

# Spiritual Maturity Course

Spiritual Growth for reigning in the  
Kingdom of Heaven



The Vine International

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Spiritual Maturity Course  
Spiritual Growth for reigning in the Kingdom of Heaven  
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## PREFACE

Every sincere Christian seeks to experience more of God and His will. In the Christian walk, we need knowledge, prayer and power. Spiritual maturity is not merely an extraordinary gift that some Christians possess while others do not. Spiritual maturity is a process that can and should be experienced in the daily life of God's people as the Church of Jesus Christ led by the Word of God. In the lessons of this course, we will study biblical principles and truths necessary for you to grow in the maturity and knowledge of God and strengthen you as a responsible member of the local Church.

The purpose of this book is to form mature Christians instructed in the Word of God and able to minister to His people. In each chapter, we will be studying the most important biblical principles of the Christian life, such as walking in the Spirit, fleeing from sin and following the path of the overcomer. We will also study the safest ways to obtain spiritual revelation, how to be transformed in mind, will and emotions, how to have a renewed character and a full understanding of the Plan of Salvation. These are some of the issues dealt with in this course and are studied in the light of the basic premise of the New Testament that every Christian, including you, is destined to come to the full knowledge of the truth and serve as a minister in the spiritual house of God.

We believe that every lesson of this course will help you understand the Gospel and attain a mature and balanced Christian life. Therefore, we have divided this course into well-founded and objective lessons, which you will apply to your daily life and practice. At the end of each lesson, a list of questions has been included to help reinforce your understanding and retention of the content and principles presented through the lesson. Dedicate yourself to the study of each lesson, reviewing each topic from time to time, completing all the exercises, and praying that each point becomes a reality in your life and in your ministry.

Our prayer is that the Lord will use this course to lead you to new levels of spiritual maturity and an awakening of faith and holiness, culminating in an effective spiritual leadership in the Kingdom of God.



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## INTRODUCTION

This manual was originally put together in Brazilian Portuguese by Pastor Aluizio A. Silva pastor and founder of the “Videira - Igreja em Células” (The Vine Church in Cells) in Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil. Translation and editing of the English version by Richard Lee Spinos.

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**1**

**PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION IN THE WORD**



## **DISTINGUISHING DIFFERENCES OF SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY**

Every man is a spirit, possesses a soul and lives in a body. Many people think that the spirit and the soul are the same thing leading to the conclusion that we are only made of only body and soul. However, if they were the same, there would be no need to separate them as the writer of Hebrews does in chapter 4:12: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit.” Therefore, soul and spirit are not the same thing. The Word of God teaches us that man is a tri-dimensional being possessing a body, soul and spirit. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning this truth:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1Thess. 5:23)

## **THE NEED TO PERCEIVE YOUR OWN SPIRIT**

Why is it necessary to know that Man is composed of spirit, soul and body? There are many fundamental aspects of this need. Let us look into a few reasons why it is essential for us to learn, not only that mankind is a tri-dimensional being, but also how we can perceive our own human spirit.

### **1. God is spirit**

The Bible tells us that God is spirit (John 4:24). In order for us to make contact with the material dimension, we must be matter. Similarly, in order for us to make contact with God who is Spirit, we ourselves need to be a spirit.

We cannot hear God with our physical ears nor see him with our physical eyes. However, the Bible says that we can know Him and make contact with Him through our spirit. However, to the extent that we fail to perceive our own spirit, we fail to perceive God.

### **2. The new birth occurs entirely in our spirit**

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:6)

When Adam sinned, he died, and along with him, all his descendants. Adam's death was not an immediate physical death, but a spiritual one. His spirit died to God. It is not that the natural man does not have a spirit, but that his spirit is dead and unable to make contact with God.

The new birth is the rebirth of this spirit that was formerly dead to God. Our spirit is like a radio that synchronizes heavenly sound waves.

### **3. Spiritual knowledge is acquired in the spirit**

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1Cor. 2:14)

Any knowledge of true value that we acquire in the Christian life we receive through the spirit. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, meaning that they are perceived through the spirit. Since the natural man's spirit is dead, he cannot understand the things of the Spirit.

It is not that the things of the spirit are difficult or mysterious, but that since the spirit

of the natural man is dead, he cannot understand them. It is as if his spiritual “radio” is not tuned into the frequency of God.

Jesus said that His words are spirit (John 6:63). Since they are spirit, only the spirit can perceive them.

The problem is that many Christians, despite having been born again, still use their minds to understand things that can only be perceived spiritually. Those that do not know how to discern their own spirit usually understand the Bible using only their natural minds, and for this reason, they do not take full advantage of the revelation supplied by the spirit.

#### **4. God is worshiped in the spirit**

God is spirit so He must be worshiped in spirit (John 4:24). It is not so much the way that we worship God as much as from which part of us the worship originates that is important. We must exercise our spirit if we want to worship God. If we fail to discern our own spirit, we will compromise our worship and the most we will be able to achieve is worship on the level of the mind or the soul, which is unacceptable to God.

#### **5. We must pray without ceasing in the spirit. (Eph. 6:18, 1Cor. 14:15)**

Praying in tongues is a type of prayer that we offer on the level of the spirit. Paul explains in his letter to the Corinthians that if we pray in another tongue, our spirit prays (1Cor. 14:14). In the next verse, he adds, “I will pray with my spirit”. We do not have to depend on our minds to pray with the spirit; therefore, we can pray all the time, even when we work or study.

Now the question is . . . how can I pray in the spirit if I do not even know that I possess a spirit? If we worship in the spirit, we must also pray in or with the spirit. You can see that the normal practice in the Christian life implies a clear comprehension that we are spiritual beings each possessing a soul and living in a body, but worshiping and praying through our spirit.

We are spiritual beings with God’s nature, made in His image and likeness (Psa. 82:6). We are not a body, but a spirit. Therefore, we are able to speak to Him, hear Him and have fellowship with Him.

#### **6. We are exhorted to walk in the spirit**

Our entire Christian life consists in learning to exercise our recreated human spirit to make contact with God, to communicate with Him and to be led by Him.

Paul says, “If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays...” (1Cor.14:14). Look at the way he says this: “if I pray... my spirit prays”; see that the “I” and the “spirit” are the same thing, showing that Paul saw himself as a spiritual being.

The Holy Spirit does not dwell in the soul, but in our recreated human spirit. Every direction that the Spirit gives to us comes through our spirit. Our spirit fulfills the function of connecting with and communicating with God.

To fail to discern your own spirit can block you from experiencing a victorious Christian life as well as being led by the Holy Spirit. If you can’t hear what the Spirit is saying, how can He lead you?

This is central to the Christian life: God dwells in us in the person of the Holy Spirit, molding us and guiding us in full truth. This cannot be just a teaching; it must be a



revelation in our spirit. This is the apex of revelation from God: that Jesus Christ dwells in us and He has become our very life.

The Christian life consists of two substitutions: the first on the cross, where He died in our place; and the second, in our daily lives where He lives the Christian life through us. Everything is accomplished through His grace, not only salvation but also sanctification.

## **7. We serve God in the spirit**

In the first chapter of his epistle to Romans Paul said that he served God in the spirit (Rom.1:9). The same applies to every Christian. We need to learn to exercise our spirit so we can serve God by doing His will.

We can only know God's heart and do His will through our spirit; that is why we need to learn how to exercise it. Jesus said, "The Spirit of truth will guide us into all truth" (John 16:13). How can the Spirit guide us into all truth? The answer is by speaking to us through our recreated spirit.

The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit and He speaks to our spirit. Just as almost every Christian, you can testify to this experience in one way or another by having perceived the voice of God in your innermost being. If someone has never heard the Lord in his spirit he has never been born again, because every Christian is born by the Word of God. If we have not heard His voice, it is because the radio is not adequately synchronized.

I can perceive my body and my soul, meaning my mind and emotions, but how can I perceive my spirit? This question is important since the human spirit is often called the heart in the Bible:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. (Romans 2:28, 29)

It is through the heart that we can perceive our spirit. We should not think that the heart is merely the physical organ that beats inside of us. When the Bible speaks of the heart, it speaks of something intimate, from the depths of our being.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY**

Through the Word of God and through experience, we can see that man consists of three parts and that each of these parts possesses its own specific function.

The body is the material part where our physical senses operate. Its basic function is to make contact with the material world through the five senses.

The soul is the part that allows us to make contact with ourselves. We can say that it is what makes us self-conscious. The soul is the "I", the "me" therefore; it is the center of our personality.

The spirit is that part responsible for maintaining fellowship with God. It is what gives us consciousness of God.

Although the soul is the center of personality, the spirit is the most important part, as it is the center of our entire being. It is through the spirit that we can worship God and receive revelation. We say that our spirit is the center because God dwells in it.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE SPIRIT

The human spirit possesses three basic functions: intuition, conscience and fellowship.

### 1. Intuition

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. (1John 2:20)

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. (1John 2:27)

Intuition is the ability of the human spirit to receive knowledge, independently of any exterior influence. It is the knowledge that reaches us with no help of the mind or emotion; it comes intuitively. The revelation of God and all actions of the Holy Spirit are made known to us through the intuition of the spirit. Our mind simply helps us to understand what the Holy Spirit reveals to and within our spirit.

Many times, there is something inside of us prompting us into doing something or warning us not to do something. This inner feeling is the spirit's intuition. How many times, after having done something, do we confess: "something inside of me was telling me not to go through with it"? We can all testify that we have been through many such situations and circumstances. Our spirit is at work, but we don't believe it or pay any attention to it. Confined to the life of the soul, which is outside of the spirit and therefore constituting part of the exterior life, we almost never give credence to the interior voice of the spirit.

Spiritual things can only be discerned by our spirit (1Cor. 2:14). Jesus knew in His spirit what was in the hearts of people around Him. Paul was constrained in the spirit. Through all of these references, we can see the form in which the intuition of the spirit manifests itself. It is a knowledge that does not come from our mind or the physical world.

No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD." (Jer. 31:34a)

Today we live under this covenant. We are all taught directly by the Lord. You may not know how you know, but something inside of you tells you whether certain things are true or not.

Intuition manifests itself through restriction and constraint. For example, we can be thinking about doing something that seems reasonable to us, so we decide to go ahead and do it. However, some heavy and oppressive feeling inside of us seems to go against what our mind has pondered, our emotions have accepted and our will has decided. It seems to restrain us from doing what normally we would do. This is the restriction of intuition.

On the other hand, certain things seem irrational and contrary to common sense and very much against our will. However, for some unknown reason, we feel constrained to do what normally we would never consider doing. There is an impulse and push to go ahead and do it. This is the compulsion of intuition.

There are distinct differences between knowledge and understanding and it is important to understand the difference between the two. Knowing is a function of the

spirit while understanding is a function of the mind. We know something through the spirit's intuition and our mind is then illuminated to understand what the intuition has known. In the spirit's intuition, we know the persuasion of the Holy Spirit; in the mind, we understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, the knowledge gained by intuition is called revelation. Revelation is the unveiling by the Holy Spirit, of the true meaning of something. This knowledge is so much deeper than the knowledge of the mind. Through the spirit of revelation and understanding, the anointing of the Lord teaches us all things.

## 2. Conscience

It is easy to understand the conscience since we are all familiar with it. It is the ability to discern between right and wrong, not according to the mind's criteria, but according to the direction of the spirit.

I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit (Rom 9:1)

When Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. (Acts 17:16)

When we compare these two passages, we see that the conscience is part of the human spirit. Testifying, confirming, refusing and accusing are all functions of the conscience. In 1Corinthians 5:3 Paul says that in his spirit he judged a sinful person. Judging means condemning or justifying, which are actions of the conscience.

Our conscience often condemns things that our mind approves. The judgment of the conscience is not according to mental knowledge, but according to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

There are two paths in the Bible: the path to the tree of life and the path to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We are not taught by the Word to walk according to the pattern of right and wrong, but to be led by the spirit. When you go to the movies, how do you decide what to watch? You may begin to question in your mind thinking, "It is not pornographic, it is not wrong, therefore I can watch it". This reasoning does not come from the conscience; it is the mind working. The mind reasons but the conscience does not, it only decides. Our conscience rejects many things that our mind approves. We should permanently reject, the guidance dictated by the mind, according to the tree of knowledge. Rather, the spirit, must lead us by the principle of the tree of life, which is God's Spirit within us, received through our conscience.

We must be radical with what God condemns through our conscience. We should never try to explain or justify anything that the Bible condemns as sin. Whenever our conscience refuses something, we should stop immediately. Some people try to justify themselves by saying that they do not have much of any conviction of whether something is wrong or not. Romans 14:23 teaches that whatever is not done in faith is sin.

We can only serve God through a clean conscience. We can all testify that the action of our conscience does not depend on our knowledge of the Bible. Many times, we feel that something is wrong only to find out later that the Bible forbids it. Without anyone teaching us, we knew that our romantic life was wrong, and that our finances were less than

honest. Whoever is born of God has, in his spirit, the voice of the Holy Spirit that speaks through his conscience. None of us will ever be able to say that we did not know. The function of our conscience is to testify of God's will within us.

### **3. Fellowship**

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior (Luke 1:47)

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1Cor. 6:17)

Genuine fellowship with God is experienced on the level of our spirit. The presence of God is not perceived by our thoughts, feelings and intentions, for He can only be known directly in our spirit. Those who cannot perceive their own spirit cannot worship God in spirit either. It is in our spirit that we connect with the Lord and maintain fellowship with Him.

Everything God does, He initiates through our spirit. It is always from the inside out. This is a very practical way to know what comes from God and what comes from the devil. The devil always starts acting from outside, through the body, trying to reach our soul. God, however, acts from the inside out.

Whenever we worship God, we should turn to our heart because it is in our heart that we detect our spirit. Do not try to exercise the mind while worshiping, exercise the spirit through the heart. When we worship by singing in the spirit, it is helpful, because there is no need to exercise our mind and we can exercise the spirit freely. When you perceive the fire of God warming your heart, allow it to fill you completely. When it comes as an overflowing river, drink it completely. Fellowship with God always begins in the heart and is fueled by our willingness to yield to our spirit and not to the dictates of our soul.

## **HOW TO EXERCISE YOUR OWN SPIRIT**

God's has already completed His work in our spirit. It is like a light that was turned on. Jesus says that the spirit is ready (Mat. 26:41). Our spirit is ready but it must be exercised and worked on. It is like a newborn child. It is perfect, but needs to be developed: it has a perfect mouth but it doesn't know how to speak, it has perfect feet but doesn't know how to walk.

We have been born of and regenerated by God; He now lives in our spirit. It is up to us to develop our own spirit. We develop our spirit in order to be able to differentiate what comes from our soul and what comes from our spirit (Heb. 4:12). If we are unable to separate our soul from our spirit, we will not be able to fellowship with the Lord or even serve Him. God uses four methods to develop our spirit:

### **1. Brokenness**

The soul conceals and covers the spirit as the skull covers the brain. If we wish to see the brain, we need to break the skull. That is why our soul needs to be broken. Without brokenness, we cannot perceive our spirit. Therefore, the first method that God uses to reveal our spirit to us is by breaking our soul. Through this breaking of the soul, we become sensitive to God in our spirit.

