistants (deacons, I Tim. 3:8-10, 12-13).

Tradition tells us that Timothy was ordained the first bishop (pastor, elder) of the Ephesian church, as Titus was of the Cretan church. Both of these men were also apostles. Thus, they were used to ordain (appoint) other elders (pastors, bishops) for other congregations, as well as deacons within their own congregations.

Pastors and People

We have already discovered that pastors have the gift of governments or “taking the lead.” According to Peter, they are to take the oversight of the flock. Paul tells us they must be mature in the faith and able to hold fast the Word of God and by sound doctrine (teaching) exhort and convince the gainsayer (Ti. 1:9). They must be able to “rightly divide the Word of Truth” (II Tim. 2:15). They are “to rule well” and be “apt to teach” (I Tim. 3:2, 5:17). In short, they “labor in doctrine” (teaching). That is, they instruct—through preaching and teaching—the congregation of God’s people in the doctrines (teachings) of the Word of God, combining biblical principles with practical applications. We do not find everyone in the Early Church preaching and teaching one after the other during a “believer’s meeting.” On the contrary, “then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul” (Acts 15:12).

In Acts 20:7 we read:

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.”

Here we see a New Testament minister and meeting in action: Paul preached; they gathered to break bread.

New Testament ministers, be they apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers or deacons, are called and anointed by the Spirit of God to preach and teach the Word of God, edify the saints and equip them for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11ff.). In addition, the pastor (elder, bishop) of a local congregation also “rules” (takes the lead) and cares for the Body of Christ in his locale.

But what of the people?

Is there no place for the “laity” in the corporate worship of the local church?

Praise God, there decidedly is!

“How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine (teaching), hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying” (I Cor. 14:26).

The context of this verse is a discussion of the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:8-10). The larger context is the gathering together of the Body of Christ at a typical believers’ meeting.

As we have seen from the verse in Acts 20:7, at such times the Lord’s Supper was observed. In Acts 4:31 we find that corporate prayer was offered. We know from the Book of First Timothy that elders (pastors, bishops) preached and taught at meetings. And here, in First Corinthians, Paul reveals that the gifts of the Spirit were seen in manifestation. It is in the area of prayer, praise, testimony and the exercise of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit that each believer can contribute an invaluable blessing to the whole church. No one need be left out. The gifts are divided “severally” to “every man” in order to “profit withal” in any particular church gathering.

Paul said:

“For ye may all be prophesying one by one, that all may be learning and all may be being comforted” (I Cor. 14:31, Gk.).

Here we see the desire of God expressed in the matter of saints seeking and manifesting the gift of prophecy. An application can be made regarding all nine gifts of the Spirit. We are to “earnestly desire” spiritual gifts, especially prophecy (I Cor. 12:31;

14:1).

Although not all are “prophets” in the sense of the ministerial position (Eph. 4:11), yet, all believers have access to the spiritual gift of prophecy. In fact, Paul admonishes us to especially desire—not to be “prophets”—but to prophesy (I Cor. 14:1).

As we will see in another lesson (The Miracle of Ministry), any Spirit-filled believer has the capability of manifesting any or all of the nine gifts (manifestations) of the Spirit listed in I Cor. 12:8-10. Through this nine-fold equipment, the Lord Jesus Christ makes Himself visible to the Church and the world. The importance of each Christian seeking and manifesting spiritual gifts during worship services cannot be overestimated.

Of course, this by no means exhausts the laypersons’ ministry to the local church. Especially in this technological, media-oriented age, there are a hundred and one *natural* means of ministering to the Body (ushers, greeters, musicians, sound men, video technicians, printers, etc.).

Each believer must dedicate his natural and supernatural talents and gifts to the Lord and then “bloom where he’s planted.”

New Testament Pattern:

“And stop being continually drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18-19, Gk.).

Here, the apostle describes the variety of corporate worship available to us as the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Psalms.

This probably has reference to the singing of chapters in the Book of Psalms in the Bible. Today, many choruses sung in Spirit-filled churches derive their lyrics from the Psalms.

2. Hymns.

This could refer to “prophetic odes” or songs or praise given spontaneously to a believer during a service—a sung prophecy—in his native tongue; or it could refer to a song of praise composed by a Spirit-filled saint as he sought the Lord and His glory.

3. Spiritual songs.

This is, literally, “songs of the Spirit,” or songs directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, i.e., songs “in tongues.” This refers to the manifestation of the Holy Ghost wherein the Spirit of God gives both the words and the melody to a song of praise to God.

The apostle Paul gives almost identical advice to the Colossian Church in his letter (Col. 3:16). Hence, we can readily form a picture of Early Church worship.

Corporate Worship Revealed

1. Believers “gathering together” in one place (Acts 15:12).
2. Singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:15-19; Col. 3:16; I Cor. 14:15-16).
3. Giving and receiving of preaching and teaching of the Word of God (Acts 15:12;

20:7).

4. Observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7).
5. Giving and receiving of offerings (II Cor. 9:5).
6. Material support of the ministry (I Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6; I Tim. 5:17-18).
7. Manifestation of the spiritual gifts (I Cor. 14:26).
8. Collective prayer and intercession (Acts 4:31; 12:5).
9. Prayer for the sick by the elder (Ja. 5:14).
10. Testimony to God's grace (Acts 15:12).

There appears to be no "set form" or ritual regarding the day, or number of days per week on which the whole congregation gathered. Early in its career, the Church met "daily" and "from house to house" (Acts 2:46). There does seem to be abundant evidence that—regardless of the additional meetings held during the week—Sunday was observed as the *regular* day of worship (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 24:1-25; Jn. 20:19; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).

Thus we see the picture of the plan and purpose of God in the collective, public worship of the Church.

The Miracle of Ministry

“*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (I Pet. 4:10).

Someone has said Christians are “saved to serve.” Certainly, in the light of scriptures such as Heb. 9:14, we can see that our redemption was effected in order that we might serve God in worship and ministry unto others in His Name.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear to the careful observer that all believers are one Body in Christ (I Cor. 12:12), joined to one another and the Lord in the Spirit of Christ. This *mystical Body of Christ* is a living organism animated by the Life of Christ and empowered by the Holy Ghost. Each member of the Body of Christ has received one or more spiritual enablements which will edify the Church and serve the grace of God to the world.

Since we—the Body of Christ—are the Tabernacle of Christ and the dwelling place of God in this dispensation, it behooves each Christian to discover his or her place in the Body and begin to function in it to the best of his or her ability under God. Only as the individual members of the Church and, consequently, the Body of Christ at-large, displays the Life and Power of God through the spiritual enablements imparted to it, will the Presence of God become manifest to an unbelieving world. It is imperative that we do all within our power to recognize and operate in all of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit so that the wisdom, power and Love of God can once again grace this fallen world in the fullness with which they did in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago.

Manifestations

The first group of spiritual abilities we will study belong to a category which we have designated, manifestations. We choose this word to describe them for the purpose of under-scoring this fact: *they are not permanent possessions of the believer*. That is, these enablements are supernatural energies of the Holy Spirit Who indwells the Spirit-filled Christian and are “on again, off again” experiences operated by the Spirit within the believer at His will. They are to be desired and yielded to; yet their manifestation is *under the direct control of the Holy Spirit*. We cannot *make* them appear; nor can we operate them at will. They are under the sovereign control of God.

“*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*” (I Cor. 12:7).

This verse discloses several facts about the gifts of the Spirit.

First, these nine abilities are “manifestations.” The Greek word literally means, “shining forth.” That is, through these supernatural gifts, the energy of the Holy Spirit becomes visible. How often have you desired to *see* the Move of God? God is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24) and the only way He can become *visible* to the senses is through His miraculous powers. It is through the gifts of the Spirit that we are enabled to *see* or *hear* God in the here and now! Praise God!

Second, these gifts manifest *the Spirit*. They are attributes of His Personality, not ours. They are His Voice and Power made manifest in temples of clay.

Third, they are given: that is, they are manifested *in the present moment*. This text does not say, “the manifestation of the Spirit has been given.”

Fourth, they are given (in the present) to every man, that is, to every Spirit-filled member of the Body of Christ. These precious gifts are not for a select few or even exclusively for the full-time ministers of the Word. They are given to each and every member of the Church.

Fifth, these gifts are given for the purpose of the edification or “profiting” of the entire Body of Christ, not just the one manifesting the gift. Thus, we see the design of the gifts: *ministry to others by the supernatural power, presence and life of God.*

Although the apostle Paul does not group them in a particular sequence, for convenience and clarity, we will study them in three groups of three gifts.

Dedication

As we begin our study, settle it in your heart and mind that these gifts are *for you!*
Adopt this attitude:

“If I don’t manifest these gifts, perhaps no one will. If I don’t seek these gifts, perhaps no one will. I will earnestly desire and manifest these gifts for the glory of God and the edification of the Body of Christ. If I don’t, perhaps no one will.”

This is the attitude of a true and dedicated disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. By manifesting the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit, we allow the Lord *to become visible* to the Church and the world.

Illumination

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; to another discerning of spirits” (I Cor. 12:8, 10).

There are three gifts which bring revelation to us in our service for God. Bear in mind that they are supernatural enablements of the Spirit of God manifested in the present moment through a Spirit-filled believer, at the discretion of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

1. The Word of Wisdom.

Although there are no “cut and dried” definitions of these gifts given in the scriptures, we can deduce a general understanding of them by close examination of the grammar and context of our text. This is not “wisdom” but a “word of wisdom.” That is, this gift is not the product of a believer’s diligent study of the Word and daily walk with God, but a sudden, supernatural manifestation—in the present—of a “word” or portion of the omniscient wisdom of God. One moment the believer is without it; the next moment it appears.

The Lord Jesus demonstrated this gift on many occasions. Two of note are the question of tribute money (Mt. 22:17) and the instance of the woman taken in adultery (Jn. 8:7).

2. The Word of Knowledge.

This gift, like its companion, the word of wisdom, is an example of a supernatural manifestation—in the present—of a “word” or portion of the complete knowledge of God. It is not scholarly knowledge of God or the Bible gleaned from study and stored in

the Christian's heart, but a special enablement of the indwelling Spirit given for the purpose of supplying a particular need. It gives access to knowledge beyond the confines of our limited, human ability. The Lord Jesus operated in this gift repeatedly, as illustrated in the situation regarding Nathaniel (Jn. 1:48).

3. Discerning of Spirits.

This gift of the Spirit signifies the supernatural ability to discriminate and judge between different kinds of spirits (angelic, demonic, human and the Holy Spirit). It is not the ability to judge between the true and the false, etc., on the basis of acquired knowledge or wisdom, but a sudden, temporary, supernatural ability to *see* into the spirit world and arrive at true assessments concerning matters contained therein. Our Lord manifested this gift when demonstrating with Peter (Mt. 16:23).

Communication

“To another prophecy; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (I Cor. 12:10).

4. Prophecy.

This gift of speech is the supernatural ability of a Spirit-filled saint to speak forth the mind and counsel of God. It is not the recitation of facts gleaned from the study of God's Word, but, rather, the giving forth—in one's own language—the revelations of God given directly to one's spirit. A prophecy ministers to the Body: edification (building up), exhortation (calling closer to God), and comfort (encouragement, I Cor. 14:3). This manifestation of the Spirit occurred when the Ephesian believers received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6).

5. Divers Kinds of Tongues.

This manifestation of the Spirit describes the ability of a Spirit-filled Christian to speak forth—supernaturally—words from God in a language he has not consciously learned. It refers to an *impulse of the Spirit* during a congregational meeting to minister forth publicly an utterance in a language unknown to the speaker, and most often, to the hearers too. When interpreted this gift may bring forth: revelation, knowledge, prophecy or teaching (I Cor. 14:6).

6. Interpretation of Tongues.

This companion gift to that of divers (different) kinds of tongues provides a believer with the supernatural ability to understand and subsequently minister forth—publicly—the meaning of an utterance in an unknown tongue. It is entirely supernatural in that the believer has no conscious knowledge of the language being spoken, the meaning being supplied directly to the believer's spirit by the Holy Spirit.

Demonstration

“To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles” (I Cor. 12:9-10).

7. Faith.

The gift of faith is the supernatural ability given by God which enables a believer to possess the assurance that what God has promised or which the believer desires shall come to pass. Some translations render this gift, “special faith” or “faith for miracles.” Jesus referred to it as “the faith of God” and declared that it would “move mountains” (Mk. 11:23). Paul, using the same phraseology, identifies it with the “gift of faith” (I Cor. 12:9, 13:2). It is given by the Spirit during prayer and fasting (Mt. 17:21). Peter received and manifested the result of this gift when he raised Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:40).

8. Gifts of Healings.

This phrase literally reads, “the gifts of healings.” Possession of this manifestation of the Spirit enables one to be a channel of Divine healing to one in need: spirit, soul or body. It is not referring to natural methods of healing, but rather, to the direct, supernatural action of God through the Holy Spirit within a believer, which drives out afflictions and effects cures, restoring the injured or infirm person to health and wholeness. Jesus demonstrated this gift continually (Acts 10:38).

9. The Working of Miracles.

This gift of the Spirit enables a Spirit-filled believer to effect “signs and wonders” in the service of God. In short, the gift of the working of miracles will accomplish anything which the other eight gifts do not. It is required to raise the dead (Acts 9:40), and to cast out devils (Mt. 12:28). In situations where a bodily part is missing, a “recreation” of that member would constitute a manifestation of the gift of the working of miracles. It also enables one to alter the course of natural law (Jos. 10:12-14).

The Purpose of Gifts

Through these nine channels of power, the Presence of the Holy Spirit becomes manifest in our midst. It is through these manifestations of the Spirit that the Church is edified and the needs of humanity are supplied. The saints, as the song of old states, are “channels only,” but truly, “filled with all Thy wondrous power.” These gifts of the Holy Ghost are absolutely essential to the Body of Christ if we are to manifest the Life and Power of the Son of God on this earth during His physical absence. It is through the Church—by the gifts of the Spirit—that the Master is shown to be alive and well and doing the same works of mercy He always did.

“But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (I Cor. 12:11).

Notice in this verse that the Holy Spirit again underscores certain truths about the gifts which we have already endeavored to discuss. The verbs “worketh” and “dividing” are in the present tense. This fact reminds us that these gifts are not permanent possessions. They are available to “every man.” Once again, all Spirit-filled believers are eligible to manifest the gifts, *as the Spirit wills*. All of these operations are under the direct, sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit.

Exhortation

“But covet earnestly the best gifts...follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts” (I Cor. 12:31; 14:1).

In these verses we are admonished to desire earnestly the manifestation of the spiritual gifts in our lives. They are given by the Spirit; but we must desire to be so used. It is not enough to take the attitude, “God knows where I live; if He really wants to use me, He can.” Rather, we must vigorously seek and earnestly desire to have these wonderful evidences of the Power of God displayed to the Church and the world through us.

Impartation

How may we receive the manifestations of the Spirit?

First, we must be born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. These gifts flow through Spirit-filled saints of God who have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb empowered by His Spirit.

Second, we must be entirely consecrated to the will of God, desiring His glory, not ours.

Third, we must actively and consciously desire and seek for their operation in our lives.

Fourth, we must cultivate their manifestation through times of prayer and fasting. Jesus clearly connected the operation of the miraculous in our lives with a Spirit-controlled prayer life (Mt. 17:21; Jn. 14:12-13). The greatest proponent and displayer of the spiritual gifts, likewise, boasted of his private communication with God which issued in a public demonstration of His power (I Cor. 14:15, 14:6).

Through the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom and discernment of spirits we receive Divine illumination.

Through prophecy, divers kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues we enter into Divine communication.

And through faith, gifts of healings and the working of miracles, we make possible Divine demonstration.

These manifestations of the Spirit are the Divine avenues of supernatural Life and Power for the Church. They serve as the believer’s spiritual tool box in his ministry to the Body of Christ and the world.

Ministrations

In addition to the nine “manifestations” of the Spirit given to us in I Cor. 12:7-11, there are a number of other graces of God given to the Church mentioned in the scriptures.

Unlike the supernatural abilities we have just discussed which are “on again, off again,” these endowments of the Spirit are permanent possessions of the saints of God gifted with them. They are what we *are* in the Body of Christ.

Nine-fold Ministry

Just as there are nine “manifestations” of the Holy Spirit, so there are nine “ministrations” of the Holy Spirit. They are Christ’s gifts to the Body for the work of the ministry.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

Here are given the first four ministry gifts of the Spirit. These gifts have been popularly referred to as “the five-fold ministry.” Technically, however, Paul here gives us a “four-fold” ministry. The grammar of the Greek must have “pastors and teachers” referring to the same persons. This is further borne out by Paul’s words to Timothy concerning the qualifications of a pastor (bishop, elder). Among other things, he must be “apt to teach” (I Tim. 3:2). However, the gift of teacher is also listed separately in Rom. 12:7 and I Cor. 12:28, so the distinction is still warranted, though not from the verse in Ephesians.

Notice, first of all, that these gifts are Christ’s gifts to the Body. The calling to function in any of these ministries originates in God. Paul, an example of many ministry gifts, repeatedly stated that his call to the work of God came from the Lord (Rom. 1:1). Someone has aptly said, “Some are called and sent; others just packed up and went.” This statement is humorous but the reality is not. There is possibly nothing more devastating to the Body of Christ and the individual’s own spiritual life than the attempt of a member of the Church to function in an area in which he has not been gifted by God.

There are several lists of the ministries of the Spirit given in the Bible. They are: Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11 and I Pet. 4:11.

1. Apostle.

An apostle is one “sent forth on a commission.” This ministry gift describes the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry (Heb. 3:1), the Twelve (Lk. 9:1-10), Paul (Rom. 1:1) and a number of others totaling over 20 persons in the New Testament. It is a full-time ministry of evangelizing and church planting, teaching and establishing converts in the faith. The credentials of a true apostle are a Divine call to the work (Acts 13:1-2), the making of converts and disciples (I Cor. 9:2) and the ability to work “signs and wonders” (II Cor. 12:12). In addition, as one studies the Book of Acts carefully, it would appear that this “foundation gift” enables one to operate in all of the other ministries listed in Eph. 4:11 (for a full discussion of the ministry gifts, see my book, *Gifts Unto Men*, in the second course).

2. Prophet.

A prophet is one who “speaks forth the mind and counsel of God.” In the New Testament, this ministry describes one who is both a “forth-teller,” called and anointed by God to a ministry of preaching and teaching the Word, as well as a “fore-teller” gifted supernaturally to receive and disclose to the Church direct revelations from God, many of which would concern the future. A key Old Testament passage along this line instructs us that—according to the Lord—a true prophet of God will be subject to Divine dreams and visions (Nu. 12:6).

3. Evangelist.

An evangelist is a “bearer of glad tidings.” He is a ministry gift from God given to publicly proclaim the gospel. His ministry is confirmed by the ability to make converts to

the faith and have the Lord working with him in accompanying “signs and wonders” (Acts 8:6).

4. Teacher.

A teacher is one who instructs others in the truths of the Christian faith. He may function within one congregation, travel to several different churches or a combination of both. He may also fulfill his ministry in a school setting.

5. Pastor.

A pastor (elder, bishop) is a shepherd of God’s people, a spiritual leader of a local fellowship of saints, who possesses the gift of “governments” (I Cor. 12:28) and who feeds and instructs the saints in the Word of God. He is an under-shepherd under the authority of the “Great Shepherd of the sheep,” the Lord Jesus (I Pet. 5:1-5).

Other ministries

Another group of gifts is listed in Rom. 12:4-8. They are, likewise, ministries and not “manifestations” because Paul refers to them as “offices” (Rom. 12:4). There are some duplications of Eph. 4:11; consequently, we will delete those and comment on the others which we believe to be part and parcel of other gifts.

6. Deacon.

“Or ministry, on ministering” (Rom. 12:7, Gk.).

This gift—ministering—is translated elsewhere in the New Testament as “deacon” or the verb, “deaconing.” It refers to one who serves—in particular—the physical needs of others. Philip and Stephen were early New Testament deacons (Acts 6:5), although Philip also had the ministry of evangelist. This office contains the gift of “helps” (I Cor. 12:28). The qualifications for the office and ministry of deacon are given in I Tim. 3:5ff. (see my book, *The Empty Office*, in the second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

7. Giving.

“He the one who is constantly giving (imparting), with simplicity (liberality)” (Rom. 12:8, Gk.)

The spiritual ministry gift of giving refers to a Divine enablement to minister to others in material and financial ways. It is indispensable to the furthering of the work of God. No doubt, the women who followed the Lord Jesus and “ministered to Him of their substance” demonstrated this quality (Lk. 8:3). Indeed, many churches and ministries are “kept afloat,” financially, by those with this gift who often make up for the neglect and disobedience of members who refuse to tithe and give offerings to the work of God.

8. Showing Mercy.

This spiritual ministry refers to the demonstrating of real Christian love and compassion to those who have been bruised and battered by the ravages of sin, the assaults of the enemy and living in a fallen world. It is perhaps fulfilled in the work of Christian counseling, whether done by a pastor or Christian psychiatrist or psychologist. Perhaps it was manifested by Barnabas a “son of consolation.”

We have passed over the ministries of prophet and teacher given in Romans, chapter 12, as we have already noted them earlier. Another gift mentioned is “exhortation” (Rom. 12:8); we believe it is fulfilled in the office of evangelist. Likewise, “he that ruleth” we understand to be demonstrated by the office of apostle since the Greek noun means “to take the lead,” and this gift—more than any other—is the foundation-stone of the Church.

Another list of gifts appears in I Cor. 12:28.

There are no *new* designations here, but two synonyms do appear. “Helps,” as we have already noted, is contained in the office of deacon since it refers to ministering to and undergirding the weak and needy.

The other is “governments,” which we have mentioned is contained in the office of pastor (elder, bishop), the word meaning, “to rule in a local assembly of saints” (Vine).