### **2. Word of God**

The Word of God also has the power of separating the soul from the spirit. God uses

our circumstances to bring us to brokenness and the power of the Word to separate our soul from our spirit. The Bible says:

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

### **3. Praying in the spirit**

A third way to perceive our human spirit is by praying in the spirit. Paul says in 1Corinthians 14:14 that if someone prays in a tongue, his own spirit prays while the mind (soul) is left unfruitful. Therefore, if you don't pray in tongues, develop this manner of praying in the spirit and you will grow in your own spirit through it.

### **4. Rejecting Passivity**

The last way of exercising your spirit is to reject passivity. The devil uses passivity to take men captive, but we need to exercise our will and allow God to do His work in us.

You will never receive anything if you go to a church service and sit passively waiting for God to do something in you. However, you will definitely receive the presence and edification of God if you exercise your spirit and seek the Lord, by yielding your mind, emotions and will in the direction that the Spirit takes you.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE SOUL**

The soul is the center of our personality; it is our "self". For this reason in many places, the Word of God calls men "souls". The main characteristics of man's personality, such as ideas, thoughts, love, etc. are of the soul. The Word of God shows us clearly and unquestionably that the human soul consists of three parts: the mind, the will and the emotions.

### **1. The Mind**

Many times in the book of Proverbs it is suggested that the soul needs knowledge (Prov. 2:10; 19:2; 24:14). Since knowledge is a function of the mind, based on these verses, the mind is a function of the soul.

Marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. (Ps. 139:14).

Since knowing is a function of the mind, then it is also of the soul. The book of Lamentations says that the soul can remember (Lam. 3:20) and we know that remembering is a function of the mind.

The mind is the soul's most important function. We will never be able to reach the full knowledge of truth, if our mind is in darkness. Our mind is renewed so that we can experience and understand the will of God, which is revealed in our spirit.

### **2. The will**

Seeking is a function of the will; therefore, the will is in the soul.

Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the LORD your God (1Chro. 22:19).

Refusal is a function of the will:

My soul refuses to touch them... (Job 6.7)

Choice is also a function of the will:

So that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body. (Job 7:17).

Therefore, we see through these verses that the will is a function of the soul. The will is the instrument of our decisions and indispositions. It reveals whether we want something or not. Without it, men would be reduced to mere automatons. Man uses his will to choose to sin or to serve God. Therefore, the power of choosing is in our soul.

### **3. The Emotions**

Emotions are an important part of the human experience; they add color to our lives. However, we can never let them guide us, since they are a part of the soul.

Emotions manifest themselves in many ways: love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, etc.

Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (1Sam. 18:1)

Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions? (Song of Solomon 1:7)

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. (Psa. 42:1)

We can perceive through these verses that love and other good feelings start in our soul, proving that the soul possesses emotion as one of its functions.

Now David said on that day, "Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul), he shall be chief and captain." Therefore, they say, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." (2Sam 5:8)

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I have spoken in my burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with wholehearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country. (Ezekiel 36:5)

In the above verses, we see expressions such as hate, spite, other expressions of hatred, and they all come from the soul. The soul possesses the function of emotions such as hatred and joy (Isa. 61:10; Psa. 86:4); anguish and desire (1Sam 30:6; 20:4; Ezekiel 24:25; Jr. 44:14).

### **DANGERS OF WALKING IN THE FLESH (SOUL)**

One of the most important truths of the Christian life is the fact that God now dwells in us through the person of the Holy Spirit. The reason why it is so important for us to differentiate between the soul and the spirit is that God speaks to our spirit. How can we discern the voice and the will of God if we do not have this discernment? If you fail to connect with the Holy Spirit through your spirit, your life, and consequently your character will be seriously damaged.

The Word of God calls those who walk according to the soul "carnal". A carnal person does not necessarily live in sin the way that many people think. Those that live in the practice of sin possibly haven't even been born again because "those who are born of God don't keep on sinning" (1John 3:6). The carnal person sincerely tries to accomplish and know the will of God; however, he does it by exercising the soul. In this way,

Christians that live according to the pattern and dictates of the soul tend to follow the function of the soul that is more peculiar to them. We may identify carnal believers through any of these three functions:

### **1. Emotional**

Emotional people tend to use their emotions as the basis for their spiritual life: if they feel chills down their spine and strong emotions, they can do the work of God, but if those emotions go away, their excitement does so as well.

### **2. Intellectual**

This type of carnal believer rejects the subjective feelings of the soul and lives according to the pattern of the mind and intellect. This type of believer often criticizes emotional people as being carnal, but they do not realize that living according to the mind also comes from the soul. These brothers tend to be extremely critical and naturally minded in the work of God. Normally, they do not accept the supernatural and want to fit the Holy Spirit into their own mental patterns.

### **3. Volitional**

Such believers live according to the whims of their own will; they are moved during “good times”. They are initially excited to be part of any number of activities, but their fire soon burns out. They have no perseverance whatsoever. These Christians even argue out of sincerity: “If I don’t feel like it, I don’t need to pray or read the Bible since God doesn’t want sacrifice”.

Carnal Christians may sound pious, but they give fleshly excuses for not serving God. If you live according to the soul, you will eventually fall into one of these three points, or even all three of them.

So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rm. 8:8).

## **TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUL**

Our spirit has already been recreated and regenerated. God has already completed all of His work in our spirit. Our spirit is like a lamp that was turned on inside of us, once lit it will never go out. The new birth happened in an instant, but our soul now needs to be transformed. The process of transforming the soul is something that will continue for the rest of our lives. How can our soul be transformed?

### **1. By the renewing of the mind**

Most of the attacks of the enemy are against our mind. All the knowledge that we have for discerning is contained in the mind. The mind is the primary function of the soul. If we change our mind, we change our life. The only way to change our mind is by conforming it to the Word of God.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2)

### **2. By contemplating the Lord**

Another way to have our soul transformed is by contemplating the Lord (2Cor. 3:18). We are changed from glory to glory when we contemplate the Lord in all prayer and

fellowship with Him in spirit.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Cor. 3:18)

Our spirit was created to contain God, but our soul was created to reflect God. With regard to our spirit, we have to exercise it constantly in order to make contact with God; but with regard to the soul, we have to transform it by renewing our mind with the Word of God and contemplating the Lord.

The more we are filled with the Word of God and seek His face, the more we cooperate with the Holy Spirit towards our own transformation.

## **FUNCTIONS OF THE BODY**

The Word of God tells us that our body is merely our earthly house. It is the place where we live in this world. The basic function of the body is to interact with the physical world. Paul tells us that our body is our earthly house, but one day we will be clothed with our heavenly home (2 Cor. 5:1-4). Our body is not eternal and cannot be made eternal nor saved from death. That is why we must receive a new body.

Our spirit was regenerated, our soul is being transformed and our body will be glorified. Here we see the past, present and future aspects of our salvation.

### **1. Sensation**

This is the door to our being. It consists of the body's five senses. Everything that enters our soul enters through the five senses. If we wish to obtain victory over sin, we must discipline our body so that nothing immoral or sinful enters our soul through it.

### **2. Locomotion**

It is evident that one of the functions of our body is to move from one place to another. Our body is the inferior part because it is limited to the physical world, it is impossible for the body to perceive spiritual things.

### **3. Instinct**

Instincts are automatic reactions of an organism that are independent of the commands of the soul. Since they are automatic reactions given to protect us, they are not sinful in themselves. However, they are the basis for the desire of the flesh. God created good instincts, but because of sin, they degenerated and today they must be submitted to our control.

There are three groups of basic instincts: survival, defense and sexual. Let's have a quick look at each one of them.

*Survival* – the survival instinct includes eating, drinking, and physical necessities. We are born with such instincts: no one needs to teach a child to breastfeed, they are born with the sucking instinct. Sin transformed this natural instinct into gluttony and drunkenness.

*Defense* - The defense instinct includes our self-protective reflex reactions, such as stepping back, hiding, and protecting oneself. Sin has transformed this into fighting, factions, wrath and all kinds of violence.



*Sexual* – The sexual instinct was corrupted and transformed into adultery, promiscuity, prostitution and the like. We should not allow the natural instincts that remain inside of us to control us, even after conversion. The body should be our servant, not our lord.

## **THE DISCIPLINE OF THE BODY**

We must know what the functions of the body are and understand them in order to understand that God works from the inside of our spirit and the devil works from the outside. Therefore, everything that is of God comes from the inside working out (through our spirit) and everything that is of the devil comes from the outside and works itself in (through our body and soul).

The enemy first tries to enter through the windows of the soul, which are the five physical senses of the body. This process always begins with the enemy trying to attract and gain our attention. Once he has our attention, he will try to awaken one of our body's basic instincts. As we have already seen, our instincts were corrupted by sin and were transformed into allies of the devil. When the devil awakens an instinct within us, we say that we are being tempted.

Once the devil succeeds in awakening an instinct within our body, the next step is to produce a desire. The desire itself is not yet a sin, just a strong temptation. Temptation may lead to sin, but it is not a sin in itself.

Sin occurs when our desire becomes an intention. Jesus said that whoever looks at a woman with an impure intention has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28). It is much easier to obtain victory over the devil once we understand the way he works. The Word of God teaches us how to keep the body under the control of the spirit:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1)

We must offer our body to God and maintain it under the discipline of our will that is in turn submitted to God. The body is not disciplined through asceticism. It is simply a matter of not yielding to the will of the body. Our body and our soul are that part of our natural being that the New Testament calls "the flesh". The carnal man lives on the natural level, or the level of the soul and the body.

## **SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

God has His purposes in separating the spirit, soul and body. There are practical implications in this separation that we must understand in the light of God's Word. There are certain attitudes and relationships that we must have and practice in order to experience a victorious Christian life. We must recognize that as three-dimensional beings, each dimension requires a different approach. Therefore:

### **1. The spirit needs to be exercised**

God has already completed His work in our spirit, so we can say that the spirit is ready. However, just as a child may be born perfect, it still needs to be developed. The same is true of our spirit.

## **2. The soul needs to be transformed**

This transformation occurs by the renewing of the mind; and it is through this renewal that we can know God's will. (Rom. 12:2; 2Cor. 3:16)

## **3. The body needs to be disciplined**

Paul instructs us to be harsh when disciplining our bodies, subjecting them to servitude in order for us to be approved. (Rom.12:1; 2Cor. 9:27)

## **4. The three parts of man and Salvation**

*Our spirit was regenerated in the past* – the life of God was put inside of our spirit. It is like a lamp that was lit. The work is finished. That's why the Lord said that the spirit is ready (Mt. 26:41).

*Our soul is being transformed in the present* – God's goal is that the life in our spirit overflows to our soul to the point of saturating and transforming it.

*Our body will be glorified in the future* – The pinnacle of God's work is the manifestation of His children in glory.

## **5. The three parts of man and the purpose of God**

*The body points to Egypt* – from God's perspective, sin lives in the body therefore there is no cure. We must get out of Egypt and receive a glorified body.

*The soul points to the desert* – we need to ask if we are living on the level of the soul or the spirit after being saved. Life in the soul is a dry and fruitless place. To live by the soul is to live in the desert.

*The spirit points to Canaan* – the Promised Land points towards Christ. God wanted Israel to enjoy the good land fully just as He wants us to enjoy the Lord Jesus today. We already know that the Lord dwells in our spirit; therefore we understand that we also enjoy Him in our spirit.

## **6. God's dwelling and the three parts**

*The body points to the outer courts of the tabernacle.*

*The soul points to the Holy Place.*

*The spirit points to the Holy of Holies.*

Paul exhorts us to be confident while entering the Holy of Holies as stated in his letter to the Hebrews (10:19). However, where is the Holy of Holies today? The answer is very simple: it is in our spirit. The ark of the Lord is in our spirit and it is through our spirit that God speaks.

Inside every radio there is a receiver. When we tune in the radio, the receiver captures the magnetic waves in the air. The same happens with us, our spirit is this receiver that captures the spiritual waves that come from God. We synchronize our spirit correctly when we have a broken, contrite and open spirit before God.

## **REVELATION IN THE SPIRIT**

In the Christian life, the most important thing is spiritual knowledge or revelation (Eph. 1:15-19, Eph. 3:14-19).

Revelation is the knowledge sent to our spirit by the Holy Spirit. It is not discovering something new or previously unheard; on the contrary, there is nothing new. Everything has already been written. When God's light shines through our spirit there is revelation.

Revelation is the knowledge of something through the spirit which we may already know in our mind. It is simply the ability to see from God's point of view and to see as God sees. (1Cor. 2:11-12; 2Cor. 3:6; 4:6; 2Cor. 5:16; John 20:11-16; Luke 24:13-16; 30-31.)

Revelation is not seeing something that has never been seen before, but it is seeing the same things in the light of the Holy Spirit. It is when the words in the Bible 'jump out' before our eyes and what we already knew in our minds takes on a new dimension, intensity and reality. You already knew that you were the temple of the Holy Spirit, but after revelation comes, everything is different and a new attitude of holiness springs up inside of you; after all, now you know that someone completely holy lives in you.

Revelation first occurs in our spirit. The Holy Spirit sends the truth to our spirit, and from the spirit, it moves to our mind. The mind alone, without the illumination of the spirit cannot receive God's revelation.

There is a great difference between mental and spiritual knowledge. How can many people know the Word of God and yet not be transformed? Because the natural man doesn't understand the things of God's Spirit since these things are discerned spiritually, through revelation. It is one thing to possess natural (carnal) knowledge but quite another to possess spiritual knowledge which can only be obtained through revelation. Paul said that he formerly knew Jesus in the flesh, but later got to know him through the Spirit.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (2Cor. 5:16)

Paul's biggest desire was for Christians to have God's revelation. If we take a closer look at his prayers in the Epistles we will see that he had one goal: revelation (Eph. 1:15-19; 3:14-19; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-12).

Paul knew that people are transformed by the power of the Word when there is revelation. Faith will spontaneously manifest itself and God's life and anointing will overflow through the lives of those who have revelation.

When there is God's revelation, there is growth, discipleship, Christian maturity, missions and new leaders. Everything else is only a consequence of having our lives impacted by the light of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (Eph. 1:15-19).

As our spiritual eyes are opened and we understand the dimension of His power inside of us, there is an explosion of power and authority in our lives. This present generation will discover the authority of the supreme greatness of God's power that operates inside us. It

is of no use to have mere mental knowledge; we need to have revelation in the spirit.

For this reason I bow my knees [...] that you may be able to comprehend [...] what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:14-19)

The Bible says that the love of God exceeds all knowledge. That is why Paul prays for revelation, because the mind itself cannot understand. Paul wanted the Christians to have a revelation of God's love in order to know all the fullness of God. We are filled with God's fullness when our eyes are opened and we clearly understand His love. Many of us ask for power, but this power is already inside of us. The Holy Spirit is the dunamis of God; it is the power of God now living inside of us, waiting to be set free through faith. When revelation comes, faith will release the power of God in the person of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:9-11)

Paul is talking about something spiritual and not a mental perception. The Christian life does not consist of accumulating mental knowledge, but of advancing into new levels of revelation in the spirit.