It is important to observe that in I Cor. 12:28, Paul lists both “manifestations” and “ministrations” and states that both types of gifts have been “set” in the Church by God. In other words, even though “miracles” appears, this is not to imply a “ministry of miracles” as a permanent possession.

Last List

One final list of spiritual ministries appears in I Pet. 4:11. Peter says, “if any is speaking, as the oracles of God; if any is ministering (“deaconing”) as at the ability which the one, true God is constantly supplying” (Gk.).

Obviously, the “ministering” refers to the office of deacon. The “speaking” refers to a “ministry of speech.”

9. Speaking.

This is not the Greek word for evangelizing, preaching or teaching. It is the common word for speech. It evidently describes a type of *Heavenly eloquence* not due to natural oratorical ability, but to the anointing of the Spirit. Apollos no doubt possessed this ministry (Acts 15:24), as did Stephen (Acts 6:10, Gk.). Perhaps those in the Body of Christ today who give powerful testimonies are manifesting this gift. Certainly, many ministers of the Word would also possess this gift (Eph. 4:11).

Thus, we have the nine-fold equipment of the Church for the work of the ministry. These ministrations are the permanent enablings of those in the Body of Christ gifted with them. Certainly, more than one of these ministries may be manifested in one person.

The first five: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, are given “for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:11).

Divine Distinction

An important distinction must be made here. Although all members may minister in the “manifestations” of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:8-10), not all are called or equipped as “ministry gifts” to the Body. If there are “shepherds” there must be “sheep.” If there are those who “rule” there must be those “ruled over.” If there are “governments” or “ones who take the lead” there must be those in the Body who are to “follow.”

A careful balance must be observed in the things of God. While it is true that we are all one Body in Christ and members one of another, and although as believers we are

equal under God, we are not the same in office or authority.

The five-fold ministries were set in the Church by Christ in order to perfect (mature) the saints, in order that they, in turn, might minister to the Church and the world.

Motivations

“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts” (I Cor. 14:1).

It is important that we grasp the fact that all of our service to God—whether through the manifestations or the ministrations of the Holy Spirit—must be motivated by Love. This is the Divine design. All of our ministry must be prompted by the Love of God and a desire for His glory. Only in this way can we be pleasing to God and effective to man.

The text just quoted correctly points out the necessity of our “following after” or earnestly pursuing a real manifestation of the Love of God in our lives as we seek to minister to others by the gifts of the Spirit.

The apostle Paul give further amplification to this theme in the Book of Galatians. There he lists nine motivations:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Notice that Paul speaks of “fruit” and not “fruits.” As the late Dr. A.B. Simpson has beautifully written:

“It is all one fruit. We have not a great many things to do but just one, and that is to love; for all these manifestations of the fruit are but various forms of love. Joy is love exulting; peace is love reposing; long-suffering is love enduring; gentleness is love refined; meekness is love with bowed head; goodness is love in action; temperance is true self-love; and faith is love confiding, so that the whole sum of Christian living is just loving.”

Thus, we see the beauty of real Christian ministry, the Love of Christ expressed in word and deed through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the ministries of the Holy Spirit, motivated by this nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Consecration

How may we discover our ministries in the Lord?

“I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

Here is the fountainhead of all of our usefulness in the Kingdom of God. We must all—individually—as born again, Spirit-filled Christians once and for all, consecrate and dedicate ourselves unto God without reservation or qualification in order that His will—not ours—may be done. It is in the context of this exhortation to complete and hearty abandonment to God and His will that Paul begins to discuss the various ministry gifts in the Body. We have all received abilities—natural and supernatural—but we will never discover them until we have surrendered our *all* to God. This consecration results in our being “transformed” (“transfigured,” Gk.) by the renewing of our minds. That is, we begin to see ourselves—not as we once were—but as we are now, members of the

Body of Christ, with a job to do and a service to perform.

Thus, we are able to prove the “good, acceptable and perfect will of God, for us.” It is pathetic that many believers can tell everyone else in the Church what they should be doing, yet they are unable to discern the will of God for themselves.

Is this sad plight the will of God?
Decidedly not!

Revelation

This consecration, according to the apostle, leads to a revelation from God regarding His will for our lives and the gifts we may possess. The ministries may be within, dormant as it were, but it is the step of entire, unconditional consecration to God on our part which brings them forth into bold relief. It is our surrender which leads to our service.

Confirmation

“For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:8).

This text illustrates the fact that our ministry gifts will receive confirmation from the Lord. How silly, for example, for one to contend he is an apostle when there are no conversions as a result of his ministry, and the miraculous signs and authority of the office are not in evidence. Certainly, there will be a desire for a particular office present in the heart of an individual when one is so gifted (I Tim. 3:1); yet there must also be an accompanying enablement of the Spirit and a meeting of the qualifications for the ministry given in scripture. It is unfortunate that mere human desire and natural, carnal zeal (ego-drive) can often manifest in the place of a genuine Call of God.

Edification

“Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them” (Acts 15:12).

“As they ministered unto the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, ‘separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them’” (Acts 13:2).

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:3).

These verses indicate the Bible truth that the Church will be edified by the ministry of one truly gifted in a particular way. Appreciative comments from saints “Amen-ing” one’s ministry are an additional means of Divine witness.

Consecration, revelation, confirmation and edification: doorways into the acknowledgment, reception, manifestation and productivity of the manifestations, ministrations and motivations of the Holy Spirit.

Let us walk in the light of them and, by God’s Power, participate in the miracle of ministry unto others in His Name.

On the following page, take a moment to assess your gifts and ministries in the Lord Jesus. Take a few moments in the Presence of God to take stock of yourself in God.

My Spiritual Inventory

Have you been born again?

When and where?

Have you been filled with the Spirit?

When and where?

What is the evidence?

Have you been baptized in water since your conversion?

When and where?

Have you entirely consecrated yourself to God?

When and where?

Are you faithful in prayer, Bible study and witnessing?

How often?

Are you a member of a local Christian congregation?

Does it believe the entire Bible is God's Word?

Are you faithful in church attendance, giving and sharing?

Do you earnestly seek to manifest spiritual gifts?

Have you a desire to serve as a deacon?

Do you sense a call to the ministry of the Word?

Do you consider your natural talents *yours* or are you simply *a steward of them*, under God?

Do you consider winning and discipling one person to Jesus per year a worthwhile and reachable goal?

Why, or why not?

If you were to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to-day, would you be comfortable or uncomfortable in the Master's Presence?

Why, or why not?

What areas of your Christian life do you seek to change?

What do you propose to do about these situations?

Successful Christian Living

“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col. 2:6).

It is one thing to have been redeemed by the grace of God; and quite another to be living to the praise of the glory of that grace.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the privilege and responsibility of living for Him in the presence of the unbelieving world. Those around us who are without a personal relationship with the Heavenly Father may actually see Him in us as we walk in the Spirit of God. What possibilities are ours in Christ!

Perhaps the single most important subject to understand in the area of actual, successful, Christian living, is sin. We need to accurately grasp the facts of our deliverance from the bondage of sin before we can effectively live above its power in the presence of men. Be sure the eyes of the unsaved are upon us and our actions will speak at least as loud as our words to them of the reality of our relationship with God.

Jesus said:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 5:16).

Successful Christian living comes about through our knowledge of the facts pertaining to our complete redemption from sin. This redemption is three-fold: encompassing our total being, spirit, soul and body.

Sin’s Penalty

First, we have been delivered from the penalty of sin through the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf, and our co-crucifixion with Him.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

This verse declares the blessed truth that we have been declared “justified” or “in right standing” with God through our faith in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ.

“For he that has died is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7).

This verse reads, literally, “For he that has died stands Justified from sin.” That is, the *freedom* spoken of in this text is a legal one, not necessarily an experiential one. Not only did Christ die for us, as a Sacrifice in payment for our sin-debt, but we died with Him. We are no longer under the penalty of the broken law.

Through our death with Christ on the Cross (in the Mind of God), our relationship with the law—its penalty and jurisdiction—has been totally severed, just as anyone’s relationship with the laws of the land is terminated at physical death. Praise God, we are dead to the penalty of sin!

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. 7:4).

In the Mind of God’s justice, Christ died for us, satisfying the demands of God’s law, redeeming us by His Blood; and we also died with Him, severing our relationship with the law and its penalty. We are free!

Sin's Presence

Second, we shall very soon be delivered from the presence of sin. Our redemption from sin will ultimately include our freedom from the very presence of sin in our bodies. Just as our spirits were redeemed from the penalty of sin in the new birth and our justification by faith (Rom. 5:1; 8:10), so our bodies will also be redeemed by the power of the Holy Spirit at the Second Coming of Christ.

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11).

This verse brings out the blessed truth of our future deliverance from the bondage of our death-doomed bodies into the glorious freedom of our glorified bodies. Notice that this text states that if the Spirit of Christ is dwelling in us now, that same Spirit will quicken (future tense) our mortal (death-doomed) bodies. This verse does not refer to the resurrection. Dead bodies are not Paul's subject here, but mortal (lit. dying, but not yet dead). But this verse, likewise, does not refer to Divine healing either, as some teach. Paul does not say the Spirit is quickening as he would have had he meant a present blessing, but, rather, *shall quicken* (simple future tense, Gk.). Paul has in mind here the group of believers remaining on earth when Jesus Christ returns who will be translated and given new bodies like unto His glorious resurrection body!

Three-fold Salvation

We have Eternal Life in our spirits now!

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead (devoid of eternal life) because of sin: but the (human) spirit is life (living with God's life) because of righteousness (right-standing with God)” (Rom. 8:10).

We will receive Eternal Life in our bodies at the Second Coming! It is then that we shall be *saved* in our bodies from the very presence of sin (Rom. 8:23-24).

These two tenses of salvation—the past and the future—are crisis or *point in time* experiences. We were born again in a moment, when we made Jesus the Lord of our lives (Jn. 3:16). Thus, our spirits were saved. Likewise, our bodies shall be saved “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” when Jesus returns and our bodies are “quicken” and made to taste of Eternal Life (I Cor. 15:51-52).

But the third salvation—the salvation of our souls—is not an instantaneous event, but a progressive procedure.

We have been saved (in our spirit); we will be saved (in our body); and we are being saved (in our soul).

It is this daily process of the saving of our souls which is so crucial to our walk with God and our testimony among men. It is the degree of change that men can discern in our souls (intellects, emotions, wills) that cause them to take notice that we “have been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Soul Salvation

James the apostle gives us the clearest teaching in the Bible regarding the saving of our souls.

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with

meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls” (Ja. 1:21).

Notice several facts here. First, James is writing to believers, to Spirit-filled Christians. Second, he gives us a command to “put off” certain evil conduct and to “receive” in a humble attitude of mind, a “word” which has been “engrafted” in our hearts. This “word” has the power or Divine ability to “save” our souls.

It is obvious that James does not have initial salvation in mind here. This salvation is not concerned with the spirit which has been saved in the new birth, but, rather, with *the soul* which needs to be continually saved. This text literally reads, “and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to be continually saving your souls.”

This saving of the soul, then, is decidedly a process, *not a once for all* experience of grace. In this third salvation we have a distinct part to play. It is up to us to “put to death” certain evil tendencies, and, likewise, to cultivate the growth of the “engrafted word” which will result in our souls “being saved.”

It would be helpful at this juncture to remind ourselves that the word translated “saved” in the Bible is a much broader term than we often realize. It means: “save, heal, deliver, restore, renew, etc.,” depending upon the context.

Our soul is our conscious personality, our intellect, emotion and will. There is a “word” which we possess already abiding in our hearts (spirits) which has, when yielded to in an humble attitude of mind, the Divine Power to save, heal, transform and renew our conscious personalities. Praise God, how we need this ministry!

We will leave the first part of James’ admonition (to put off evil) until later. Concentrating on the second portion, it is necessary to discover what is meant by the “word.” In my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry*, in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*, in the chapter on Love, I said:

According to the apostle Paul, this “word” is the commandment of love (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). Jesus said it was the sum of the Old Testament. It is the one supreme commandment of the New Testament.

“But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Ja. 1:22).

This “word” is something which can be *heard* and *done*, or obeyed.

“For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (Ja. 1:23-24).

The Greek phrase rendered “what manner of man he was” is literally “what manner of birth he was.” The Christian is born again of Love, to walk in Love.

“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (Ja. 1:25).

Notice here that the “word” is also a “perfect law of liberty..” It can be “looked at” and “worked.”

James clearly identifies it in chapter two, verse eight:

“But if ye fulfill the royal law according to the commandment, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well” (Ja. 2:8).

This “word” is none other than the Love Commandment.

It is the “Word.”

It is the “Perfect Law of Liberty.”

It is the “Royal Law.”

It is the “New Commandment.”

It is the “Golden Rule.”

It is the “Law of Christ.”

It is the “word” (logos, Gk.) which has been engrafted in our hearts at the new birth.

“The old commandment is the word (logos, Gk.) which ye have heard from the beginning” (I Jn. 2:7).

“And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment” (I Jn. 3:23).

What is the “word?”

According to: Paul, Peter, James and John, the “word” or “logos” engrafted in our hearts is the Love Law given to us by Jesus.

Praise God for the opportunity of allowing the Seed of Divine Love engrafted in our hearts to blossom and grow to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in the place of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:16ff.).

Remember, James tells us to, “receive with meekness the engrafted word.” The word translated “receive” means to yield to or give right of way to. “Meekness” refers to a humble attitude of mind. It is not for us to *manufacture* the fruit of the Spirit (indeed, it is His, not ours); the Seed is already within us. We must simply yield to the Law of Love in our daily activities. Consistently, we must—by an act of our will—choose to Love in every crisis of life, instead of living after the impulses of our flesh (natural inclinations apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit).

Just here the first part of James’ exhortation must be understood and addressed. He tells us to “lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.” The idea is to “put to death” the propensities of our lower nature.

It is just here that the difficulty arises. The temptation to sin is often so intense, so insistent, that we find it well nigh impossible to comply with this command, as much as we may desire to do so. Is there no solution?

Praise God, there is!

The Truth About Sin

Before we can effectively deal with sin’s power in our daily lives, we must understand just what it is. Biblically, sin is both a power and an action.

We are all born under sin’s power, being “sinners by nature.”

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).

“And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. 2:3).

These verses portray the natural condition into which every child of Adam is born. The “spirit of the prince of the power of air” is constantly “working in us.”

However, this is not to say that the Devil is omnipresent, personally indwelling every unsaved individual. Rather, consider that he is capable of exerting a force field of evil upon the spirits of the unsaved, moving them to transgress against the laws of God and, consequently, to do his diabolical will. This “sin principle” was eloquently described by the apostle Paul as he reflected upon his pre-Christian experience in the Book of Romans,

chapter seven (see my book, *Psychiatry, Sin & Salvation*, in the third course, *Diploma in Ministry*):

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14)

“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:20).

This “sin principle” dwells in the unsaved (Eph. 2:3).

It can also exert an influence upon the unsaved.

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it (the body) in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12).

Divine Decision

We have a choice the unbelievers do not. They are *owned by sin* (Jn. 8:44; Eph. 2:3; Rom. 7:14). We have been delivered from the authority of *sin*, being indwelt instead by *the Holy Spirit* (Rom. 8:10). However, even though sin has been expelled from our inner man and we are released from this force field of evil, as regards the deepest, innermost self (spirit), yet we are still capable of being motivated by sin as it appeals to our bodily senses and the various glands, nerves and hormones of our fallen, physical beings.

This is why Paul says for us to refrain from “letting sin rule in our body” that we should obey it in the lusts (strong desires) thereof. Grammatically, the word “it” refers to “body,” not “sin.” It is our physical man (brain, nervous system, senses, etc.) that must be controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is our body which has not yet been redeemed. By disciplining our bodies we can live above sin. It is here that the second aspect of sin makes its entrance. Sin is also an action.

Sin: an Action

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (I Jn. 3:4).

We see here that sin is also an action, a breaking of the laws of God. We have also discovered that for us as Spirit-filled saints of God and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and participators in the New Testament, there is basically only one law, the Law of Love.

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, ‘thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet’: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying (‘word,’ ‘logos,’ Gk.), namely, ‘thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:8-10).

In the words of James, we must “lay apart” the actions of sin and subsequently allow the Love Law to have preeminence in our lives. Paul, likewise, emphasizes the importance of “putting to death” our bodily responses to sin in order to live holy lives among men.

“For if you are constantly living according to the flesh ye are about to die: but if ye through the Spirit are constantly putting to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13, Gk.).

Whether or not we succeed in this proposition depends upon our understanding of and

reaction to another important Bible term: temptation.

The Truth About Temptation

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust (strong desire, Gk.) and enticed” (Ja. 1:14).

Once again, James gives us some crystal clear teaching concerning a subject which is vital to successful, daily, Christian living. It is not the view held by the average Christian concerning the subject. Subconsciously, if not consciously, the normal Christian would recite the text just quoted: “But every man sins, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.”

But this is not what James says. To be “drawn away of our own lust (strong desire) and enticed” is not sin, but temptation!

Unfortunately, many believers have the mistaken idea that if one is truly saved, he will never have any sinful emotions in his consciousness; there will be no “strong desires” welling up within to retaliate, envy, hate, lust or otherwise manifest an un-Christ-like trait.

Nothing could be further from the experiential truth! The truth is, before conversion we had a human nature under the control of the unholy spirit; whereas after the new birth, we have a human nature under the control of the Holy Spirit; but in both cases, *we still retain our human nature!* We still possess—when not under the conscious control of the Holy Spirit—all of our natural, human emotions and capacities for sinful self-expression. However, emotions are not *sinful* and temptation is not sin!

“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

Notice, carefully, that this verse does not say we will not *have* the lust (strong desire) of the flesh when we walk in the Spirit, but, rather, that we will not *fulfill* (carry out to completion) the desire of the natural self when walking in the Spirit of God. The apostle Paul defines “walking in the Spirit” two verses earlier:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word (logos, Gk.), even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Gal. 5:14).

And so we see that Paul and James are in perfect agreement regarding the nature of successful, Christian living. It is none other than subduing the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit in such a manner that the Divine Love of God is consistently manifested to others.

Triumphing Over Temptation

But how do we deal successfully with temptation?

How are we to discipline our bodies to respond in Love rather than to the pressure of our senses?

Let’s remind ourselves of the first temptation of the first human beings recorded in the first Book of the Bible. You will recall that God had given only one prohibition to the man and the woman: to refrain from eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:17).

Three Choices

We have often been taught that the choice was very clear and that the two needed simply to choose between obedience and disobedience. This is only partially true. There remained available to Adam and Eve a third alternative when faced with the temptation, beyond either obeying or disobeying. That alternative was: *calling upon God*.

In the heat of the test, when all within them cried out for gratification in the eating of the forbidden fruit, when their senses clamored that the tree was “good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6), when they sensed the absolute inability of even an innocent, human nature to keep the spiritual law of God, they could have *called upon God*. He would have met the temptation for them, and they would never have fallen from grace!

How tragic that, instead, they chose to meet the test “in the flesh” (human nature apart from the aid of the Holy Spirit). The pages of human history have preserved the utter travesty of their choice.

New Testament Experience

What is perhaps even more unfortunate is that many New Testament believers have not learned this lesson. How tragic that we continue to fight the battle in our own selves in-stead of relying on the Power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the very moment of crisis!

Let’s face it. Isn’t the real truth of the matter that we consider ourselves “pretty good Christians,” well able to live victoriously. May God help us to see—with the eyes of our spirits—that there is only one victorious Life: *Christ’s!*

He is the only Perfect Son and it is only as we—truly—admit our weakness and inability to face temptation in our own strength, relying instead upon His within us, that we will triumph over temptation on a daily basis. Our success does not lay in ignoring the lusts of the flesh, nor in repressing or denying them (maintaining that we are too spiritual to own such sinful propensities). There is nothing in the whole wide world we can *do* to live above sin (in and of ourselves). We need Christ, desperately.

Our victory lies in bringing these weaknesses and shortcomings out into the Light of the grace of God and allowing the Holy Spirit “to put them to death” through the operation of the prayer language. In this way we can experience true spiritual victory, not a human counterfeit of our own invention.

Our Moment of Truth

Each and every temptation is actually a potential *moment of Truth* wherein we have the opportunity of allowing the Spirit within to meet the challenge for us with the resultant fruit of the Spirit coming forth in the place of our “works of the flesh.” This is successful, Christian living!

Remember, the Love of God is already within us. We have only to allow the indwelling Holy Spirit to deal with the temptations for us. We must learn to let Him subdue our bodies so that we do not *fulfill* (carry out to completion) the lusts (strong desires) of our natural, human natures.

This is accomplished by means of prayer.

Prayer Power Unlimited

Recall that the first man and woman could have been victorious in the moment of trial if they would have—in faith and trust—*communicated with God*.

It is not an accident, therefore, that we are counseled in the New Testament:

“For because he himself [in his humanity] has suffered in being tempted (tested and tried), he is able immediately to run to the cry of (assist, relieve) those who are being tempted and tested and tried [and who therefore are being exposed to suffering]” (Heb. 2:18, Amplified Bible).

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).

Notice the importance of *grace* in these verses. Grace is God’s unmerited favor, our Heavenly Father doing something for us which we cannot do for ourselves.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).

The apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 8:13:

“But if ye through the Spirit are constantly mortifying (putting to death) the practices of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13, Gk.).

It is the Holy Spirit Who *kills* our fleshly propensities as we seek His aid in prayer.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

In Eph. 6:17 Paul reminds us that the Spirit is our Sword in spiritual combat with the world, the flesh and the devil (see my books, *The Perfect Weapon* and *Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link*, in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

“And take salvation as your helmet, and the Spirit as your sword, which (Spirit) is the spoken word (voice, utterance) of God” (Eph. 6:17, Gk.).

We wield this mighty Sword by means of prayer (Eph. 6:18, Gk.).