For this reason we [...] do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge [...] in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; [...] that you may walk worthy of the Lord. (Col. 1:9-10)

Once again, Paul is praying for Christians to overflow with revelation so that they will live a holy life. He says that the holy life is only a consequence of revelation. It is a fact that once God really lives in us, we will show Him more reverence in the manner that we use our body. If we are carrying a large quantity of money in our pocket, everyone will perceive the care with which we walk. If we are carrying the life of God inside of us, people should perceive the difference in our walk.

## **WAYS TO OBTAIN REVELATION**

By observing the Word of God, we can say that there are at least four essential factors in obtaining revelation.

### **1. Know the Word of God**

By definition, revelation is to take something that is hidden and bring it into view so everyone can see it. What does that mean? I will not have any revelation if I do not know the Word of God. We need to know God's Word before we can receive revelation.

The mere mental knowledge of the Bible has no spiritual value. If all that you have is just mental knowledge, then you have nothing at all. Religious people read the Bible but they remain in their sin. On the other hand, there is a spiritual principle taught in 1 Corinthians:

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. (1Cor. 15:46)

Before we can receive spiritual knowledge, we must have natural knowledge. If we have no knowledge of a certain subject in our minds, there is no way we can know it in the spirit. Before we can receive revelation, we must fill our mind with the Word of God. Take time reading, studying, meditating, listening to, speaking of and practicing His Word. To the extent that this becomes a habit, the more your spirit will be exercised and the more revelation you will receive.

## **2. Have eyes to see**

Let's use a treasure chest as an example. If we wish to see what is inside the chest, the first thing we will do is open it and take out what we want to see. That is what we mean when we speak of opening the Word of God. However, if after we open the chest, we discover that we cannot see, we discover that we are blind. In this case, we can't see what is being revealed. The same is true in our spiritual lives. It is not enough to just open the Bible. We also need eyes to see. That is what the Bible says:

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1Cor. 2:14)

If you have not yet been born again, you will not be able to receive revelation. Those who have not been born again are blind to God; they cannot see the things of the Spirit.

## **3. Receive light**

Once we have opened the chest and are able to see, something fundamental will still be missing: light. We won't be able to see without it.

Having your sight restored speaks of the new birth, but having light points to the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Christian that has not yet been baptized in the Spirit is a child of God, but lives like a natural man – he can't discern the things of the Spirit. He can praise God, but can't worship; he can know the Bible, but has no revelation. The third condition, then, is to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

## **4. Opened eyes**

In the same way that we cannot see something that is hidden, we also cannot see it if there is no light. But even if we have all of this, we will not be able to see anything with our eyes closed.

In the Bible, our eyes are represented by our heart. To close our eyes is to shut the door of our heart. Many people shut the door of their hearts and are not open to learn from others, so God withholds His revelation from them. All of God's blessings come through the heart therefore we should take good care of it.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev 3:20)

Jesus told the Christians of Laodicea that He was knocking at their door. This word was intended for Christians, not for unbelievers. The Lord wants to come in but their hearts are closed. Similarly today, God has knocked on our hearts' door hoping that we will open it for Him, and that we would thirst for Him, hunger for His Word and long for His presence. There is no point in having all of these ingredients if our eyes and our hearts are not opened wide to the Lord.

## **True revelation**

Man is a triune being: he is spirit, has a soul and lives in a body. In order to go forward, this same man will have to learn about the things of God through his spirit and not only through his mind.

Many people get confused when they talk about knowing something in the spirit and revelation seems to have taken another meaning to some of them. The Word of God is clear concerning the things that we need in order to have revelation. Some brothers want to have a revelation of insignificant things, and they even teach that revelation is finding something that no one has ever seen or perceived.

We must understand this: the Word of God has a central point. Every one of God's purposes in the history of mankind has a central point: Jesus Christ in us. That is the revelation we must have. So many brothers in the church waste their time trying to learn so many things but miss God's central point: Christ. Many others know these truths and still see no change in their lives.

## **EVIDENCES OF TRUE REVELATION**

How do we know if we have revelation? There are four signs or evidences of genuine revelation. Genuine revelation is evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, therefore we also produce these fruits:

### **1. Life**

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

Jesus makes it clear in these words that when God speaks to us in the Bible, such revelation will generate life inside of us. Expressing life is the first characteristic of someone who has received revelation from the Lord.

The letter kills, but the word that comes out of Jesus' mouth is accompanied by His breath and His breath is the Spirit. There is light when the Lord speaks because "in Him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Whenever the Lord speaks there is life and we are filled with it. Everyone is searching for life and we should have life overflowing within us like a fountain, to satisfy others.

In the Bible, wine is a symbol of life. Wine represents life because its effects are similar. When someone is filled with wine, he or she will feel bold, audacious, and talkative; will smile more and will make for more pleasant company. Their face glows and their eyes shine. This is life manifesting itself. It is true that all of these things are temporary because wine is only an illusion and not a reality. Wine is a mere imitation of the reality of the supreme life of the Lord Jesus.

When we are filled with the Lord, we have all of these expressions of life, but now with deep spiritual reality. We feel more joyful, bold, able to speak and full of energy. It is very strange to live with people that don't express life in any way or form. Jesus is the living Word, so life will be manifested whenever the Word of God burns in our heart. God's will is that we overflow with the manifestation of Jesus and His abundant life in us.

The authority in our words will be the life of God flowing through us. When our

words are flowing with life it will generate life in others. Life has the power to destroy death. We can't explain life adequately, but we can perceive it wherever it is manifested.

Everyone seeks life. We shouldn't accept lifeless gatherings, lifeless counseling or lifeless sermons. There must be a spiritual problem when life is not being manifested. The letter alone brings death, but the revealed Word generates life.

## **2. Faith**

Growing in faith is the second characteristic of someone who has received some revelation. It is as if a new light has shone over a Biblical text which we already knew. When this happens, our heart is awakened to an exciting faith.

Paul says that, "faith comes from hearing the Word of God" (Rom 10:17). If no faith has been awakened, then there was no revelation. Faith is generated by God's Word and revelation is nothing more than God's Living Word in our spirit. If knowledge does not generate a new measure of faith in us, then it is natural and purely intellectual knowledge.

When God's revelation comes, our heart is warmed with a new faith and disposition. To grow in faith is to grow in revelation. Revelation is like a light. Today we see it as a candle, tomorrow as a 50 Watt light bulb, then 100 watts, 1,000 watts, until finally it is like a stadium floodlight. We shouldn't be content with the level of revelation and faith we already have achieved, we should always aim for new and higher levels.

## **3. Change**

Simon Peter answered, saying: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Based on Peter's affirmation, Jesus said: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Mat. 16:16-19).

After receiving revelation from the Lord, we will never be the same because the revelation will transform us. Peter made a great confession to Jesus. Jesus answered by saying the revelation was given to Peter by the Father. Because of this revelation, he was transformed from Simon, which means fragile, into Peter, which means rock. A rock has similar characteristics as those of Jesus. What transformed Peter? Jesus said it was the revelation that he had received from the Father. Upon each revelation that we receive from the Lord we are transformed from glory to glory until we reach the likeness of Jesus.

We don't need to make an effort to change ourselves and be transformed. We just need to know the Lord through the revelation in our spirit. We are supernaturally transformed when this happens. When someone claims to have revelation of a certain truth, but that revelation has not transformed him or her in any way, then his or her revelation is questionable. Revelation brings about a change in life.

If there have been no changes in your life it is because the light of the Word has not shone in your spirit. Some people complain that some brothers are constantly changing. Thank God for these people who are changing and will continue to change. They are not the same now as they were last year, and will not be the same next year as they are now. In order for the revelation of the Word to burn in my heart, my life must be constantly

growing and becoming transformed.

#### **4. Strength in temptation**

When a truth is learned only through the mind, it will not help us during the attacks of the enemy. However, when it is something that burns in our heart, we can depend on it whenever we need it because there will always be faith to destroy the action of the enemy.

The Word that comes from the spirit inside of us destroys the works of the devil. Every Word that comes out of the spirit is God's Word. Therefore, revelation is manifested in at least four different ways: life is imparted, faith is imparted, transformation is imparted and deliverance in times of battle is imparted. Revelation is progressive; it is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until it attains the light of the midday sun. (Proverbs 4:18).

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. (1Cor 13:12)

### **PRINCIPLES OF RECEIVING REVELATION**

If we wish to receive revelation from the Lord, there are some principles which we should adopt. I can't force God's light to come, but I can be ready to perceive it whenever it is manifested.

The main issue in receiving revelation is to deal with the heart. It is in the heart that the light of God shines (2Cor. 4:6). If our heart is having problems, we won't perceive the light of God.

#### **1. A Heart Consecrated to God**

Samson was defeated by the Philistines and then they put his eyes out (Judges 16:20, 21). Why was Samson defeated? Because he was a Nazirite consecrated to the Lord, and his hair was the sign of his consecration. When his hair was cut off, then his consecration was also cut off. Every time our consecration and obedience to God are broken, a dark cloud comes over us and we become blind to spiritual things.

Sin is such a terrible thing; it produces insensitivity in our heart and makes us unable to hear and receive from God. The devil's goal, as we have already said, is to keep us from seeing; he wants us to be blind to God and His purposes. When sin enters our life, the devil has an opportunity to bind us, so we are kept from obtaining God's revelation. The Lord's revelation is for those who obey and have a heart that is consecrated, offered and delivered to Him.

Many of God's servants do not understand the things of the spirit and live as if they were unbelievers. They act this way because they make mistakes in their heart by not having a heart that is consecrated to the Lord. Their spiritual eyes – the eyes of the heart – are blinded and they can't see spiritual things. This is usually the main reason for blindness among God's people.

On the other hand, those that walk in obedience become more sensitive and open to receive from God in their spirit.

#### **2. A Teachable Heart**

In relation to teaching, there are two categories of Christians in God's house: those



that have the ‘Adam complex’ and those that believe that ‘they know it all’. Christians in the first category presume that they don’t need to learn anything from anyone, because God will teach them everything. In their presumption, these brothers throw away centuries of history concerning the move of God and wait for God to start it all over again with them.

On the other hand, Christians in the second category are worse off because they already know everything and they do not need to learn anything from anyone, let alone seek revelation. They possess all the knowledge that is in the world.

Those who act this way shouldn’t expect anything from the Lord because God resists them. All this is pride and God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (1Peter 5:5). The Lord advises the church of Laodicea to buy balm for their eyes so that they may see (Rev. 3:18). This ‘seeing’ is something in the spirit. To put balm in their eyes means to have a teachable heart. Whoever is not willing to learn from others will not learn directly from the Lord either. Because of his lack of consecration, Samson was blinded just as the Christians of Laodicea were blinded by their pride in assuming that they knew everything.

Revelation is the uncovering and revealing of something that was hidden. It is not enough to reveal what is hidden, light is also needed; otherwise, you will not be able to see. I can reveal what is hidden in a box, but if there is no light, it is worthless. This uncovering is important and light is essential, but if I don’t have eyes to see, it is all in vain.

The minister of the Word should meditate on the Word in the Lord’s light, but if the hearers are blind, it will be worthless. We need to have eyes to see before anything. If not, we will fall into the same plight as the Pharisees: they had eyes, but did not see; they had ears, but did not hear.

God will not teach me if I try to learn on my own that which I refuse to learn from others. However, if I am willing to learn from others, then God’s light will come through that person and reach me with even more revelation. If God is moving in our region in a neighboring city, I should be willing to go there to learn, because if I don’t, and try to learn on my own, God will resist me because God resists the proud.

May the Lord grant us eye salve so that we may see and receive revelation from His Word.

### **3. A Clean Heart**

Jesus said, “the pure in heart will see God” (Mat 5:8). This seeing is a promise for the future, but it also refers to the present times that we can see God through revelation (1Cor. 2:9-10).

Many people have an impure heart before God and thus cannot receive revelation. It is not enough to have a clean heart; we must have a pure heart. To be clean means not having any hidden sins. It comes from the complete forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. However, having a pure heart is not just a matter of the absence of sin. A glass of water can have clean water mixed with sugar, so in the same way, there are clean hearts that are not completely pure.

To have a pure heart means having a heart without mixtures. It is hard to see the things of the spirit if our heart is filled with profane things. Many things in our heart are not sinful, but they are impure. Let us use a person that has just opened up a business as an

example. Even though his heart is not dirty, it is filled with business interests. Throughout the day, he will be minding his business. If there is a desire in our heart for the Lord, but also an equal desire for other things, then our hearts are impure. To have a pure heart is to have a heart solely for God.

Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. (Psalm 73:25).

David was called ‘a man after God’s own heart’ because all of his pleasure was in God. When our heart is entirely turned to the Lord to the point that we can say that our pleasure is in Him, the windows of heaven will open and the light of God will come over His Word. In 2Chronicles 16:9, we read that the eyes of the Lord search back and forth across the earth for the man whose heart is completely His. To have a heart for God is to have Him as a treasure, because where my heart is, my treasure will also be. When we take pleasure in the Lord and have Him in our heart, then revelation comes spontaneously.

#### **4. An unveiled Heart**

But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. (2Cor. 3:15)

Paul is saying that the Jews have a veil over their hearts that keeps them from seeing the revelation of Jesus. What is this veil? It is the veil of traditionalism. Why are there so many that don’t surrender to the evidences of the Holy Spirit’s baptism? History proves it, the growth of the church proves it, and signs prove it and mature lives prove it. Why, then, do people still say it is a lie? It can only be because of the veil that is over their hearts. God does not place this veil over us, we do it ourselves. When we harden our hearts in a natural and human concept, we are putting a veil over our hearts that keeps us from receiving new revelation.

This fact can be seen throughout history. God always uses a man to bring revelation, but this same man resists the new revelations that God wants to bring through others. God doesn’t stop; we are the ones that are entrenched in our human traditions. If we desire revelation, we need to give up on human traditionalism.

To be traditional is to be closed to any new things God is doing. In this way, there are traditional people that pray in a low voice and those that pray out loud. There are traditional people that pray in tongues and others that don’t. A traditional person clings to the past.

In receiving revelation it is fundamental to have a correct heart. If we desire revelation, it is essential to be filled with the Word of God.

#### **5. To be filled with God’s Word**

Evidently, if I wish to grow in the revelation of the Word, I need to spend time reading it and filling my mind with it. Someone may ask: “But isn’t revelation received in the spirit?” Yes, but the mind needs to begin by being filled with the Word. A very important biblical principle comes into play in this matter: “However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.” (1Cor 15:46). The mind accomplishes a very important function, but if the mind is darkened and problematic, then the revelation of the spirit will be affected. First, my mind needs to know so that afterward my spirit may receive light.

Many people have no revelation because their minds are not filled with the Word of God. Once I start filling my mind with God's Word, He Himself will take care of transforming that knowledge that was originally mental into something spiritual which will transform me, build faith, and fill me with life.