It is only as we allow our indwelling Intercessor to help our infirmities (weaknesses, liability to assault by the tempter) that we receive the victory in our lives over the power of sin. We dare not struggle with temptation, testing or trial *on our own*. Rather, we must allow God, the Holy Spirit, to meet each difficulty for us as we take them to Him in prayer. It is Holy Ghost prayer (i.e., prayer *in other tongues*) which will edify us, build us up in our faith and keep us in the sphere of God’s Love (I Cor. 14:2; Jude 20-21).

Indeed, Jesus counseled us to spend much time in prayer in order to avoid temptation in the first place (Mt. 6:13)!

“Is any among you afflicted (tested, tempted or tried)? Let him keep on praying” (Ja. 5:13, Gk.).

“But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

This Power of God is not only Power to witness, worship and work, but power to walk as well (Gal. 5:16, see my books, *You Must Be Drunk!* and *All About the Anointing [Diploma in the Deaconate]*).

Under the Influence

Just as the alcoholic must imbibe a certain quantity of wine before the beverage *speaks and acts* through him, so, too, we must daily commune with the Holy Spirit until we are *under the influence* of His radiant, loving Personality (Eph. 5:18).

Through this two-fold process of “putting to death”—by the Spirit—the sinful practices of the flesh, and then choosing to think, speak and act on the principle of indwelling Love, our very souls (conscious personalities) can be continually *saved* (healed, restored, transformed, renewed) from all the effects of sin and Fall, resulting in a God-like countenance and personality.

Praise God for a complete restoration in Christ!

Do you long for a completely redeemed personality, full of the fruit of the Spirit and free from strife, hate, fear and confusion (Gal. 5:22)? Then resolve today that you were born again of Love in order to walk in Love on a daily basis, revealing to the world the Presence of Christ through your renewed personality.

This is successful, Christian living.

The Main Event

“*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil*” (Eph. 6:13).

A correct understanding of the subject of spiritual warfare is essential to living a victorious Christian life. In order to win spiritual conflicts, we must understand and act in the light of certain fundamental facts.

We Are in a Battle

The first truth we must recognize—if we are to win in the area of spiritual warfare—is that we are engaged in a conflict. It is naive to assume that just because we have a living relationship with the Heavenly Father, everything in our lives will automatically fall into Divine order. We must accurately estimate the Bible truth that we are constantly engaged in a spiritual conflict of eternal significance. This war is infinitely more important than any boxing or wrestling “main event.” Daily, we are being besieged by a host of malevolent spiritual forces intent on neutralizing our effectiveness as the Children of God in the midst of a world dominated by spiritual darkness.

If we are to wage a successful spiritual combat, we must come to grips with the fact of the existence of a conflict. We must—once and for all—dismiss the excuses for the works of the enemy which we have entertained for so long. It is not mere coincidence that we are harassed by fear, plagued by disease, dominated by poverty or intimidated by a lack of boldness in witnessing. It would be manifestly enlightening to us, should the curtain of the spiritual world be lifted and the work of the enemy against us really be perceived by us in its entirety. That which we have *accommodated* and allowed in our lives—from a rocky marriage to a financial disaster—would often (not always), directly or indirectly, be seen to be nothing more than a calculated attack of evil spirits to thwart our Christian testimony and neutralize our experience in Christ.

“Who hath delivered us from the power (authority) of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13).

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (Jn. 17:16).

“For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20).

These scriptures—and many others like them—disclose the blessed truth of our complete redemption and deliverance from the world system. As those who have been rescued, we pose a real threat to the pseudo-rulers of this system. We are representatives of the victorious Christ, commissioned by Him to enforce His victory in the world today.

Not only are we Christ’s legal representatives in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (II Cor. 5:20), but we as Spirit-filled believers have been endowed with spiritual fire-power to displace all the works of the devil in the lives of men (Acts 1:8; Lk. 10:19).

Through the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Blood of Christ, the Name of Jesus and fasting and prayer, we pose a real threat to the kingdom of darkness. These weapons in God’s arsenal have been given to us so that we might successfully wage spiritual warfare and rescue the perishing.

We Must Know Our Enemies

A second fact of no mean importance in understanding and conducting spiritual

warfare is that of knowing our enemies. I mentioned in my book, *Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link* (also in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*), that it would be absurd for a professional boxer to spend months training and studying the moves of his opponent only to attack the referee at the sound of the bell!

The only way to be victorious in spiritual conflict is to understand who our enemies really are.

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Pet. 5:8).

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil” (Eph. 6:11).

These verses make it abundantly clear to any Christian that our adversaries in the “good fight of faith” are spiritual. It is not: people, places, politics or predicaments which we are really battling, but:

1. The Devil.
2. Principalities.
3. Powers.
4. Rulers of the Darkness of this World.
5. Spiritual wickedness in high (heavenly) places.

In addition, we have the world system and our flesh with which to contend. We have already noted how to deal with these two foes in another lesson.

Settle it in your heart, then, that the real forces behind your circumstances are spiritual entities fired with a vehemence of hell. The perpetrators of the evil day in which we so often find ourselves are the Devil and his hosts of evil spirits.

Let us not fight, “as those who beat the air,” but let us rather, “make every lick count,” and deal with the real foes arrayed against us. By the Holy Bible and the Spirit of God, let us determine to recognize—as one minister has so ably put it—“the scene behind the seen.” Thus will we win spiritual battles.

We Must Know Our Weapons

If it is vital for us to recognize that we are in a conflict, and also to understand who our enemies really are, it is, likewise, imperative that we take stock of our weapons.

Remember, we are not in a natural conflict. If we were, natural weapons would have their place. However, Paul reminds us that we, “wrestle not against flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:12). Spiritual warfare must be waged with spiritual weapons.

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (natural), but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (II Cor. 10:4).

“By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left” (II Cor. 6:7).

The gospel (the Word of Truth), the Power of God (the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit), and the armor of righteousness (the whole armor of God), are the spiritual tools God has placed in our arsenal. Without them we shall face only disappointment and defeat; with them we shall be *more than conquerors* through Him

Who loved us and fitted us with such a dynamic defense.

Defeating Our Foes

1. The World.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (I Jn. 2:15).

The “world system” refers to the entire “course of this world” (Eph. 2:2), which is dominated by the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.” It encompasses the entire natural, sensual and demonic corruption of society from the purposes, plans and provisions of the Heavenly Father. Its chief end product is sin (transgression of God’s law). Our weapon against this foe is *unconditional dedication of our entire selves: spirit, soul and body, to God, and the yielding of our members to him as instruments of righteousness, both “once for all” and daily* (Rom. 12:1-10). Only a greater love for God can displace a love for the world in our hearts.

2. The Flesh.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts (desires) of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Ja. 1:21).

“Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Pet. 2:1-2).

These verses make it clear that it is our privilege and responsibility to live in daily victory over our natural, human nature, and manifest the “fruit of the Spirit,” which is Love, in the place of the works of the flesh, which are sin. This is accomplished—as we have noted in another lesson—by “putting to death” the deeds of the body (fleshly responses) and subsequently “receiving the Word” or *walking in obedience to the indwelling love law*. The “sincere milk of the word” in the text quoted above (I Pet. 2:1-2), probably has reference, not only to the written Word of God—the teachings of scripture—but more especially to the *teaching (logos, Gk.) of love*, engrafted in our hearts, spoken of by Paul, James and John as the “Word.”

The power to live this life is, of course, the indwelling Holy Spirit to Whom we are to yield in private prayer in the Spirit (other tongues) (Eph. 6:17-18; Jude 20-21).

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:18-19).

This is a beautiful word picture contrasting two exalted states. The first is one of drunkenness resulting in profligacy (degradation). The second characterizes the Spirit-controlled life which manifests itself in praise and joy of heart.

There is another telling feature of this analogy. Just as it requires different amounts of alcohol to cause different individuals to become inebriated, so it takes different amounts of “communion in the Spirit” for different Christians “to come under the influence” of the

Holy Spirit! May we all accurately determine our own particular needs of the grace of God and live accordingly.

3. The Devil.

“And they overcame him (the Devil) by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11, Gk.).

This verse discloses the key to overcoming the Devil. John the apostle has in view here our defeat of the adversary in our individual, spiritual lives, particularly as concerning our eternal destiny. Three factors must be noted:

A. The Blood of the Lamb.

It is the Blood of Jesus Christ which has purchased our redemption (Rev. 1:5). God stated that it was the blood which maketh atonement for our souls from the very beginning (Lev. 17:11). It is the shed Blood of Christ which has settled the “sin question” and given us access into the Presence of God (Heb. 10:19). It is the Blood of Jesus which has made possible our deliverance from the authority of Satan and which has ended his power over us (Gal. 1:4; see my books, *What Price, Freedom?* and *Plead the Blood!*).

B. The Word of Their Testimony.

This refers to our public declaration that Jesus is our Savior and Lord (Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 3:1), and that we have—in fact—been redeemed by His Blood. It is another way of saying that we have expressed living faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This phrase identifies a company of people who are not ashamed to publicly call Jesus *Lord* (Sovereign, Master, Ruler) in the presence of the world, the flesh and the Devil.

C. They Loved Not Their Lives Unto Death.

This phrase further identifies this group of people as those who take the word of Jesus literally:

“For whosoever shall save his (natural) life shall lose it (eternally); but whosoever shall lose his (natural) life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it (eternally)” (Mk. 8:35).

“Death” here refers to physical martyrdom for the cause of Christ. As one commentator has put it, these people carried their “not-love” of (physical) life all the way to death.

Thus, we soundly defeat the Devil by the Blood of the Lamb—our complete redemption from sin and the authority of the Devil—the Sacrifice of Christ for us; the Word of our testimony—our public confession of Jesus as our Lord—and by our abandonment to the will of God, even to the laying down of our natural lives in death for His Name if need be.

There are several other weapons available to us as we wage spiritual warfare with the remaining foes: principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

1. The Holy Spirit.

It was the Anointing of the Holy Spirit upon the Lord Jesus Christ that enabled Him to do all of His mighty works (Acts 10:38). Our Lord promised us the ability to do those very same miracles—even greater ones—through the Anointing of the Holy Ghost (Jn. 14:12-13). This power, as we have discovered in another lesson, includes access to the nine gifts of the Spirit enumerated in I Cor. 12:8-10. Jesus, Himself, said that special faith and the power of the Holy Spirit were required to deliver those possessed with devils (Mt. 17:21; 12:28). Thus, the Holy Spirit is the one “indispensable Weapon” in our Divine arsenal (Isa. 59:19-21; Zec. 4:6).

Through the revelation gifts (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discernment of spirits) we can expose and learn how to best deal with the work of the enemy; through the communication gifts (tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy) we can encourage each other while undergoing the enemy’s attacks; and through the demonstration gifts (faith, gifts of healings, working of miracles) we can effectively dislodge and subdue all the works of the enemy in our lives and the lives of others.

2. The Name of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus has bequeathed the use of His Name in spiritual combat to His Church. We must understand that His Name, breathed in faith, has all authority in Heaven, Earth and Hell (Phil. 2:9-10). It certainly is not a “magic amulet,” which may be voiced effectively against the enemy by one who is without a personal relationship to the Master (Acts 19:13-16), yet with a proper understanding of its use and power, the Name of Jesus carries with it all the authority of the Master Himself against the enemy of our souls (Acts 16:18).

3. The Blood of Jesus.

As we have already discovered, the Blood of Jesus is a tremendous weapon in fighting the “good fight of faith” (Rev. 12:11), largely, because it is emblematic of the position in God which it has purchased for us. All of our covenant blessings are ours because of the precious Blood. *To plead the Blood* in spiritual conflict is no idle display of ritualism. Rather, it serves to remind the Lord, the Devil and ourselves of our victorious position in God and our legal right to freedom from the authority and power of the enemy in every area of life.

4. The Word of God.

The importance of the Bible in waging and winning spiritual warfare cannot be overemphasized. It is the Word of God, forever settled in Heaven, which discloses the Truth about God, the spiritual world, ourselves and the reality of spiritual conflict. Without a correct understanding of—and belief in—and obedience to the written Word of God, we shall never prevail in actual wrestling with the enemy. It is the Word of God which sets forth what Christ has done for us on the Cross, what He is doing for us as High Priest and Intercessor, and what the Holy Spirit can do through us in the *here and now* experience of our conflict. The Word of God is the starting place of all successful spiritual combat.

5. The Angels of God.

The Bible tells us that angels are “all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14).

The scriptures abound with illustrations of how angels have been sent by God to minister to His People in times of: revelation, temptation and tribulation. These celestial spirits have a part to play in helping bring about God’s plan on planet earth. They are dispatched from the Throne of Grace in response to our prayers to God for deliverance (Mt. 26:53; Psa. 103:20). Though there are fallen angels (demons), let us never forget the myriad of godly ones. Truly, there are many more which be for us in life’s fight, than those which be against us (II Ki. 6:16)!

The Whole Armor of God

We come now to the closing phase of our study. Perhaps the most familiar portion of scripture examining our place and procedure in spiritual warfare is Eph. 6:10-18. We have discussed this portion of the Bible, as well as its background texts (Isa. 59:16-21), in our book, *Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link* (also in my second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*). Consequently, we will notice the chief truths given here only briefly.

The Apostle first admonishes us to: “be strong in the Lord.” This is literally “be strengthening yourselves in the Lord and in the dynamic strength of His might.” Notice, this is something we must do (I Cor. 14:4; Jude 20). If we do not build ourselves up in faith by prayer, we have no one to blame if in the “evil day of adversity” our “strength is small” (Pro. 24:10).

Next, he exhorts us to put on God’s whole armor. No part is to be overlooked. Total armor equals total victory. Many failures in spiritual warfare can be traced to inadequate preparation and defense.

Partial armor yields only partial victory.

No armor...

After outlining our enemies as different classes of evil spirits in the spiritual *air* (atmosphere) around us, the apostle lists our *armor*. It is this which will stand us in good stead in *the evil day*. What is this *evil day*? This will vary from person to person. In short, it is any time when one’s faith is tried, temptation is insistent, or affliction or persecution arise upon us for Jesus’ sake. It is a *time of trouble* calculated to wreck our spiritual lives and give the Devil an inroad.

1. The Belt of Truth.

Jesus said, “Thy Word is Truth” (Jn. 17:17).

John said, “...the Spirit is Truth” (I Jn. 5:6).

The Master said, “I...am the Truth” (Jn. 14:6).

Thus, the Word of God, the Spirit of God and the Son of God must be the mainstays of our Christian experience. We must live in understanding of, and obedience to, both the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Certainly, we should humbly bow before the God of the Word also!

2. The Breastplate of Righteousness.

Righteousness is being declared “in right standing with God.” Our righteousness is

two-fold. Through the death of Christ on our behalf, right-standing with God (the removal of guilt and the addition of Christ's goodness) has been imputed to us. That is, the righteousness of the Son of God has been "set to our account" as a free gift of God's grace (Rom. 3:24). It is this *legal righteousness*, based, not upon what we have done, but upon what Christ has done, which gives us our sure standing in the Presence of God. It is by faith, not by works (Eph. 2:8-9). Secondly, our righteousness is imparted to us by the indwelling Holy Spirit Who makes the Life of Christ real in our experience as we walk in the Spirit of Love and thus fulfill the requirement of God's Law (Rom. 8:4).

3. The Gospel of Peace.

This refers to the blessed mission of the messengers of the gospel declaring the reality of peace with God through the work of Jesus Christ (Isa. 52:7). The very feet which took us on paths of sin, now are to carry us forth as heralds of the Gospel of peace with God!

4. The Shield of Faith.

This piece of weaponry is declared to be "able to quench (put out) all the fiery darts of the wicked one." John gives us the definition of this faith in his first epistle:

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (I Jn. 5:4-5)?

This is very simply *heart faith* in the Person of the Lord Jesus as Savior, Lord and Deliverer. The Lord Jesus never once sinned in thought, word or deed during His time on earth. In addition, He paid the sin-debt that we had incurred, freeing us from the wrath of God and the power of Satan. The Shield of Faith simply says: "The victory of Christ over the world, the flesh and the Devil is my victory, for I am *in Him*, and He is *in me*. It is complete and invincible, because His victory was and is complete and invincible."

It was the shield of faith Jesus used in His conflict with Satan in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1ff.). Faith—for any conflict—"comes by hearing, and the (spiritual) hearing by a word from God" (Rom. 10:17, Gk.). As the Adversary approached the Master, the Heavenly Father gave Him a "word" from the Word which Jesus "used" as a shield by speaking it out in faith. We must do the same.

Paul refers to faith as a shield in Eph. 6:16. Interestingly, the verse reads, literally, *"over all, having taken up the faith (of God) as your shield, wherewith (the shield) ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one"* (Gk.).

In the original Greek, the word rendered "wherewith" agrees, grammatically, with "shield," not "faith." Why do we make this distinction? Because this isn't a "garden variety" type of faith but an active one, used as a "shield," spoken to the enemy as Jesus used it.

5. The Helmet of Salvation.

Salvation, in the words of one Bible scholar, is "God's all-inclusive redemptive term." It means: salvation from sin, healing, deliverance and soundness for spirit, soul and body. God's salvation entitles us to pursue victory in every spiritual conflict threatening the enjoyment of this "full salvation" by ourselves and others.

6. The Sword of the Spirit: the Word of God.

All of the spiritual armor, with the exception of this article, is defensive, enabling us to “stand” (hold on to what we’ve gained). Only the “Sword of the Spirit” is offensive (enabling us to gain new ground and plunder the strongman’s house).

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

In the original Greek, the word “sword” is *feminine* in gender. The word “Spirit” is *neuter* in gender. But the word “which” is *neuter* in gender, agreeing with *Spirit*, *not* feminine to agree with *sword*. In Greek grammar there is a rule that states, “relative pronouns (i.e., “which”) agree in number and gender with their antecedents (the words they modify).” Therefore, Paul’s Greek text is saying, “and the Sword of the Spirit, which (*Spirit*) is the word of God.” The Greek noun translated “word” in this verse is “rhema” which has reference, not to the written Word of God (the Bible), but to a “spoken utterance.” Our Sword, then, is none other than the Holy Spirit of God Who is our *utterance* (voice) before God (see my book, *The Perfect Weapon*).

This ministry of the Holy Spirit in warfare on our behalf was prophesied by Isaiah:

“When the enemy shall come in like the flood, the Spirit of Yahweh shall put him to flight” (Isa. 59:19, Heb.; see my book, *Light for Living*).

It is not surprising to discover that we wield this Sword by means of prayer in the Spirit (other tongues). When is the Spirit God’s “word” or “voice” on our behalf but when we pray “as the Spirit gives the utterance” (I Cor. 14:2)? This is certainly the teaching of Paul in his discussion of the spiritual armor in Eph. 6:10-20.

Through praying in the Holy Ghost (other tongues), we can allow the indwelling Holy Spirit to “put the enemy to flight” in our lives and the lives of those around us. If we pray to God privately, we can then speak to the mountain (or demon) publicly: *and it will move!*

7. Prayer and Fasting.

These two weapons work closely together, along with all the others. It is through prayer that we are edified and built up in our faith (I Cor. 14:4; Jude 20). Moreover, fasting and prayer result in “special faith” to cast out demons (Mt. 17:21). We are to “cast out” evil spirits possessing people by means of the “word of faith.” But we must tarry in the Presence of God in prayers of communion, intercession, edification and worship first. Our private prayer will result in public ministry. The “prayer of faith” (Mk. 11:22-24) and the prayer of “binding and loosing” (Mt. 18:18-20) are directly connected to fighting and winning spiritual battles.

Through private prayer we can deal with the spiritual forces behind the scenes of a spiritual conflict, and through the “word of faith,” as God leads, we can deal with the manifestations of those forces in the lives of men and the circumstances of life.

Spirit-empowered prayer can *change things* for:

1. The Lost (Rom. 10:1; I Tim. 2:1-2).
2. The Saved (Rom. 8:26-28; Eph. 6:17-20).
3. The Ministry (Rom. 15:30; Phil. 1:19).

It is up to us—the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ—to take up “the whole armor of God,” free ourselves of all the works of the Devil, and then liberate all humanity from the authority and power of darkness. Onward, Christian soldiers!

Worldwide Witnessing

“*And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*” (Mk. 16:20).

Evangelism is the heartbeat of the Church. Every believer has the privilege and responsibility of being a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, declaring in word and deed, the gospel.

The word “evangel” means “good news.” The word “evangelist” means a bearer of glad tidings, a messenger of good news. Admittedly, not every believer can do the work of a full-time evangelist, but every believer can testify—by life and speech—to the grace of God which has saved him through Jesus Christ.

Every saint needs to be actively involved in the ministry of evangelism. Although not everyone in the Body of Christ will be gifted by the Spirit to set forth the gospel of Christ in a formal manner behind the pulpit, yet, it is the plan of God that everyone who names the Name of Christ should share the good news whenever and wherever possible in an informal manner.

A New Ministry

“*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation*” (II Cor. 5:18).

If you are a Christian, you are in the ministry. You may not be called into the “five-fold” ministry, but according to the Word of God, you are in “the ministry.” What is this ministry? It is the ministry of reconciliation. That is, every believer has the sacred trust of sharing the message of God’s redeeming Love to mankind with everyone within his sphere of influence. It is simply a matter of “letting our light shine” in word and deed among men in such a way that they are moved upon by the Holy Spirit to accept, believe and receive the work of Jesus Christ done on their behalf in reconciling them to God.

I read a statistic some time ago that has continued to both challenge and inspire me. I doubt that I shall ever get away from its possibilities.

Dr. Charles Allen stated in his book, *God’s Psychiatry*, that if there were only one true believer alive in the world, and that one true Christian won just one other individual to Christ in one year, and if they continued to each win just one additional person per year, in just 31 years, over two billion souls would be saved!

That means that in 32 years our present population would be saved, in 35 years, the estimated population of the earth for the turn of the century (about 10 billion) would be won to God! Imagine, all this without media ministry, crusades, church services, etc.! Personal soul-winning—alone—could win the world!

Perhaps more alarming is the fact that some estimate the present number of born-again persons on planet earth, not at *one*, but *600 million*. That means with the same type of exponential growth (each one winning one per year), the world could be won in four years!