## LOGOS AND RHEMA

There are two terms used in the original Greek, which are equally translated, as "Word" that are indistinguishable when we read the Bible without the aid of a Greek lexicon. These two terms are 'logos' and '*rhema*'. They are both translated as "Word" because they are seen as synonyms, but the Holy Spirit chose such terms to show us the tremendous difference that exists between the written Word and the living Word. Let's look at a few Biblical examples where we can find the terms logos and *rhema*:

### 1. Logos

*Logos* is the written Word. It is what God said and has been registered for our instruction. It contains what God said previously by the prophets and through the Son (Heb. 1:1-2). We minister this written Word to others, not the word of men. We must be familiar with this Word, because the knowledge of the written words of the Bible is extremely important. Let us look at a few texts that use the term logos in its original form, and what our attitude needs to be towards the written Word.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my word (logos). (John 14:23).

Remember the word that I said to you (logos). (John 15:20).

Sanctify them in the truth; your word (logos) is truth. (John 17:17).

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (logos). (Acts 6:4).

And the word (logos) of God continued to increase. (Acts 6:7).

Holding fast to the word (logos) of life. (Phil 2:16).

Being trained in the words (logos) of the faith. (1Tim 4:6).

Rightly handling the word (logos) of truth. (2Tim 2:15).

Preach the word (logos). (2Tim 4:2).

For the word (logos) of God is living and active. (Hebrews 4:12).

Is unskilled in the word (logos) of righteousness. (Hebrews 5:13).

But be doers of the word (logos). (James 1:22).

Let the word (logos) of Christ dwell in you richly. (Col 3:16)

The written Word should dwell in us richly and abundantly. We should read, meditate on, and memorize this Word. We should be among those that simply by mentioning a fact in the scriptures is enough for us to know its content (at least in general terms). That is essential, because without the knowledge of the written Word, we will never reach the experience of the living Word (*Rhema*).

*Logos* is the foundation of *rhema*. As we have already learned, first comes the natural, then the spiritual. First, we should have our mind full of logos so that the Holy Spirit can bring us the *rhema*.

I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God (logos) abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one. (1 John 2:14)

The characteristic of young men is their strength, not their natural strength but their spiritual strength. The young men referred to here in their struggle against evil resemble the Lord Jesus when Satan was tempting Him. The enemy cited Bible verses to Jesus, but the Lord defeated him by using the Scriptures and by affirming, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

## 2. Rhema

Despite being translated as "Word" in the Bible just like logos, *rhema* has a very different meaning. While logos is the written Word spoken in the past, *rhema* is the Word that God is speaking to us personally; it is the word burning in our hearts. Let us look at a few passages in the New Testament where the word *rhema* is used.

Jesus answered: It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (*rhema*) that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

*Rhema* is the term used here in the original Greek. This means that the logos, the written Word, cannot feed us, only *rhema* can nourish our spirit. Both logos and *rhema* are the Word of God, but the first is the Word that is written in the Bible and understood in the mind, while the last is the Word of God spoken to us in and for a specific occasion and received in the spirit.

One time a brother received the news that his son had been run over by a car. He immediately opened the Bible randomly and read John 11:4: "This illness does not lead to death." The brother then felt peace and even rejoiced. When, however, he reached the scene of the accident, he found out that his son had died instantly. Was the statement in the gospel of John not true? It is the Word of God and it will always be true, but it was logos, not *rhema*.

Faith comes from hearing (literal), and hearing through the word (*rhema*) of Christ. (Rom 10:17).

Here once again the Word is *rhema* and not logos. This shows us that what generates faith is not simply reading the Bible, but it is to have the Word burning in our heart through the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit's action, it is just the written word.

We all know many verses of the Bible. One day, however, a text we have already known and even memorized gives us a different angle, bringing life and color to the verse. That truth starts to warm our hearts, generating faith. God is speaking to us. We knew it generally before, but now God spoke to us individually. Every *rhema* is based on logos, but we can't have logos without *rhema*.

The words (*rhema*) that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. (John 6:63).

Only *rhema* is spirit and life, and *Logos* itself cannot give life and it can even kill because the letter kills. The Gospel of Luke tells us about what Mary did when she found out that she would give birth to the Son of God:

Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word (*rhema*). (Luke 1:38)

Before, Mary had the words of the prophet Isaiah:

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Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. (Isa 7:14)

But now she has the Word spoken specifically to her: “you shall conceive and bear a son”. It was for having received this Word that Mary conceived the child and everything was fulfilled. God spoke these same words individually to her through *rhema*, that were recorded back in Isaiah’s time and today in His word logos the text that was written about her and to her. Only when God spoke to her through the angel, does the Bible use the expression *rhema*, indicating that it was the living Word.

Finally, in the gospel of Luke, Simeon said: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word” (Luke 2:29). The Word here is *rhema*. Before Jesus came, God told Simeon that he wouldn’t die before seeing Christ the Lord. But on the day that Simeon saw the Lord Jesus, he said: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word”. Simeon had the *rhema* of the Lord.

## Learning Exercises

1. What are the three parts that constitute the nature of man? Explain each one of them.

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2. Why must we be able to perceive our own spirit?

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3. What are the basic functions of the spirit? Give a brief explanation of each of them.

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4. What are the four ways to exercise your spirit?

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5. What are the functions of the soul? Give a brief explanation of each of them.

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SPIRITUAL MATURITY COURSE

6. Why is it dangerous to live the Christian life only on the level of the soul?

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7. How can the soul be transformed?

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8. What are the functions of the body? Give a brief explanation of each of them.

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9. Why must we discipline our body?

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10. What are the practical implications of describing the nature of man in three parts?

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11. How are the three parts of man related to salvation?

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12. How are the three parts of man related to God's purpose?

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13. How are the three parts of man related to God's indwelling?

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14. Explain why it is important to receive revelation in the spirit.

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15. What are the conditions necessary to receive revelation?

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16. Of what does true revelation consist?

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17. What are the evidences of true revelation?

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18. What principles govern the dynamics of receiving revelation?

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19. Explain the difference between *logos* and *rhema*.

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## 2

### WALKING IN THE SPIRIT



If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25) “... for we walk by faith, not by sight. (2Cor. 5:7)

After having understood the basic three-part make-up of Man we must understand how God works through us and how we must cooperate with Him in order for Him to work freely in and through us. This cooperation requires us to exercise our spirit in order to receive God’s leading. In the first lesson we learned that we must do our part to transform our soul by renewing our mind and by disciplining our body bringing its instincts under subjection to God’s will.

Our spirit has already been regenerated. When Adam sinned, he died to God and with him; the entire human race fell into spiritual death and separation. Hence, the first thing God needed to do in man was to regenerate him – man must first receive the new birth.

Once we are born again, the purpose of God is to guide us by the Holy Spirit who dwells in, and operates through, our human spirit. Simultaneously, God expects us to cooperate with Him by exercising our spirit in obedience to Him.

The Holy Spirit dwells inside of us. God’s nature, love, power, goodness, and health all dwell within our recreated spirit. We do not need to seek after these things, we just need to have the revelation that they are already inside of us. We now have the mind of Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Everything that is necessary for a holy and fulfilled life has already been placed inside of us through the person of the Holy Spirit. Once we learn to walk in the spirit, all these realities of the Holy Spirit dwelling within our own spirit will begin to manifest in us.

We were like a person with many different kinds of diseases that went to see his doctor. The doctor diagnosed the patient and prescribed several types of medication, one for each disease. The pharmacist then put all of the medications inside one syringe. This combination of medications became a powerful dose that cured all of the diseases. God did the same with us; He injected us with a spiritual medication, in the form of the Holy Spirit that cures all of our inner needs. We must completely understand that everything we need for an abundant life in God has already been given to us through the Holy Spirit within us. If we need power, He is power. If we need love, He is the love that was shed abroad in our hearts. If we need understanding, all of the treasures of wisdom are hidden in Him. All things are already complete in our spirit. Our real need today is to learn how to be led by the Spirit depending on Him for all our needs.

The Christian life consists of two substitutions; the first was on the cross, where the Lord Jesus died in our place and the second is in our daily lives where the Holy Spirit wants to live in our place, and become our life.

## **UNBELIEF: THE FIRST SIN**

If we understand the origin of the first sin, then we can understand the origin of all sins, because the principle of all sin is the same (Gen. 3:1-6). Sin manifests itself in three principal forms: unbelief, independence and the natural life.

The first sin was not especially offensive in appearance. It was not obscene, pornographic, scandalous, or evil at first glance. Adam and Eve merely disobeyed the instructions of the Lord and ate the wrong fruit, nothing else.

The first sin gave birth to all others, because the principle in operation governs all other sins, even though they may start in different ways. Let us see how this happened.

In this part of our study, we are going to look at the principle of unbelief. Regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil God told Adam and Eve: “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:17). Eve chose to believe what the devil said instead of believing what God had said. The devil contradicted God saying: “you will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4).

The world says: “You can never change; there is no deliverance for you; you were born this way, you are going to die this way; even if you become a Christian you will not change, you will always be the same” – that is what the world and the devil says. God however says that you are a new creature and if you believe, you will manifest newness of life.

Therefore, we have two affirmations before us: God’s affirmation and the devil’s affirmation. Which one are you going to believe? That is the root of the matter “Who am I going to believe?” Every man has to make this choice because sin began when Adam and Eve chose to believe in the devil rather than trust God.

Many times homosexuals say things like, “It is impossible for me to stop being what I am,” But that is what the devil says. God however says that if you believe, you will become a new person – a new creation. The world says, ‘you can never change; there is no hope for you; you were born this way and you will die this way; you can even become a Christian, but you will still remain what you have always been.’ – That is what the world and the devil say.

However, God says that if you believe, you will become a new creation. It is a question of being and not just doing. You are a new creature. We should always give people the same option, because that is where sin started: when Adam and Eve chose to trust in the devil rather than trust in God. The Bible exhorts us: “Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). God cannot lie; He is completely faithful to what He says.

### **Sin manifests itself in three ways against God**

*Pride (rebelliousness)* – This type of sin attacks the authority and the throne of God. Satan said “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isaiah 14:14). From God’s point of view, this is the most serious type of sin, because it directly attacks the throne of His authority.

*Disobedience* – A disobedient person lies, steals, fornicates and disobeys God’s commands. Disobedience attacks God’s holiness. God is holy; He will not tolerate uncleanness, impurity and iniquity.

*Unbelief* – Unbelief attacks God’s character. The unbeliever is actually accusing God of being a liar. God says, “You were enriched in everything by Him” (1Cor. 1:5), but the unbeliever says, “I am poor”. God says, “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” (Mat 8:17), the unbeliever says, “I’m afraid of dying of cancer”. God says, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions” (Luke 10:19), the unbeliever says, “I don’t have the gift of casting out demons; that is only for pastors”. There are many subtle ways to say that God is a liar. Many times, we are very clever in our unbelief.

To better understand life in the Spirit, we have divided this study into three simple principles. Life in the Spirit is accomplished in three ways: walking by faith, walking by the

cross and walking in the supernatural.

## **WALKING BY FAITH**

To walk by faith and understand the Holy Spirit's pattern of life, we need to comprehend how the first sin came into being. Sin diverted man from God's standard and understanding how this came about will help us determine the way back to His pattern. The problem with the flesh started when Adam and Eve began to doubt God's Word. Now for us to enter into the dimension of the Spirit we need to fulfill the first condition. To walk in the Spirit implies walking by faith. If we do not walk by faith, we are not walking in the Spirit.

Walking in the spirit and walking by faith are interchangeable terms in the bible. The Word of God says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11.6) and that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8.8). Observe these two passages: in the Letter to the Hebrews, Paul says that unbelievers cannot please God, and in the Letter to the Romans, the apostle says that the carnal Christian cannot please Him either. Therefore, the carnal Christian is also a type of unbeliever.

Eve doubted the word of God and thus became the first unbeliever. Now, for us to enter into the dimension of the spirit we have to walk by faith. Unbelief is one of the manifestations of carnality and those who are in the flesh are easily recognizable; they are unbelievers, indifferent and insensitive. At this point, it is important to recognize that we are not dealing with belief for salvation but belief for walking in the spirit. Many Christians have sufficient faith for salvation because the Bible teaches that saving faith is a gift (Ephesians 2:8, 9) whereas as faith for God's provision and guidance is a command for those who already possess eternal life and must move forward to maturity.

### **1. To walk by faith is to be full of the Spirit**

If someone walks in the spirit, he will be full of the Holy Spirit. A person that walks in the spirit can easily be identified because everything that he does overflows with life. When we talk about life we are not referring to the deeds and works of righteousness and integrity and everything that one would expect from a good Christian, we are talking about something more subtle, intuitive, something that although we don't know where it comes from or where it is going, we can see that it is powerful. When we see someone full of the Spirit, we sense something different about that person.

The first miracle that Jesus performed was turning water into wine. In the Scriptures, wine is a symbol of life. It is easy to see if a person has been drinking wine. The first thing you notice is the change in their complexion; their skin appears healthier. Secondly, their eyes begin to sparkle as if full of joy; however it is a natural joy, coming from the alcohol of the wine. Thirdly, they become filled with excitement and a sensation of strength. The person starts to feel like a lion; a smile easily forms on their lips and they seem full of life. Wine is a symbol of life because it brings the sensations of life, even though it is superficial and temporary.

When we drink of the Lord and come under the influence of the Holy Spirit, something similar happens to us, but it is something much more profound. We smile easier and become less inhibited feeling free to praise, jump or shout before the Lord. It is not an

external joy, from jokes or from upbeat music; it is well founded, coming from the inside, from the Spirit; it is something permanent; fire from the Lord that burns inside our hearts, transforming our perspective of life as something beautiful and different. This fire is the living presence of the Lord within us.

## **2. What does it mean to walk by faith?**

To walk by faith implies placing no dependence on what you see, what you can do, or what you understand. Walking in the spirit implies renouncing these three things: walking by sight, by your own ability and by your own understanding.

### *a. Walk not by sight*

We live by faith, not by sight (2Cor 5:7)

The second most important aspect of walking in the spirit is to walk by faith and not by sight. We should adopt the following rule: “If what I see agrees with the Word of God, I keep looking at it; but if it does not agree with the Word of God, I ignore what I’m seeing and choose to believe only what the Word of God tells me. This seems like an imprudent way to live – to the world it is simply madness.

If there is one type of circumstance in which we are tempted to walk by sight it has to be when we deal with illnesses and diseases. Many times, we insist on looking at the symptoms of the disease instead of looking at what the Word of God says concerning sickness and diseases. If the Word of God says that the Lord Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses on the cross (Mat. 8:17), then we must reject the symptoms and hold to the truth of the Word, no matter what we see or feel. Walking by sight is a characteristic of the carnal Christian. If we insist on walking by sight, we will be slaves to the natural realm. Circumstances will easily knock us down and our confidence will collapse. We must learn to see in the spirit and walk by what we believe God will do, not by what the devil suggests will happen by provoking us to focus on present circumstances.

### *b. Renouncing our own effort*

Every carnal Christian walks in his own strength and effort. Faith implies dependence on God. If we walk in our own strength, we do not need to use our faith. The principal characteristic of the life of faith is rest. Paul says in Hebrews 4:3 “For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said.” Those who walk in the spirit walk in rest. They are like sailboats in the middle of the sea; they do not need to make any effort, they just allow themselves to be taken by the wind. We are like the sailboat and the wind acts like the Spirit. Observe that this rest is not leisure, not a retreat or vacation. We could go to the most beautiful and pleasant places in the world searching for rest, and still not find it. Our body may be resting but we may remain restless. True rest is being able to say, “Lord, I know it is you who does the work, not me. I am not the one who saves, You are, Lord. I am not the one who sanctifies, but You are, Lord. I am not the one who does it, but You are.” If we lose our rest and anguish every time we have to do something like preach, work or any other activity, and if our anxiety increases to the point of losing our joy, then there is a lack of such rest. The work of God is not done in tiredness, fatigue or through sweat: it is done by depending on the Lord. Ezekiel gives us a clear idea of just who serves in the temple:



And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat. (Ezekiel 44:17, 18)

When we do the work of God, we must not sweat. We are the Levite priests in charge of serving in the house of the Lord and when we are serving Him, we must not produce sweat.

It is vital that we understand what sweat represents in the Bible. In Genesis 3:19 God included sweat as part of the curse of sin. Sweat is the symbol of the curse, but thankfully, through Jesus Christ we were delivered from the curse of sin. It is so great to serve God. We do not have to sweat and be tired.

Those who draw near to serve in the temple of God's presence must not work in and through their own strength thus producing sweat. We no longer have to live with the curse of sin. The Lord Jesus sweated great drops of blood in Gethsemane in our place so that we do not have to sweat. Now we can enter His rest. His Spirit works in us. Walking by faith means giving up our own efforts and entering the rest of God. If we walk in the spirit, we will also walk in His rest.

*c. Renouncing our own understanding*

Some Christians walk by their own effort, some walk by sight and others walk by their own understanding. After man ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he became full of his own opinions. In order to enjoy God's best today, man needs to break free from his natural understanding and independence of God.

God called Abraham and told him that he would be the father of multitudes. He and his wife could not have children so they decided to help God by having a child with Sarah's maidservant Hagar (Genesis 16:1-4). The name of the child was Ishmael who represented the fruit of Abraham's own understanding and natural strength in an effort to accomplish the will of God. However, the Lord did not accept it. God rejects the efforts of those who do things that do not please Him, but He also rejects the efforts of those who do things to please Him through their own will and understanding.

Another example of someone who walked in his own understanding is Saul. The Lord commanded him to destroy the Amalekites (1Samuel 15:3), but what did Saul do? Seeing the healthy cattle and the fat sheep, he decided to separate them as an offering to the Lord. His natural understanding was that it would have been a waste to kill them all and after all he would be offering them to God. However, God's verdict is that whoever is of the flesh cannot please Him.

God rejects many things that are not wrong in the eyes of man. Although we should not be slaves of codes of conduct and the rules of right and wrong, the important thing is to learn to walk in the spirit.

If we correctly hear the Spirit, naturally we will do God's will. If we walk by our own understanding we are not walking by faith and dependence on the Spirit; that is why the ones that walk in their own understanding cannot please God; the things that they do not come from faith but from the flesh.

When we are counseling someone, we should not give him or her all the answers up

front; we should stimulate them to use their own spirit in order to discern God's direction for them. When God speaks, there is growth. Human words can be good, but when God speaks, there is transformation and life.

Growth comes when we learn to hear from God directly. Many leaders stimulate their disciples to be dependent on them. Real spiritual leaders teach their disciples to hear and depend on God. If the leader always reveals what the will of God is, the disciple will never learn to discern on their own.

To live in the flesh is to walk in your own strength, by your own sight and by leaning on your own understanding. The walk of faith on the other hand, is to walk in God's rest, ignoring the visible and renouncing your own understanding whenever necessary.

## **WALKING BY THE CROSS**

The first sin involved unbelief, and if we are willing to walk in the spirit today, we must walk by faith. However, there was something else involved in the first sin: independence.

There were two trees in the Garden of Eden. The tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life pointed to God Himself. If man had chosen the tree of life, he would have chosen to depend on God. He would have had no firsthand knowledge of the difference between good and the evil and would have been free to leave the difference up to God. He would not have ever had to live by what he knew on his own, but by what God would have instructed him. The tree of knowledge of good and evil symbolizes independence from God. When man ate from it, he became independent from God with respect to knowing good and evil. This is a case where independence is death.

In the same way that the first sin originated, certainly all sins originate in the same manner and upon the same foundation because all sin is centered on the ego. Sin is the ego in action. Independence is the specific way in which the ego manifests itself. It says, "I have my own opinions, desires, goals, and identity. I am accountable to nobody". When man chose to eat from the tree of knowledge, his ego, or soul, was expanded and it became the center of human personality. The purpose of God was (and still is) for the human spirit to be the center of man, but sin transformed man into a soul-centered or fleshly being, the spirit died, the ego became the center, and as a result, man became selfish and egocentric.

Sin is everything that originates in the ego. Everything that man does independently of God is sin. It can be preaching, praying, or any other pious or religious activity – if it is done through the ego's initiative, it is of the flesh.

We can also see that the ego manifests itself through the fruit of the flesh. What is enmity? It is the ego's reaction when it isn't recognized. What is rage? It is the ego's reaction when it is opposed. What is jealousy? It is the ego's fear of being replaced. What is division? It is the result of the rejection of the ego that believes it is always right and never gives in.

All sin springs from egocentricity, in contrast, every virtue is born of an altruistic spirit. While egocentricity places the person at the center, altruism places others at the center. What is love? It is forgetting one's self and considering others. What is joy? It is living in contentment with what you have and what you are. In the Bible, the attitude of denying yourself and putting someone else at the center reveals the character of the cross. In order

to live life in the spirit, it is not enough to walk in faith, we also must walk by the Cross.

In 1 John 3:23, we read:

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.

Here we have two principles: faith and love (or the principle of the cross). To walk in love and to walk by the cross is the same thing. Love is, ultimately, the renouncing of self.

Life in the Spirit is a direct consequence of walking according to the cross. True Christianity only exists if we live by the cross. Jesus not only died on a cross; He lived the life of the cross. This lifestyle consists of daily renouncing the will of the ego in order to do God's will.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6:9-13, He finished the prayer by saying: "for yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory". The kingdom, the power and the glory are the things for which men have always sought and fought.

The kingdom represents goods, wealth, respect and recognition. Power represents the inner desire for control, favor, gifts and abilities. Glory, a very basic drive of the ego, represents the desire to receive praise and adoration. The life of the cross consists of surrendering the kingdom, the power and the glory, knowing that we must turn these things over to God.

The Lord needs to show us how deplorable our ego is in his eyes. We need to see ourselves in His light as we gaze in the mirror of His Word so we can renounce our 'self'. This mirror provides the revelation of our sinful condition. It will bring us to the end of ourselves. However, when we fail to see our own reflection because of our stubbornness and insensitivity to the Spirit, the Lord deems it necessary to use other resources: failure and humiliation. The Lord has no desire for us to suffer humiliation. Humiliation comes as a consequence of our stubbornness and resistance to learning through the light of the Spirit. It also comes because many times we have a wrong concept of ourselves; we think that we are humble when in reality we are not. We think that we are dependent on God, when in truth we depend on our own wisdom and effort.

Suppose that a pastor invites a simple brother to preach at the church's main Sunday service. Most likely he will feel nervous and may even have stomach cramps and diarrhea, intimidated by the responsibility. This is an interesting reaction; however, it is only an expression of the flesh's fear of embarrassment. Since the brother is feeling insecure, he will pray a lot, fast and meditate on the Word. When Sunday arrives, his preaching is gripping and he leaves a strong impression on the listeners. The leaders are surprised and invite him for the next Sunday as well. On the second Sunday, he is more confident than before but still feels the need to spend time praying and seeking God. Once again, it is a blessing, and the excited leadership invites him for one more Sunday. This time our brother feels so secure that he feels able to preach to a stadium full of people. He fails to pray and meditate on the Word as he did before; now he thinks that he can trust his own ability. He steps up to the pulpit and preaches his entire sermon, but when he looks at his watch, only about ten minutes have gone by. He begins to sweat and feel chills, dizziness, nausea, and his desire is to run as far as he can from that place and situation. The third Sunday became a complete embarrassment. Notice how God worked in the heart of this

brother. He led him to the recognition that he was not as dependent and humble as he had thought, but only realized it on the third Sunday. It is not easy to spot our own mistakes, but when embarrassment comes, then we see them.

### **1. To deny yourself means to take up the Cross**

What does it mean to deny oneself? There are many wrong concepts about denying the ego. Denying oneself does not imply the annihilation of the will; rather it is definitely renouncing my own will when I want to follow a different direction other than God's will.

Denying oneself does not imply erasing one's own personality and preferences. It is not a life of asceticism. This type of thinking portrays the Christian life as one of constant misery. Life becomes a heavy burden, difficult to endure. Jesus came so that man could have an abundant life.

Denying oneself is not the loss of desire. When desire turns into lust, it turns into sin. However, there are legitimate and Biblical desires like getting married, having children, preaching the gospel, saving lives, etc. However, self-denial implies that there will be moments of an apparent loss of will, preference and fulfillment of legitimate desires.

### **2. Areas where the Cross affects us**

In Luke 14:25-33 Jesus set and explained the standard of Christian living to His followers. This standard is nothing more than the application of the cross in each area of our lives. In this text, Jesus emphasizes three basic things when He expressively repeats the same phrase three times, "you cannot be my disciples". Every time Jesus spoke about taking up the cross, he also spoke about denying oneself. The two concepts go hand in hand – denying oneself is to take up the cross. The cross is nothing more than obeying the will of God and there is no way to obey the will of God without denying our own will.

#### *a) Our relationships*

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:26

The first point speaks of my need of acceptance of honor of respect and love. It relates to the fear of rejection and of being forgotten. The cross in action implies our renouncing of love and unconditional acceptance of others. It is not that I no longer want others to love me, but that I will not demand love at any cost. If in order to receive love, I need to reject Jesus, relegate my faith to second place or even renounce the truth, then I will choose to not be loved.

When we take up the cross, we need to disregard the world's opinion of us, even if the world accuses us of being crazy, fanatical or stupid. We will be better off clinging to the cross.

Just as God required Mary to conceive Jesus as a virgin, He may require something of us that will bring struggle and distress.

Think about how hard it must have been for Mary to become God's instrument in bearing the Messiah. She could have been stoned to death as an adulteress. However, she disregarded the need for worldly acceptance. Today God may ask us to do things in the church for which many others will misinterpret and even reject us.

We need to be free from the opinions of others. We have no need to seek the approval,

compliments, recognition or acceptance of others, even from our closest brothers. We must offer our love, our compliments and our unconditional acceptance, without the hope of receiving any of these things in return. It is necessary for each of us to apply the cross to our relationships.

*b) Our Ego*

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:27)

To take up the Cross implies doing God's will instead of our own will. We all have the natural tendency to avoid pain and seek pleasure. The will of God many times comes accompanied by pain and we should take hold of it instead of our own desire for pleasure and comfort. The cross speaks of giving up our rights, recognition, opportunities and so forth. When Jesus was under the burden of the cross, he said, "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42)

Several times in the life and ministry of our Lord, Satan offered an easy way to power without going through the Cross. The temptations to escape the cross were numerous. Especially as He drank of the bitter cup of Calvary, the temptation to step down from the Cross was tremendous. We know that Christ had the power to forgo the Cross if He so chose. He chose to do the will of His Father instead of His own. However, we cannot say the same of ourselves. How many times have we stepped down from the cross, thus losing our power and authority?

What does it mean to step down from the cross? Stepping down from the cross implies any attitude that we have of preserving ourselves, or our own ego. Anytime you take the easy way instead of God's way in the application of spiritual principles, you are stepping down from the cross. Let us be even more exact and explicit. Every effort to defend, excuse, protect, justify or save the ego is a step down from the cross.

Self-pity is a form of stepping down from the cross. Self-pity is what you feel when you find yourself wronged by another person and you start to feel sorry for yourself because you cannot do anything about it. You say to yourself, "How could anyone treat someone as wonderful as I am so badly?"

Resentment is also a manner of stepping down from the cross. The person that becomes irritated when wrongfully treated because he unable to do anything about it expresses resentment through phrases such as, "I, the wonderful person that I am, treated like that? Someone like me should never have to suffer like this." Can you recognize the ego here?

Refusal to assume blame is yet another way to step down from the cross. "Everyone is guilty except me, or at least everyone is guiltier than I am." Self-vindication and self-justification are ways of stepping down from the cross. Entire churches are destroyed because someone insisted on taking revenge.

However, perhaps the greatest way of stepping down from the cross is when we try to force our cross on others. The carnal person asks, "Why do I always have to be the one to carry the Cross?" Each of us needs to take up our own cross and never force it on others. Have you ever seen a lamb die? A lamb humbly advances to its own slaughter and when the executioner takes the knife to it, it does not let out the slightest whimper. A lamb

meekly yields its own life to the will of the executioner. In contrast, when a pig is slaughtered you can hear the squeals from blocks away. Have you ever heard the phrase, “die, you gravy sucking pig!” A pig has a tremendous will to live out his sorry existence! Two thieves were condemned next to Jesus on the cross, but Jesus went to the cross voluntarily like a lamb. Do not take up your cross like a squealing pig or a raving criminal, but as a lamb.

### *c. Our possessions*

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:33)

There is no Christianity without the cross only religion. Our ego needs to lose its place of centrality and give way to the will of God. I must renounce the desire to live for myself and, even more, I have to give up my own possessions. For many, giving up possessions is more difficult than giving up oneself. The Cross is intimately related to our lifestyle. Prosperity is part of the Gospel, but it is only one part. The principal emphasis without a doubt is a generous and sacrificial life style. The cross makes us sensitive to the necessities of the world around us.

Many people embrace the verse that says that Christ was made poor so that we could be made rich through His poverty (2Cor. 9), but they reject the command of Jesus not to accumulate treasures on earth. It seems contradictory, but the paradox disappears when we understand that God gives us so that we can give it back to Him. Prosperity is simply having more than is necessary.

We must allow the Cross to deal in the area of our finances. The Lord requires complete control over our bank account. We must not allow the materialistic mindset that has taken hold of our generation to drag us away. We are a prosperous people whose possessions are subject to the cross.

### **3. The application of the Cross**

To take up the cross simply means to choose the will of God over our own will. The cross is in reality, His will. We should consider nothing that is contrary to God’s Will as a cross for us to carry. Once we understand this, we can also say for example, that sickness and disease are not crosses that we should carry since Jesus Christ already carried all of these on His Cross (1Peter 2:24); therefore, we cannot say that illness is the will of God. We can also affirm that poverty is not a cross since we have been delivered from the curses of the law (Gal. 3:13). The cross that Christ bore was definitely the will of God and not some sort of attack from the devil like disease or poverty.