Get the population statistics for your city or town and allow the Holy Spirit to expand your horizons concerning the “winnability” of your world!

I have a close friend who has won nearly 30 persons to Jesus Christ in a little over a year. Imagine, without fanfare, brochures, special cards, or any other hype, he has

quietly, consistently let his light shine in such a way that over two dozen persons have come into a living relationship with the Savior in slightly over a year. Thank God, he has grasped the meaning of Christianity outside of the pulpit: worldwide witnessing!

Passive Evangelism

There are, broadly speaking, two types of evangelism: active or aggressive sharing of the gospel, and passive or apologetic witnessing to the grace of God. By apologetic, we do not mean witnessing in a defensive manner, but simply that, in this setting, the believer is only responding to the inquiry of the unsaved person rather than initiating the contact himself.

The apostle Peter gives us the guideline for this type of passive sharing of the gospel.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is within you with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15).

First, we are to “sanctify” or “set apart” the Lord God in our hearts. That is, we are to—daily—submit ourselves unto the indwelling Christ as Lord of our lives. He is to reign supreme within, with no rivals. In addition to a submitted will towards God, we are to have a servant’s attitude toward man. It is our responsibility to be ever prepared to render to anyone a Bible reason for the certain hope we have of eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God.

It is our God-given duty to be adequately equipped in the knowledge of our redemption so that anyone whom the Spirit places within our sphere of influence may receive from us the Truth concerning the Way of salvation.

Eternal Life always makes itself evident in the countenance and manner of life of the person in whom It dwells. The Christ-life in your life, if conscientiously yielded to, will manifest a distinct poise, peace and serenity in your experience among unbelievers. This God-like personality will stand in stark contrast to the fear, strife and uncertainty of the majority of modern men. Just as surely as our Light shines, the darkness of the world will feel its effects. This demonstration of the Life of God within us will prompt the curious onlooker to inquire as to the source of it. It is in response to this Holy Spirit-inspired curiosity that our witness to Christ is made.

But notice that Peter qualifies the nature of our response. It is to be with “meekness and fear.” That is, we are not to brow-beat the inquiring soul with a “holier-than-thou” display of sanctimonious piety. Nor are we to overpower him with a “bull-dog-matic” air of Bible-thumping rhetoric. We are not dealing with merchandise but with precious human lives which our Savior shed His Blood to redeem. Our conversation should be in meekness. That is, we are to calmly and simply explain the “hope of salvation.” It is up to us to take our place, not above the individual in an assumed superiority, but alongside him, as one spiritual beggar showing another where to find food.

Our conversation is also to be “in fear.” The idea here is “self-distrust.” Peter is here reminding us that it is truly, “not by our might, nor by our power, but by His Spirit.” The sincere seeker will not be won to Christ by our cleverness or natural skill. It is not the wisdom of purely human logic that draws men, but the Father, Himself, through the Spirit. We must *fear*: that is, be spiritually untrustworthy of our own competence to lead a soul to Christ, and depend upon the Anointing of the Holy Spirit and the efficacy of the

Word of God.

In the beginning of verse 16, the apostle gives us yet one more quality of the passive evangelist, namely, “a good conscience.” It hardly needs mentioning that a “double life” will not only repulse an unbeliever, but will sap our confidence before him and the God we represent.

Personality Plus

A second type of passive evangelism involves the personality of the believer. It is true that in general witnessing is done in a vocal manner; but it cannot be denied that much of our sharing of the good news is also inarticulate.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn. 13:35).

“That they all may be one: as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jn. 17:21).

In these verses, the Lord Jesus makes it clear that the Love demonstrated by His disciples for one another—in the presence of the unsaved world—gives mighty testimony to His Presence in the world. Our fellowship and love for other members of the Body of Christ will often speak louder of the reality of Christian experience than the most eloquent example of homiletics (preaching).

It is as we let the Light of the Love of God shine within us in word and deed in the midst of a “love-starved” generation that the Spirit of Christ can convict and woo the unbelievers to the Savior’s Heart.

Again, our Lord made mention of our works of charity, not only our vocal testimony, as vehicles of evangelism.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 5:15).

It is true in the Christian life just as surely as in other settings that often “actions speak louder than words.” This is in no way to be construed to minimize the importance of the spoken witness to Christ; rather, it is simply to underscore the fact that our privileges in the area of evangelism are not limited to what we say by way of a formal declaration of the gospel.

Family Facts

Peter gives specific advice along this line in the matter of Christian wives ministering the Truth of God to their unsaved spouses.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands: that, if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (I Pet. 5:1-2).

Here is sound wisdom directed toward women who desire their non-Christian husbands to be won to Christ. Is the man disobedient to the Word (of salvation)? This scripture makes it clear that this attitude of unbelief, of itself, is no cause for despair. There is another way of witnessing. This verse states that such an individual may be won also “without the word.”

In the original language, there is no definite article (“the”) before “word.” Peter is saying that the man in this situation may be won “without a spoken word,” that is,

without a formal declaration of the gospel.

How is this to be accomplished?

First, the wife is to be in subjection to the husband. That is, the woman is to humbly submit to her man as head of the house (in the domestic sense). This meek display of the Love of Christ, in obedience to the biblical model for the home, will itself be a means of evangelism to the man. The world is saturated with the unscriptural example of the “liberated woman,” who is, in reality, not liberated at all, but in bondage to an undisciplined nature which asserts itself in ill-attempted displays of “leadership” aimed at usurping the natural authority of the husband. Such “liberation” untempered by the nurture of the Holy Spirit through a godly husband, often results in fear, frustration and bondage for the woman, and shame and turmoil for the man.

A second consideration is the wife’s “conversation.” This word means “manner of life.” Thus, the Bible declares that the chaste manner of life, coupled with godly reverence and self-distrust, can be *beheld* in such a manner by the man that he will know that woman “has been with Jesus.” Her loving behavior will stand out in such bold relief in contrast to the women of the world her husband encounters *outside* that he will truly wonder, marvel and finally inquire concerning the source of such a refreshing and God-like character.

We see, from the Bible, that there is a real place for passive evangelism, both in vocal witnessing which is given in response to a seeking soul, and in the good works of charity done to others in the Name of Jesus as well as the demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit, or the beauty of a Spirit-filled personality radiating the Love of Christ.

There is no excuse for disdaining the cultivation of a humble and loving temperament by clutching to the attitude that it is unimportant when compared to the actual sharing of the gospel in spoken testimony. Like faith and works, life and speech cannot be divided.

What God hath joined, let not man put asunder!

Active Evangelism

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

The second form of evangelism is what we term, “active” or aggressive evangelism.

Active evangelism is Spirit-empowered witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ before an unbelieving world. It is basically a two-fold approach to testifying to the good news in word and deed, or declaration and demonstration.

In short, we need “to tell it” and “show it!”

This is the Bible way of evangelizing the lost and God has never changed His method. The non-Christian must receive a “double witness” of God’s Love and Power by word and deed. Indeed, the Greek word translated “witness” in our text is the same noun from which we derive our English word, “martyr.” It means “to testify with evidence.” Praise God for the opportunity we have as sons of God to represent Him among men that they might be saved. It is our privilege to speak the Word of God to those in need, and it is, likewise, our joy to confirm the Truth we declare with the works of God which we perform in His Name.

As we have already noted, although not every disciple will be called of God to minister the gospel in a full-time capacity, every believer possess the power and the mandate from God to share the Word in his own area of influence. This is amply proven

by the Bible's own teaching. In Acts 5:20 we read:

"Go, stand and speak in the temple, to the people all the words of this life."

The word "speak" is not the Greek word for "preach," "evangelize," or even "teach;" rather, it is the common word for speech. We might paraphrase the angel's commission, "share with the people." The scriptures confirm that not all evangelism need be in a formal preaching setting (although that must certainly be done). It is enough that each child of God "shares," in his own way, the truths of the Love of God and our redemption in Jesus Christ.

It need not be emphasized that the power of our witnessing is none other than the Holy Spirit, Himself, filling our lives with the dynamic of Heaven. It is the Anointing which will give our words Divine force and influence and make possible the miracle-working energy of God to confirm it. The same Holy Spirit Who energizes our prayer lives will attend our witnessing with power Divine!

The importance of the Power of the Holy Spirit cannot be forgotten or relegated to an unimportant *option*. The Presence of the indwelling Spirit can so charge us that even our countenances can radiate the majesty of God, giving added force and efficacy to our witness. It was said of Stephen in the Book of Acts:

"And all that sat in the councils looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

Let us be reminded that this individual was not an apostle—one of the 12 or 70—but a deacon who was chosen *to wait tables*. It was not his natural ability that accounted for this marvelous display of God's Power, but the Anointing:

"But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

Thus, the Anointing which ministered through him so well in life, ministered to him, in the hour of his death. Praise God that we have access to this mighty Comforter!

Declaration

Our first responsibility in sharing the good news of the gospel of Christ is to boldly speak forth the Bible way of salvation. It is vitally important that we realize just what it is that we are called upon by God to share with fallen men. If we merely invite the unbeliever to attend our church services, we have definitely missed the mark. If we are just relating denominational distinctives, we have failed to comprehend the Truth of the gospel. We are to be witnesses "unto Him" (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit upon us is interested in drawing people to Jesus, not our church, denomination or Bible school. It is as we speak about Jesus that the Holy Spirit will accompany our words with His invisible but powerful Presence bringing conviction into the hearts of our listeners.

It is up to us to get involved.

The Message

What is the gospel?

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3).

This is what the apostle Paul (and others) preached to the Corinthians (and others) *first of all*. It is the very fountainhead of all the blessings of redemption.

Jesus said:

“Thus is it written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk. 24:46-47).

This is exactly what the Early Church did. They did not preach themselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and themselves as His servants.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

Nor did he change his message with the passage of time:

“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

The apostle Paul, likewise, obeyed the words of Jesus:

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

His ministry, not only to the Ephesians, as in the text quoted above, but to every nation and people was the same: Christ died for our sins and rose again; we must repent and believe the good news.

The facts underlying the gospel are quite clear. Man is estranged from his Creator by sin: both in nature and action.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23; Psa. 51:5).

Man is a slave to sin and cannot save himself (Jn. 8:54-55). He is under the control of spirit-forces which he is powerless to combat in his fallen state (Eph. 2:1-3). His sin and rebellion have resulted in death: spiritual death (separation from God), physical death (separation of the spirit from the body), and his destiny is eternal death, or the second death (eternal separation of the spirit, soul and body of man from God in conscious torment in the Lake of Fire; Rom. 6:23; Gen. 2:17; Rom. 2:32; Rev. 20:12-15).

The “atonement” or satisfaction of God’s justice on behalf of fallen man is the physical death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The efficacy of the blood sacrifices of unblemished animals in the Old Testament prefigured the final Sacrifice of Christ (Lev. 17:11).

Thus, Christ, the Sinless One, voluntarily assumed our guilt and sin and died in our place, thereby satisfying the demands of God’s justice. The resurrection is the eternal proof of the acceptance of His Sacrifice by God, on our behalf. Since all have sinned, death (spiritual, physical, eternal) is the lot of every man. Christ, however, had no sin of His own, and, thus, was qualified as a Sin-offering for us (II Cor. 5:21). Since He was sinless in Himself, death could not legally hold Him and He was vindicated by the Spirit and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness through the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4; I Tim. 3:16).