According to the divine order of the Bible, there is to be one husband for each wife. Each marriage, no matter how it occurred, is part of God’s order. Once you get married to someone, that person is your spouse and there is nothing you can do to change it. According to God’s command, there should be no divorce. His will is one husband for each wife.

If you get a divorce, you will be divorcing yourself from God’s will. However, if you accept your spouse, you will be accepting the will of God because being with that person represents the will of God itself. His will is always a cross. The cross may seem unpleasant and uncomfortable at times but it is always good. If you accept your spouse as if he or she

was a punishment, you will be acting like a transgressor of God's law. However, if you receive your spouse voluntarily by the grace of the Lord, you will be a cross bearer, bearing what is good, perfect and agreeable. By taking up the cross voluntarily, you are not acting as a lawbreaker. Therefore, recognize that your spouse is the will of God for you.

Suppose that a believing husband has a wife that has caused him much suffering. He can respond in one of two ways, since divorce is not an option: he can remain married and suffer as a criminal being executed on the Cross, or he can consider her as the will of God, as his own part and portion. He can say, "She is God's gift to me. It wasn't that I simply got married to her; it was that God gave her to me."

The Cross is the place where we overcome the devil. Many think that spiritual warfare is only a matter of casting out demons. They are always casting out demons as they walk around their home (and from their spouse when they are not looking!). Jesus cast out demons throughout his entire ministry on earth, but He only overcame the devil on the Cross.

The Cross brings true victory. I am not saying that it is wrong to cast demons out of people because Jesus did it with Peter; I am only affirming that there is no victory without the Cross. I would like to show some practical manifestations of the principle of the Cross.

*a. Willingness to suffer loss*

Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? (1Corinthians 6:7)

The answers to Paul's questions are so obvious I could just scream! "Wait a minute, Paul! You mean that when so and so does something wrong to me I am the one that has to lose and suffer the harm?" The cross is exactly that! "What if I want to claim my rights?" Well, if you have rights it is correct to fight for them all the way to the Supreme Court. There is nothing sinful in fighting for your own rights, it is not morally wrong, but where is the victory? What about crushing the serpent's head? The devil is only really defeated when someone takes up the Cross. You must ask yourself if you want to be right or if you want to be an overcomer. There are two life principles in operation at any given moment: the principle of the cross and the principle of reason. If we want to be reasonable and right, we have already stepped down from the cross. If we take up the cross, it does not matter who is right.

*b. Not pleasing ourselves*

"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Romans 15:1)

When Jesus went to the cross, he did not go because he wanted a different experience; he was not seeking spiritual ecstasy or complements. In fact, Jesus did not want to go to the Cross; He only did it to obey the will of the Father. However, the Father did not force Him to go to the Cross He went voluntarily. The point is that at times we will need to deny ourselves in order to please God.

Many people today think that becoming a Christian is simply seeking a new experience, safety against disaster or a life of happiness. No, the Christian life places the Cross at the

center. So the key question is not whether something is a sin or not, or whether I am obligated to do a certain thing or not, but what the will of God is for me.

Many marriages never prosper because one spouse is not willing to please the other at the expense of personal comfort. When we are willing to choose whatever does not please us, the life of God begins to flow through us, God uses us to edify the church and shut the gates of hell. There is a path to victory but it is neither an easy nor a pleasing one. However, in the end the victory is certain.

*c. Consider others superior to yourself*

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (Philippians 2:3)

Considering others as superior to ourselves seems old-fashioned. It seems to contradict the modern philosophy of self-esteem. However, when we carry our cross in this way, we edify the Church. Once again, we must say that taking up our cross implies suffering harm and not pleasing ourselves, and considering others superior to us.

There are two ways to face each situation in life: the wide way and the narrow way. In marital problems, for example, divorce and separation are the wide way. We all know where the wide way ends. The cross, on the other hand, is the narrow way. In a crisis, always take the narrow way of the cross it is the only way that leads to complete victory.

#### **4. The example of Jesus**

We know that God solved all of man's problems on the cross: the problem of condemnation, of sin and its power, and the lack of power to live out His will. It is impossible to speak of maturity without referring to the Cross of Christ. One aspect of the Cross is learning to practice self-denial on a daily basis.

Jesus did not only die on a Cross; he lived the life of the Cross. One of the main characteristics of Jesus' entire life was the complete renouncement of His ego. He lived His life by the principle of the Cross, in other words, by complete dependence on God.

It does not matter whether something is good or bad, correct or sinful; what really matters is if it is the will of God or not. The practice of the principle of the Cross is part of the process of maturity. Notice through Jesus' life that God's way of working with our ego follows a certain pattern or order. If we fail in one aspect, God will take us through certain situations until we finally learn the lesson necessary for His approval. In God's school, no one skips exams or buys grades.

In John 5:19, 5:30, 8:28, we see Jesus clearly testifying to His position of complete dependence on the Father. This is the principle of the Cross in action.

*a. He learned to submit himself*

The first great tension in the life of a disciple is learning to submit to authority. Without a doubt, this was also the first lesson Jesus had to learn. It would be naive to think that Jesus did not need to learn anything. In Hebrews 5:8, we see that Jesus learned obedience and the first lesson was the need to submit.

Luke says that Jesus did not only obey his parents, but he also submitted himself to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:41-51). He knew who He was and where He had come from, but He still submitted himself to His parents who were very limited in understanding. When



Jesus was 12 years old, He was already able to discuss the scriptures with the doctors of the Law. Even then, He did not put Himself above His parents; rather He submitted Himself to their authority.

It seems to us that Mary, even though she was a holy woman of God, was not a person of great understanding. Mary and Joseph were extremely poor and lacked certain privileges and opportunities. On many occasions, we find her bothering Jesus. It is very easy to submit ourselves to whomever knows more than we do, but it is very hard to submit to someone that knows less. This requires a renouncing of our pride, of the desire to be recognized and of the tendency to think more highly of ourselves than we do of others.

*b. He had a teachable spirit*

Being open to learning from others can be very difficult. We know that Jesus publicly went to be baptized by John. This could have been risky since some Pharisee could have gone up to Him later saying, "Weren't we classmates together in John's baptism class?" This could have happened, because Jesus used some of the illustrations made by John the Baptist (Compare Mat. 3:10 to 7:16-20) in the Sermon on the Mount. It must have been somewhat uncomfortable for a man as holy as Jesus of Nazareth to stand among common sinners waiting His turn to be baptized.

*c. He did not act upon his own understanding and effort*

It is not our responsibility to create our own methods. God has work to be done and we should not think that He is an incompetent builder or that He does not possess at least a blueprint. Through the narrative of John 5:19, 5:30, and 8:28, we can see that Jesus only did what God told Him. Jesus left no room for thinking or feeling that He should do anything other than that which God wanted Him to do.

We are builders and build according to the blueprint that God elaborated for us. The time is approaching when God will destroy everything that is outside of His plan. God does not accept human additions to His work. Many of us want to do whatever we want with our lives. This demonstrates a lack of understanding with regard to the principle of the Cross: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2.20). We are no longer in control, now everything is under Divine control.

*d. He renounced self-love*

Deep down inside of ourselves we harbor self-love. The possibility of being defrauded, hurt, taken advantage of and other such things frighten us and manifests our deep-set self-love. Peter naively incited Jesus to feel sorry for Himself thinking it was as an act of love (Mat. 16:21-34).

Jesus, however, was severe the likes of which we rarely see in the Bible. This was because He was confronting one of the most subtle, sensitive and satanic areas in man - self-love, or self-preservation. God's purpose is that we reach a level of maturity where we will surrender our own life. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Mat.16:25)

*e. He rejected human glory*

Jesus could have been crowned King of Israel (John 12:12-28), but he preferred the shame of the Cross because this was the will of God. We should not think that this

position was not tempting for Him. It surely was. However, He did not allow Himself be consumed by human glory because He knew God's will. So many live for recognition, to be seen and admired. If we do not reject such desires, we will be like the Pharisees that performed their works so that "they would be seen by men". We would do well to remember how sternly Jesus reprimanded them.

*f. He served the disciples even though He was the Lord*

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mat. 20:28)

God has called us to serve the saints without distinction, and this involves taking our own desire for others to serve us to the cross. The human ego desires that others be always ready to serve us, and that they treat us with the utmost politeness and respect. However, the Spirit challenges us to overcome this selfish tendency and become selfless instead. We should serve with a perfect heart and this only happens if we renounce all expectation of receiving anything in return. All expectation of a reward should be renounced. Only in this way can we serve with joy. Whatever comes as a result depends on the God who sees in secret.

*g. He obeyed completely*

God's plan is that, like Jesus, we reach a place of complete obedience (Mat. 26:36-46). God did not force Jesus to go to the Cross. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed until He knew the will of God. When God revealed that His will was the Cross, Jesus got up and walked towards it. The principle of the Cross is not so much related to the issue of sin itself, but with anything, sinful or not, that should be abandoned or placed as a lower priority. Doing what God wants: that is the issue.

## **WALKING IN THE SUPERNATURAL**

The third principle of sin is to walk in the natural. We have already learned that the first implication of walking in the Spirit is that we must walk by faith. The first sin was the sin of unbelief, so the path to victory is walking by faith, on the pathway of the Word of God. The first sin consisted of not taking the Word of God seriously, so we can say that the path of the life of faith is receiving the Word of God and obeying it.

The second implication that we have seen by walking in the Spirit is that we must walk by the cross, or in other words, in selfless love. We cannot walk in the Spirit without renouncing our ego. In 1John 3:23, we read that the will of God is that we believe and love. The things of God are indeed simple. We must walk in the path of the Word and in the path of the Cross. Everything we do outside of these paths is a manifestation of the flesh.

There is yet a third aspect that we now need to understand. This aspect is a natural consequence of the first two. To walk in the Spirit also means to walk in the supernatural. The supernatural does not necessarily mean the extraordinary; it means that the ways are spiritual and not natural. God wants to deliver us from sin and from our natural tendencies. Let us consider how the first sin found its way into our lives through the senses.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Gen. 3:6)

Notice that Eve was first tempted to eat because the tree was good for food. Everything began through the five senses of the body. This shows us the means by which we know whether something comes from God or not. The things of God always come from the spirit, and later reach the soul. The things of the devil always begin in the body, the flesh, and later reach the soul. All sin began in the body so in order to walk in the Spirit we need to walk on the supernatural level, disciplining the body.

Only the recreated human spirit can experience the things of the spiritual world. Man possesses three parts: spirit, soul and body. Eve's temptation began in her body; she then disregarded her spirit and as a result, sin gained the upper hand. If we wish to serve God, we must do so through the Spirit, through the life of God in us. The key to allowing the Spirit to flow within our human spirit is by disciplining the body.

Our spirit was regenerated, our soul is being transformed and our body needs to be disciplined. It is impossible to live the Christian life without the renewing of the mind and the sanctifying of the soul. However, we must also know that it is impossible to live the Christian life without disciplining the body. It is important to be radical in this aspect: the life in the spirit is impossible without discipline of the body.

Before we continue let us make a clear distinction: discipline is not the same as legalism. Christ has already delivered us from the law. In Romans 6:14, we discover that we no longer need deliverance from law since Christ has already set us free from it.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Rom. 6:14)

We must not transform the discipline of the body into legalism or asceticism. We do not discipline our bodies in order to buy blessings and acceptance from God. God accepts us because of the blood of the Lamb, and only by His blood, Hallelujah! Discipline is not for God's benefit but for ours.

It is a tragedy when believers transform prayer, fasting and reading the Word into legalism. When they do not pray, they feel separated from God; when they do not read the Word, they imagine that God is far from them, that God has rejected them. There is nothing more tragic than this. The love of God for us is the same on the days that we pray as on the days that we do not. Prayer is not a law; it is a need, a discipline. An increase or decrease of prayer does not change our inheritance and our privileges in Christ, but prayer helps us notice the things of the spirit with more clarity. Discipline is necessary for us; it is not a means of acceptance by God. Our access to God depends entirely on the blood of Jesus.

Discipline implies directing your body and mind to do the will of God. I am a spiritual being and I must align my will with my spirit, which always wants to be in communion with God, but the body resists and tries to align my will with its demands. I must willfully discipline my body so that I use my will to choose what my spirit desires to accomplish.

## 1. THE MAIN POINT IS THE GOSPEL

There are three equally important things in the Universe: the heavens, the earth and man's spirit. The heavens provide a place for the earth, the earth for the man and the spirit of man for God. God lives and works in man's spirit. 'The Spirit testifies with our spirit' (Rom. 8:16). Our spirit is the place where the Lord Jesus lives.

We are the vessels of God and He wants to fill us with Himself. He wants to be the substance that fills us as His vessels. Just as water bottles contain water, God made us to contain Him. God made us to contain Him much like a glove is made to contain a hand. The glove is the hand's image, but the hand is the glove's life. The glove was made in the image of the hand in order to contain the hand. In the same way, God created man in His image, in order to contain Him (Rom. 9:23-24).

Man was created in the likeness of God. God is Spirit and hence He made man a spirit. All animals were made according to their own kinds, but the Bible states that man was made in God's likeness. We are His species (John 4:24)

Man is God's vessel. The Bible divides this vessel in three parts: the spirit, the soul and the body (1Thes 5:23). The body is simply the physical part created to interact with the material realm. It is the most superficial part. The soul is the psyche, the deeper psychological part created to interact in the social realm. The spirit is the deepest part of man; it functions in the spiritual world and interacts within the spiritual realm. God's purpose is to dwell within man's spirit and be its contents and its satisfaction. This is the purpose of human existence. God did not create you just to have food in your stomach or knowledge in your brain. He created you to contain His Holy Spirit in your spirit.

God's desire is to lead us into all truth through our spirit. The Christian life consists of being led by God in our spirit. If we fail to hear the voice of God and His direction, our entire Christian existence will become a failure. The central point of the gospel is Christ in us. God's Holy Spirit is life; to interact with the Spirit is to interact with the very life of God.

Our Spirit is like a radio that tunes into the waves of heaven. A radio both receives and transmits. If we desire to be flowing with life, we must learn to make contact with the Lord through our spirit. It is fundamental that we rightly divide and discern between what is from the soul and what is from spirit. Hebrews 4:12 informs us that the Word of the Lord is what separates the soul from the spirit. If we fail to discern the soul from the spirit, we will compromise our growth and our entire Christian life. We need to learn to discern what is from our spirit and what comes from other people's spirits.

The way to distinguish between the soul and the spirit is in understanding life itself. Everything that is of the spirit is life, but that which is of the soul is death. If a person begins to speak and minister life, it is because he spoke from the spirit, but if he produces death, it is because he spoke from the soul.

If in a meeting a believer does something outside of the move of God, it will produce death. When someone preaches in the spirit, life comes out of their mouth and that life will attract and quench people's thirst. We should do nothing that does not minister life.

The things of the spirit always produce life. Life is contagious – when we open our mouth through the spirit, it will flow and spread life among those who hear. Every Word

of God is spirit and life. We should be ministering life to our brothers even when talking; life must flow even during a simple conversation. I am referring to spiritual life, which is supernatural.

To be led by the Spirit is to be led by this life. In order for us to be led by the Spirit, we need to develop sensitivity in our own spirit. If we are not sensitive, we will not be able to perceive the voice and direction of the Lord. Here are a few principles for developing the sensitivity necessary to learn to perceive God's direction in our spirit.

## **2. Discerning the direction of the Holy Spirit**

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Gal. 5:25 - NKJV)

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Gal. 5:25 – NIV)

If we are now living by the power of the Holy Spirit, let us follow the direction of the Holy Spirit in all areas of our lives (Gal. 5:25 – Living Bible)

Many people ask God to lead them through signs and proofs. However, the Lord does not want to guide us through exterior means. Rather the Spirit guides us by His life inside of us. We must perceive the feelings produced by the Spirit within us. We need to be sensitive to these and learn to recognize them. We may feel an agreement, an inner peace or we can experience feelings of uneasiness or restraint. The Spirit may either impel us to do certain things or restrict us from doing other things.

Christianity in the New Testament is not a formal, ceremonial or religious ritual or even the observance of rules, regulations and ethics. It is much more than living a righteous life, doing the right things or doing unto others, as we would have them do to us. Christianity is much more than a philosophy or a system of positive thinking. Real Christianity is supernatural. It is the life of Christ inside of us!

It is because Christ lives in our hearts that we can experience the leading or the direction of the Holy Spirit. We must learn and discern the language of our spirit. We need to recognize when the Spirit is grieved (Eph. 4:30). We need to recognize when the Spirit rejoices inside of us and wants us to rejoice with Him, or when He has a burden and wishes to pray through us.

It all starts when we have a feeling or impulse in our spirit. We then understand that the Lord wishes to say something to us. We need to stop and ask the Lord. We should wait silently on Him until we comprehend what He is saying. Then we should act according to the received information and cooperate with the Lord. We would do well in remembering these experiences and, in this way; we will be able to recognize it again next time.

## **3. How to be led by the Spirit**

a) *By following the impulse of intuition*

Intuition is a function of our human spirit. Intuition is like an impulse within the heart. It is not an audible voice, but it is an impulse. In Mark 1:12, we read that the Spirit drove or impelled Jesus. The Word "impel" is good because it describes an interior sensation.

Obviously, there are impulses that come from the body, the emotions and even from demons. However, if we are born again, we learn to differentiate all of these voices from the one that comes from the spirit. We must follow the impulse of the Spirit even if there is no logical reason to do so. If we follow the impulse, the results will come.

b) *By following the witness or testifying of the Spirit*

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (Rom. 8:16).

But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Cor. 6:17).

These verses show us that God unites our spirit with the Holy Spirit, after we receive the new birth.

The testifying of the spirit is a deep conviction that has no origin in any natural thing. Many times our mind rejects this conviction due to fear and insecurity. God speaks to us every day; however, we often are not listening, thinking that these thoughts are from our mind. May the Lord separate our soul from our spirit!

When the Lord testifies something in our spirit, the best thing to do is to check with other more mature Christians. If we still are not clear about the directive, it is best to go ahead and risk making a mistake. We will probably commit many mistakes, but we will be exercising our spirit and we will reach a point where we will have fine-tuned our spiritual senses. In the process of growth, it is normal that we miss it on occasion.

However, it is essential that we exercise our spirit to the highest level possible. God wants us to develop such a spiritual maturity that we can recognize His voice immediately and that we can respond immediately based on His Word (Prov. 20:27). It takes time but it is possible to learn to discern as to whether such impressions or feelings come from the Lord or not, and to be sure of God's will and intention in all that we do.

c) *By following the peace of the Spirit*

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... (Col. 3:15)

Peace is the referee of our hearts. We are able to perceive our spirit in our heart through this peace. The referee is the judge, the one who decides.

Imagine a football game, as long as everything is going according to the rules and there are no infractions, the referee's whistle is silent. However, when there is an infraction of the rules, the referee blows the whistle and the game stops immediately. The players then look to the referee to find out what went wrong and what his decision is on the matter. As soon as he clarifies things, the game can continue.

It is the same way with the peace of God in our hearts. When things are flowing in God's purpose, there is a deep inner peace in our heart. This peace should always be there. Paul says that God has called us to such peace. If by any chance, we lose this peace we will have to go back to the spirit to find out where we went wrong and why we have lost our peace. The Holy Spirit will quickly show us where we erred so that we can correct the situation, thereby restoring our peace.

d) *By the conscience of the spirit*

The fourth way is to follow the conscience of the heart. Before we do anything, we should not consult the mind, but the life of God within our heart. If our spirit becomes agitated, we should stop what we are doing. When our heart is at odds with God, we have a sensation like nausea. It is a sensation in the middle of the stomach, in the bowels. This feeling always comes when we enter a direction that God does not approve.

Walking in the Spirit is not a matter of right, wrong, good, or evil. There are two paths before us: the path of the tree of knowledge and the path of the tree of life. Walking by

the tree of knowledge is to walk in the flesh. Those who walk in the flesh are the ones who walk merely by following moral criteria. Those who walk by the tree of life don't ask whether it is a sin or not, if it is good or evil, right or wrong, they ask whether it is the will of God or not.

We should not do anything that upsets this life inside of us, even if it seems good to the mind. If the life within us rejects it, then we should also reject it. God rejects many things that are not sinful in themselves.

We should not teach new Christians laws of right and wrong, but stimulate them to discern the leading of the Lord through the life in their spirit. If we are too quick to instruct others about what is right or wrong, we are robbing them of precious opportunities of learning to walk with the Lord on their own.

Being a Christian does not mean being led by a code of conduct or by a number of rules and morally correct social customs. Being a Christian implies being led by the Holy Spirit of God. Our goal is not simply to be good people, but to be people full of God and led by Him.

*e) The Written Word of God*

The Bible is our most trustworthy guide and it is possibly the easiest means by which God leads us. Listening to the inner voice of our spirit is a subjective experience thus it is more easily conducive to misinterpretation. We can easily be influenced by our emotions or personal desires. Therefore, we need to submit experiences of this nature to an objective and fail-safe scrutiny. The Bible is exactly this. It is not influenced by our emotions or preconceived ideas. Therefore, it is much more trustworthy. We should approach it with openness and honesty of heart, since we also run the risk of imposing our own interpretation on it and "making" the Bible, say anything we want it to say. We must possess integrity of heart when we approach the Word of God. People will often purposely look for a biblical passage that supports what they want to believe. This "twisting" or manipulation of Scripture can bring harmful consequences.

When you feel a certain direction or impression in your spirit and you are not sure that it is the voice of the Lord, submit this impression to God in prayer. Ask Him to confirm or refute it through His Word. Inevitably, once you have done this, a Biblical verse or passage related to the subject will catch your attention. It is amazing how God can make His Word apply to so many different circumstances and situations. God gives His direction through His Word in unusual ways.

The Spirit of God never disagrees with His Word. The Holy Spirit would never ask you to do something that the Bible condemns. He would never guide you contrary to the clear principles expressed in the Bible. However, it is common for Him to guide us contrary to our preconceived ideas some of which we easily confuse with Gospel truth.

*f) Seeking Mature Counsel*

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Col. 3:15)

When God speaks to us, He will certainly confirm His direction through a more mature member of the church body. We should submit our impressions to more mature members

of the body of Christ to be sure that we are on the right path. It is a good idea to place such issues before a group of mature believers and if there is a response of unanimous peace, then you can be sure that the Lord is confirming the direction you have received.

The Bible says "...in a multitude of counselors there is safety." (Prov. 11:14) and that "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." (Prov. 15:22). Do not expose your doubts to someone that cannot help you. Seek out advice from spiritually mature people who have an approved record of accomplishment. Asking for advice from spiritually immature people will only bring more confusion and uncertainty. Go to the people whose lives prove that they are in the will of God, people who have experienced success in their Christian life because they were able to hear the voice of God directing them in their own life's circumstances.

*g) Circumstances and Divine Providence*

When God tells you to do something, you can be sure that he will start opening doors so that you are able to do it. If he is guiding you in a specific area, then His provision will become available to you in that area. David says,

The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; (Psalm 37:23).

If you passively wait for a revelation, you may wait forever. If you start moving and end up going in the wrong direction, the Lord will tell you and give you a course correction. The Holy Spirit is inside all Christians and He wishes to guide us in the ways and purposes of God. Therefore, whenever we start out, with a sincere desire in our hearts to walk in God's ways, the Spirit will give us direction. As you start moving in harmony with the will of God, circumstances and provisions will fall into place around you, providing you with certainty and confirmation of God's blessing on your endeavor.

*h) Prophetic Confirmation*

God gives prophecies to confirm something He has already confirmed to you in your spirit.

We must always be careful with apparent prophecies that tend to initiate something rather than confirm something that is already in our heart. If God wants to tell you something, He will speak to you first, in your own spirit. Later on, He may confirm it to you through a prophecy, which will serve to confirm and establish what He has already told you. Never do something simply because someone "prophesied" that you should do it. Get your own personal direction from God first.

Prophecies are not infallible. The human element involved in giving the prophecy makes them fallible. The Spirit, who gives them, is perfect, but the people that declare them are imperfect.

Many Christians revere prophecies as if God Himself had spoken from heaven. However, it is not God that is speaking directly but men speaking in the name of God. If these people really speak from the Spirit, great! Their words will edify, exhort and console the church (1Cor. 14:3). Sometimes, unfortunately, prophecies can originate from the mind of the person rather than from the mind of God, or prophecies can be influenced by the insertion of personal thoughts.

Because of this every prophecy should be judged to assure that it really is a word of the Lord before it is received and put into action (1Cor. 14:29). To summarize:



- Judge prophecy by the Word of God. The Word of God must judge every prophecy, first. If a prophecy is not in perfect harmony with Biblically expressed principles, we must reject it.
- Judge prophecy by what God has already shown you in your own spirit. If it does not testify and confirm what you have already received from the Lord, then do not accept it.
- Judge prophecy by the wisdom of the church. If a group of Christians is present when the prophecy is given, then we should hear the group's judgment. What is the general opinion concerning it? Do the Christians in the group agree that this is truly a word from God?
- Never go to a prophet for a consultation. God knows your name, your address and your telephone number. If a prophet really has something from God for you, God will send him to you. The practice of consulting prophets is of a pagan origin. Many prophets, under pressure, have been used by spirits of divination to give a word to the person who came for a consultation. Many innocent lives have been ruined because they acted upon a 'personal prophecy'.

i) *By Extraordinary Means*

The basic way that God intends to lead His children is by the spirit. The Holy Spirit that resides in our spirit speaks the will of God to our human spirit. However, the Word of God shows us that there are also extraordinary ways for God to lead us. One of them is prophecy, but there are three other ways:

- Dreams - It is unquestionable that God speaks to us through dreams. He did so with Joseph, Daniel, Mary's husband Joseph, and with Paul. God is the same and he still guides and edifies us through dreams. Some principles need to be clear, however. The first is that if you do not know the meaning of your dream, and then do not go around looking for someone to interpret it. If God wants to speak to you, He will do it through clear and comprehensible ways. If you do not know the meaning of a dream, forget about it, or tuck it away for future reference.
- The audible voice of God - Do not seek spiritual experiences. Do not ask to see or hear anything. This longing for new and different experiences can be a foothold for deceiving spirits. Having said that, it is still true today, that God can speak audibly to His children.
- The Ministry of the angels - God can send an angel to speak to you, but this angel must confirm the Word of God and the Gospel, and confess the Lordship of Christ. We must be wise in these issues as there are also demons disguised as angels of light. Paul says in the Letter to the Galatians,

even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8)

## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. What is the will of God for us after regeneration?

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2. The Christian life consists of which two substitutions?

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3. Explain why unbelief was the first sin.

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4. What are the three ways that sin can manifest itself against God?

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5. Explain what it means to walk by faith.

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## SPIRITUAL MATURITY COURSE

6. In what way can we walk by the Cross?

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7. In which areas of life does the Cross affect us?

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8. How can we apply the Cross in our daily life?

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9. What great example did Jesus leave us?

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10. Why should we 'walk in the supernatural'?

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11. What happens if we fail to discern the Lord's voice and His direction?

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12. How can we be led by the Spirit?

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13. What precautions do we need to take when seeking spiritual direction?

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### 3

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUL



## **THE MIND: A BATTLEFIELD**

According to the Bible, the human mind is unusual in that it constitutes a battlefield where Satan and his evil spirits contend against the truth and against the believer. The mind and the spirit of man are like fortresses that evil spirits yearn to capture. The human mind is a battlefield where the conflict rages for the conquest of this fortress.

In 2Cor.10:3-5, the Apostle Paul compares human arguments and reasoning to strongholds of the enemy. He describes the mind that the enemy has occupied as something that this enemy had to have previously conquered in battle. Many thoughts are stored in these rebel strongholds and the Christian must take them captive to the obedience of Christ. All this clearly shows that man's mind is the scene of battle where evil spirits are in conflict with God.

We can clearly see how the powers of darkness align themselves against the human mind and how it is peculiarly susceptible to the attacks of Satan. With respect to other functions of the soul namely the will and emotion, Satan is more limited and cannot act directly on them unless he has gained a foothold in them in some way. However, with respect to the mind, Satan can freely operate without first having to persuade it to allow him free access.

Before regeneration, man's intellect prevents him from understanding God. God finds it necessary to destroy the power of man arguments. This work must occur at the time of the new birth, and comes in the form of repentance. However, even after repentance the mind of the believer is not fully exempt from the influence of Satan, he will continue working on the mind.

In 2Corinthians 11:3 Paul recognizes that the god of this world acts upon and deceives the minds of unbelievers. Today, many times Satan masquerades as an angel of light deceiving the elect into spreading a different gospel other than the Gospel of the grace of God. The truth is that hardly anyone imagines that the devil is capable of giving good thoughts to men.

It is possible for a child of God to have new life and a new heart and still not have a new mind. Frequently the intentions of the heart are entirely pure, but the thoughts of the head are confused. If the mind of a Christian is not renewed, his life is bound to be off balance and shallow. God's people need to know that if they want to live an abundant life, they must renew their minds. The Bible states emphatically that we should "be transformed by the renewing of our mind" (Rom 12:2).

## **THE MIND UNDER ATTACK BY EVIL SPIRITS**

The Christian may find that he is unable to control his thought life and make it obey the purpose of his will. Ask yourself, who controls your mind? Is it you? If so, why can't you control it now? Does God direct your mind? If God does not govern your thought life, then who is in control? Obviously, it is the powers of darkness. Therefore, when a child of God says that he is no longer able to govern his mind, he must then recognize that he is under the enemy's control.