All of this discloses God’s side of the gospel. It is His creation (man) who is in need; His law which has been broken (the written Law and the conscience of mankind, Rom. 2:11-12), His means of atonement which has been required and initiated (Lev. 17:11; I Jn. 4:10), and His gospel that has been offered to men (Acts 17:30-31).

Man’s side of the gospel is repentance and faith.

That is, our responsibility is to repent (change our minds, surrender our wills and grieve in our emotions) toward God, that is, turn from sin and rebellion to God as Savior

and Lord, and then express faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who has effected our salvation from the penalty of sin. We must, by an act of our will, through the enlightenment of the gospel by the Spirit and the Word, intelligently embrace Jesus Christ by faith as Lord (Master, Sovereign, Ruler) and Savior.

When these two conditions have been met, “remission” of sins becomes ours. That is, our sins have been “put away,” never to be remembered again, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ on our behalf.

This is the glorious good news of salvation. It is an absolutely free gift of God (Rom. 6:23; Jn. 5:16). We must receive it by faith (Eph. 2:9-10). These are the wonder-facts which it is our responsibility and privilege to share!

The Messenger

“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master” (Lk. 6:40).

Not only must our message be God’s; but we must be. Those who share the gospel with others must first be partakers of the grace of God. As Paul said to Timothy:

“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits” (II Tim. 2:6).

This text has been used in sermons concerning tithing and the financial support of the ministry. A close examination of the context, however, will clearly reveal that the subject matter is the Christian worker’s responsibility to first experience those truths of the faith before he ministers them to others. How important is it that we be not “strangers to grace” ourselves as we seek to bring men and women into the Kingdom of God.

The Lord Jesus assures us that no follower of His can be greater than He; but everyone who is “perfect” shall be “as his Master.” This statement brings out the truth that disciples of Christ are to be those who are born again children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, who are striving towards “perfection” which is maturity in the faith and Christ-likeness of character.

The messenger of the gospel will have certain identifiable characteristics:

- First, he will be, himself, redeemed by the Blood of Christ.
- Second, he will have been publicly baptized in water in obedience to the command of Christ, as public, outward testimony of his spiritual, inward rebirth (Acts 2:39; I Pet. 3:21).
- Third, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, Whom Jesus declared to be indispensable to our testimony for Him (Lk. 24:49).
- Fourth, as a born again, water-baptized, Spirit-filled Christian, he will have totally, unconditionally and eternally dedicated his life and will to God for the fulfillment of His plan (Rom. 12:1-10).
- Fifth, he will be living in a close and vital daily fellowship with the Lord Jesus in prayer and in the reading of His Word (Lk. 18:1; I Pet. 2:2).
- Sixth, he will be an active and energetic member of a local fellowship of believers, meeting regularly with the saints for worship and edification, with a godly submission to his pastor (Heb. 10:25; 13:17).

Demonstration

“And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake,

hearing and seeing the signs which he did” (Acts 8:6).

If we as disciples of our Lord are to be *as Him* in our testimony to the grace of God before men, our witnessing will, of necessity, be two-fold: word and works.

Like Christ, we must exhibit the power of God in our evangelism. It was the “signs following” ministry of our Lord and the Early Church which resulted in unprecedented numbers of unbelievers being swept into the Kingdom of God. This miraculous power accompanying the declaration of the gospel was not limited to the Lord Jesus. Both the twelve apostles (Lk. 9:1) and the seventy (Lk. 10:9,17,19) had Divine Power operating on their behalf. Lest we think this demonstration of the wonder-working energy of God is “not for today,” we need to remind ourselves of the words of Jesus:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (Jn. 14:12).

Here, in unmistakable language, is the clear Bible promise of miraculous power, not to the Early Church, the full-time preacher, or any select group; it is to the believer (see my book, *Miracles and the Ministry [Diploma in Ministry]*).

Again, Jesus said:

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mk. 16:17-18).

It is clear that our blessed Lord has designed that all unbelieving persons shall receive a *double witness* of His Love and Power: the spoken word and the visible work, in order that their needs might be met supernaturally, bringing Him all the glory, and that His Power might be discerned in superseding the natural order.

These “signs” or “works” are those outlined in the Word of God, seen in the ministry of Jesus, and continued in the ministry of the Early Church.

The Works

These supernatural wonders include any and all of the miraculous works wrought by Jesus during His earthly ministry (Jn. 14:12): healing the sick, casting out demons, delivering the oppressed, healing the broken-hearted, preaching the gospel to the poor, feeding the hungry (miraculously), and even raising the dead.

These works may even enter into the realm of the *creative* miracle. That is, the restoration of missing bodily parts, etc. Jesus not only cleansed the lepers, but, on occasion, “made them whole,” i.e., restored the missing parts of their anatomy. It is certainly not our prerogative to limit the manifestation of the compassion and power of our God Who seeks to save, heal and restore. As we testify of a God of Love made known in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, He desires to demonstrate His Love in works of Power, healing, deliverance and restoration.

The Worker

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

The setting of this text is the healing of the lame man at the gate Beautiful. It was the

fact of the two Spirit-filled disciples having been “with Jesus” that accounted for the manifestation of the gifts of faith and healing which resulted in the man’s deliverance. Certainly, more is meant by this phrase than mere physical proximity. These believers were living in an intimate fellowship with the Master through His Spirit. And it showed!

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ with a desire to share the gospel in word and deed among a lost and dying humanity, we need to develop a kinship of spirit with the risen Christ which will result in a manifestation of the Mind of Christ and the Power of Christ in our daily lives (see my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry [Diploma in the Deaconate]*). It was said of the Early Church:

“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mk. 16:20).

The Lord was certainly “working with” Peter and John!

The Lord wants to work with us!

He can do so, however, only if we allow Him to do so, by submitting ourselves to Him and “tuning into” His will by daily, secret prayer (see my book, *At the Master’s Feet*).

This was undoubtedly the practice of the Early Church:

“But we, we will give ourselves continually unto the prayer (of the Holy Ghost), and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4, Gk.).

It is evident that the disciples were not referring to *an attitude of prayer*, else they could have practiced this while they waited tables rather than having to appoint deacons to take their places. No, they had reference to *periods of prayer*, just like their Master.

It was this ministry of *secret prayer* that resulted in their public ministry going forth in the Power of God.

Peter “prayed first” (Acts 9:40; 10:9-10).

Paul “prayed first” (Acts 16:25ff.; 22:17ff.).

The Early Church “prayed first” (Acts 13:3; 14:23).

Jesus said the “greater works” were dependent upon His “going away” (and sending the Holy Spirit), and praying in His Name (Jn. 14:12-15).

Thus, if we desire to not only declare the Word of God in proclamation, but to perform the works of God in demonstration, we must not only possess the general characteristics already noted of the “messenger,” but we must deny ourselves and meet with God in a life-changing period of “secret prayer” daily.

Ways of Witnessing

There are many and varied methods of evangelism. We have already noted the importance of manifested Love, charitable works and sincere response to inquiries.

The local pastor, in his preaching, teaching, counseling and visiting can “do the work of an evangelist” (I Tim. 4:5). Indeed, it has been my pleasure to lead couples to saving faith in Christ while discussing wedding preparations.

Testimony can be given, as the opportunity presents itself, as a visitor in a “formal” church service (Acts 15:15).

Witnessing can also be done, “door to door” (Acts 20:20-21).

Indeed, evangelism can be carried out at a public “place of prayer” or meeting (Acts 16:15).

There are probably as many ways of witnessing as there are different types of people to whom to witness! There are: radio and television, telephone evangelism and “printed

preachers;" there are tapes, tracts, books, crusades, church services and home Bible studies.

We can visit: door to door, prisons, hospitals, senior citizen facilities, nursing homes and anywhere people congregate. We can witness to crowds or individuals, using the net as well as the "hook." We—the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ—have the message, the method and the mandate of world evangelism. We must do it.

Will *you* be a part of God's great plan?

The Next Step...

It is our prayer that these 20 studies in doctrine and discipleship have been a blessing to you. If you have studied and applied the teachings in these lessons, you are a far different believer than the one who began reading this volume. Perhaps you have noticed the change in your life.

It may be that others have remarked about your developing spirituality.

As you may or may not know (depending upon where and how you obtained or purchased this volume), this manual is actually the first course in The Prophetic Voice Institute, a three-level, correspondence, ministerial training program. If you would like formal recognition of your study, write and request test forms. Upon your completion of the exam and forwarding of the fee (US\$10 separately; included in the US\$25 fee for the entire course), we will process your test and issue you a *Diploma in Discipleship* suitable for framing, as a lasting remembrance of your diligent study of God's Word.

In addition, you may want to continue your education by enrolling in the *Diploma in the Deaconate* (helps) program. This course is composed of five books (*Seven Keys of Successful Ministry; The Empty Office; All About the Anointing; The Dark World of Demons; and Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link*). These life-changing books will give you a breakthrough into apostolic power. Simply write and request a brochure.

The final program results in a Diploma in Ministry (ordination available for qualified individuals) and features six volumes (*Miracles and the Ministry; The Making of a Minister; Gifts Unto Men; The Lord Jesus: the Christ; The Lord's Supper: The Miracle, Mystery, and Majesty of "Real Presence"; and Psychiatry, Sin & Salvation*).

These courses must be taken in sequence, regardless of the extent of one's previous theological education. Regardless of whether you decide to continue on in studying with us, will you consider taking seriously the "each one, win one" concept outlined in this course?

Would you seek the Lord diligently concerning winning one soul for the Kingdom of God per year? As you do so, invest some of your time in that individual's life by encouraging him to complete this course. Perhaps he could read one lesson on doctrine and one on discipleship per week. By your encouragement (by phone, personal visit or mail) he can become a real disciple of the Lord Jesus, too, and in this way we can contribute towards the accomplishment of the Great Commission. If you are in the ministry, write for information on quantity discounts of the printed version of *Diploma in Discipleship* (online PDF versions are always free of charge from us; visit the **Prophetic Voice Institute** website anytime!).

We look forward to hearing from you in how the Lord has blessed and is blessing you as you apply the truths in this book. We are praying for you.

May God's richest and best be yours.

About the Author

Dr. Joseph Kostelnik is founder and president of Gospel Truth Ministries, an apostolic ministry with a three-fold vision: a local church (**White Oak Chapel**), training up and sending out of ministers of the Word (**The Prophetic Voice Institute**), and short-term mission trips to foreign fields as God leads.

He holds a B.A. from Point Park University, an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary, a Th.D. and Ph.D. from International Seminary, an honorary D.D. from Kingsway Christian College & Theological Seminary and an honorary Litt.D. from International Seminary.

He has served as: pastor, assistant pastor, evangelist, Bible teacher, missionary, author, educator, and media minister. He has ministered in the United States as well as overseas, including: England, Scotland, Australia, France, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Crete, Haiti and New Zealand and his ministry is marked by the miraculous.

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