We must always keep in mind the fact that man possesses a free will. God's intention is

that man exercise control over himself. He has the authority to regulate each one of his natural abilities, so all his mental processes are subject to the power of his will. The Christian must ask himself the question: Are these my thoughts? Who is doing my thinking? If it is not me, then it must be an evil spirit that is capable of operating in the human mind. This person should recognize that in this case, he did not intend to think and yet thoughts came into his head. He should conclude that these are not his own thoughts, but those of an evil spirit.

However, how can we tell if a thought is our own or of an evil spirit? The Believer should observe how the thought appeared. If your mental faculty is quiet and peaceful, functioning normally and naturally, and suddenly an incoherent thought with no connection with your current circumstances arises, most probably it is from an evil spirit. Evil spirits try to inject their thoughts into the mind of the believer in order to lead them to accept them as their own. If a child of God did not conceive a certain idea that pops into his mind, but rather opposes it, and yet it continues to remain in his thinking, he can conclude that such thoughts are from the enemy. Every thought that man chooses not to think, and each one contrary to his will, are not his but come from the outside.

It is very important to know that the powers of darkness operate not only outside of man but inside man as well. This means that they can squeeze into the thought life of a person and work themselves in from there. Evil spirits have communication abilities that we do not possess. They may work initially in the mind and then move into the emotions and the will. The Bible clearly shows that the powers of darkness can suggest ideas to a person as well as remove them. The devil had already put it in the heart of Judas Iscariot, to betray Jesus (John 13:2) and "then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart" (Luke 8:12)

## **CAUSES OF DEMONIC ATTACKS**

Whenever we give an opportunity to an evil spirit, we jeopardize our own will, and subject ourselves to strong influences imposed by the malignant will of demonic spirits. By yielding ground to them in our mind, we begin to lose our own self-control. Because of the affinity that exists between the human mind and evil spirits, Christians often pave the way for them. Whatever ground the enemy is able to gain gives him more authority to operate without hindrance in the mind of the believer. However, the human mind belongs to man, and without his permission, the enemy has no power to use it.

Believers yield ground to evil spirits in the realm of ideas and thoughts and demons operate within this realm. There are six types of ground over which the enemy can gain control. We will examine each one of them.

### **1. An un-renewed Mind**

If the Christian does not renew his mind after his spirit has been regenerated, he will expose much territory to the schemes of evil spirits. Knowing that the un-renewed mind of the Christian is their best workshop, the forces of the enemy employ every means to keep believers in ignorance or keep them from seeking the renewal of their mind.

### **2. A mistaken Mind**

All sins provide territory to the adversary. If a child of God nourishes sin in his heart, he



is yielding his mind to evil spirits and to the fulfillment of their ill will. All impure, proud, unkind and unjust thoughts provide a foundation for the activities of these spirits.

### **3. Misinterpreting God's truth**

If the children of God misunderstand or misinterpret the things that evil spirits do in their minds and bodies as something natural or what they themselves have initiated, or something caused by normal circumstances, they are giving away precious territory to the abominable purposes of these evil spirits. Any lie that the mind embraces offers more ground for further activities of satanic spirits. On the other hand, many Christians misunderstand God's truths. Evil spirits build arguments according to the biblical misunderstanding of believers causing them to think that these arguments are from God. Many Christians do not recognize that these arguments are only imitations invented by evil spirits based on their own biblical misunderstanding.

### **4. Blind acceptance of satanic suggestions**

Evil spirits sow their thoughts into the mind in the form of prophecy to see if the believer will accept or reject them. If the mind of the believer does not object, but rather approves this prophecy, then the wicked spirits gain a foothold to do whatever they please. The fulfillment of the predictions of fortunetellers depends on this readiness to accept these self-fulfilling prophecies. Demons can inject words concerning the health of a Christian's body, such as predicting weakness or illness. If the believer accepts such thoughts, they can easily become sick and weak.

### **5. An empty mind**

God created man with a mind and He expects him to use it fully. An active mind is an obstacle to the work of demons. One of their biggest goals is to lead the mind of the person to a state of emptiness, because as long as the head is empty, the mind cannot think. The Christian must exercise his mind because as long as it is functioning, the activity of the evil one is blocked.

### **6. A Passive Mind**

The difference between a passive and an empty mind is that an empty or idle mind is not used at all and a passive mind is passively waiting for some outside force to activate it. Passivity means to abstain from thinking on your own and allowing outside elements to do your thinking for you. Passivity reduces man to a machine, and gives evil spirits the opportunity to occupy the will and the body of the believer as well as the mind. If someone allows their mind to stop thinking, to stop investigating, to stop making decisions and stop examining their experiences and actions in light of the Bible, they are practically inviting Satan to invade their mind and deceive them. In their desire to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit, many of God's children feel that they do not need to measure, investigate and judge all thoughts in the light of the Bible that seemingly come from God.

*Passivity* - The ignorance of the Christian is the cause of passivity. The normal way of God's leading is by the intuition of the spirit and not by the mind. The believer must follow the revelation of intuition, not the thoughts of his mind. Yes, it is by intuition that we come to know God's will, but in addition we need the mind to inspect our inner feelings in order to determine whether they come from intuition or whether they are an imitation produced by

our emotions. We know things by intuition, but we prove them by the mind. The mind should never guide or lead, but unquestionably, it needs to test the authenticity of the direction. This teaching agrees with Scripture (Eph. 5:10, 17).

A believer can slide into passivity, when he expects God to put His will into his thinking, and blindly follows any supernatural leading without using his intelligence to examine whether it comes from God or not. The consequence of such ignorance is an enemy invasion. Fortune tellers, astrologers, psychics and mediums say that in order to receive what they call "spirit guides" (which are actually demons), the mind should not offer any resistance, and should empty itself as much as possible. Evil spirits are thrilled when they encounter such empty minds.

## **THE OPERATION OF GOD'S SPIRIT vs. EVIL SPIRITS**

No revelations or supernatural visions that require the suspension of the function of the mind or that we can only obtain by the cessation of its operation are of God. In addition, the Holy Spirit will only speak through visions that agree with the nature of God as revealed in the Bible when the believer's mind is fully active - demonic activity follows the opposite path.

### **Differences between the action of God and that of demons**

Demonic thoughts always invade from the outside in, mainly entering through the mind. The thoughts they impose force, push and compel men to act immediately - they never offer time to think, to consider or to examine. Demons confuse and paralyze the mind of man, so that he can no longer think.

## **THE PHENOMENA OF A PASSIVE MIND**

Here we will quickly present the phenomena of a mind under attack by evil spirits.

### **1. Sudden thoughts**

Once the mind sinks into passivity, evil spirits will inject many thoughts into it from the outside: impure, blasphemous and confused notions. Many such things may pass through your mind in succession. Even if you decide to reject them, you have no power to make them stop or to change the direction of your thoughts. Sometimes these ideas flash into someone's brain like lightning.

### **2. Images**

The adversary can also project both good and impure images into the mind of believers. This is because their power of imagination has diminished into passivity. They cannot control their own imaginative powers, having yielded control to evil spirits.

### **3. Dreams**

Dreams can be both natural and supernatural. God inspires some dreams and Satan inspires others. Evil powers can create images by day and dreams by night. At night, the brain is not as active as in the day, thus it is more passive and more likely to allow the devil to manipulate it. Such dreams cause a heavy head and a melancholic spirit after waking up the next morning. The dreams and visions that come from God enable us to be normal, tranquil, clear thinking and alert. Satanically inspired dreams are grotesque, depressing, and

foolish and make a person become arrogant, dazed, confused and irrational.

#### **4. Insomnia**

This is a common malady of the saints. When they lie down at night, many experience endless thoughts springing up in their minds. They keep thinking about their workday or reliving past experiences, or fill their minds with a mixture of subjects. They think of the duties and obligations of the next day, fretting over what they need to do and how to do it in the best way. Their brains turn incessantly. These people really want to sleep but cannot stop thinking. In the normal course of events, sleep renews your spirit, but when you spend night after night with insomnia, you can become terrified of sleep, of your bed and of nighttime.

#### **5. Forgetfulness**

The devil attacks many Christians and strips them of their powers of memory. They even forget what they said and did. They often cannot find objects that they put away that same day. Many people observe another phenomenon: the believer usually has a good memory, but in several critical moments, it fails inexplicably. All of this is due to the action of demons.

#### **6. Lack of Concentration**

Some people, because of the activity of evil spirits, lose the ability to concentrate when trying to think; others seem to be better off, but after a few moments of concentration on a particular subject their thoughts fly in all directions, especially during prayer and Bible reading. Some people are not aware of what they are reading and cannot pay attention during church meetings. Evil spirits try to prevent us from hearing what would be useful to us, by keeping our minds occupied and forcing us to think about other things. For this reason, many Christians cannot hear what others say. Since evil spirits assail these Christians with endless, disconnected thoughts, they impatiently interrupt others who try to carry on a conversation with them.

#### **7. Inactivity**

In the final stage, the believer's mind loses its ability to think and falls almost entirely to the power of evil spirits. The person becomes unable to think because he cannot initiate any thought of his own, since thousands of invading thoughts pass through his mind every moment and he cannot make them cease. The enslaved believer develops a cluttered and unbalanced point of view. A small hill through his eyes becomes like a huge mountain. People in this condition flee from others and situations that force them to think. They allow their time to dissipate, and spend it without thought, imagination, or reasoning.

#### **8. Vacillation**

Some Christians have no strength of character and change their opinion endlessly. However, in reality, the wicked spirits to which they have opened themselves change their thoughts and their opinions. They decide to do something in the morning and by evening, they have completely changed their minds.

#### **9. Chatterbox syndrome**

Generally, believers assaulted by Satan are very talkative, since their heads are exploding

with thoughts they constantly fill their mouths with an abundance of words. Any person who cannot stop talking long enough to hear others, but insists that others hear them first, is sick minded. Many Christians resemble remote controlled talking machines operated by external forces. Many people cannot seem to hold their tongues from gossip, joking and slander! It seems that as soon as an idea pops into their head and before there is an opportunity to consider what it means, they have already spat it out into words. The tongue has moved outside the control of mind and will. All of this is due to the passivity of the mind. Christians must understand that all their words and statements must be the result of their own thinking.

## **10. Stubbornness**

A passive person after having his mind made up by someone else categorically refuses to listen to any reasoning or evidence. He is not willing to listen to others and thinks they can never understand what he knows! Such people accept any supernatural voice as that of God and since they believe that they have the direction of God, they seal their mind against any change.

## **11. The symptom of the eyes**

Evil spirits assail the passive mind, and you can readily identify them through the eyes. The eyes reveal the mind more than any other part of our body. When a person with a passive mind speaks with others, his eyes tend to wander around, up and down, flying in all directions and can't bring himself to look at anyone in the eyes. He may also fix his eyes in one direction without even blinking, as if paralyzed.

## **12. In summary**

The phenomena of the Christian mind under attack by evil spirits are many and varied. However, there is one principle that is the basis for them all: the person loses control. The person is plagued by inactivity rather than activity, restlessness instead of calm, agitation due to the flood of thoughts, inability to concentrate, or to distinguish or remember, out of control confusion, unfruitful work, inability to work during the day and dreams and visions at night, insomnia, doubt, lack of watchfulness, unreasonable fear, disturbance to the point of agony, all these things are inspired by evil spirits.

## **THE WAY TO DELIVERANCE**

If you notice that your mind is still passive, do not despair, there is a way of escape, and you will find it if you diligently seek it.

### **1. The wiles of evil spirits**

Those who seek deliverance should know that evil spirits will not let their captives go free without a fight. It is important that you have no doubts and are certain that you have surrendered ground to demons and that you firmly decide to regain lost ground. The devil will use various tactics to try to stop you and in case they are not successful, he will launch a final attack against you using his customary lying tactics. He will tell you that you cannot reconquer your freedom because you have sunk so far into passivity, or that God is no longer willing to grant you grace once again, saying that it will be better to give up than to resist, since there is no way that you will be able to see the day of deliverance. So therefore

why bother yourself with effort and suffering? In this struggle, the believer must learn that the weapons of warfare are spiritual, because carnal weapons are of no use.

## **2. Recovering lost ground**

Summarizing what we have already learned, evil spirits may operate in the mind of the believer because of:

- (1) An un-renewed mind,
- (2) Acceptance of the lies of evil spirits
- (3) Passivity

After identifying those areas in which you have conceded territory to evil spirits, you must move immediately to recover lost ground. You must renew your previously un-renewed mind, you must locate and renounce the lies that you have accepted as truth, and you must transform passivity into decisive action.

## **THE RENEWED MIND**

God does not only desire a change in the mind of his children at their conversion. We must renew our mind constantly and completely, since any residual carnality is hostile to God. The texts of Romans 6:11, 12; 8:7; 2 Corinthians 10:5 and Ephesians 4 warn us about Satan's control in some of the areas of our lives and introduce the Cross as an instrument for the renewing of the mind.

The salvation that God has provided through the Cross includes not only a new life, but a renewing of each function of our soul as well. We must gradually develop the salvation that God has deeply rooted within our being. It is necessary to understand clearly that renewal is exclusively the work of God, but the removal, the denial, the abandoning of your old ways of thinking is something that you must do.

After recognizing the old ways of your mind and eliminating them through the cross, the Christian should now practice a daily denying of all carnal thoughts. Otherwise, renewal will be impossible. In 2Corinthians 10:5, we learned that we must bring all our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. We must examine our thoughts to determine if:

- They come from our old mind, or from the ground that we have yielded to them
- They offer new ground to evil spirits or not
- They come from a normal and renewed mind

## **1. Renounced lies**

When a saved person places himself under the light of God, he discovers that in the past he frequently accepted the lies of evil spirits, leading him into passivity. As the child of God matures, he discovers that many afflictions, weaknesses, sicknesses and other phenomena that still exist in his life today are due to his acceptance in the past, directly or indirectly of the lies that demons placed within his mind. In order to assure deliverance, the Christian should experience the light of God, which is His truth. Since he formerly lost ground by believing in the lies of the enemy, now he must regain lost ground by denying all of these lies. He should pray seeking the light of God to know all truth and in this way resist all satanic lies.

## **2. Recognizing normalcy**

The passive Christian that wants to be free, urgently needs to determine what is normal for him. He must be restored to his original state - just like he was before he fell into the deception of the enemy. It is important to ask several questions in this return to normalcy such as: What was I like before? How far have I fallen? How can I get back to where I was before? Was I born this way or what there a time when I wasn't like this? Was my memory always this bad or was there a time when I had a good memory?

## **3. Passivity destroyed**

We need to understand the basic law in the spiritual kingdom: No one can do anything in man without the consent of his will. Due to ignorance, the child of God accepts the deceit of evil spirits and gives them permission to operate in his life. Now, in order to regain ground, he must revoke the consent that he gave to the demons, insisting that he is his own master and does not tolerate the manipulation of the enemy in any part of his being.

In this process of retaking ground, the believer must take the initiative in each action and not depend on anyone else. He must make his own decisions without passively waiting for others or for ideal circumstances. Watching and praying, he must advance step-by-step, exercising his mind and evaluating what to do, to speak or to become. The believer needs to understand that this process may take some time. We must answer each suggestion that the enemy gives with the truth of the Word of God. He must answer doubts with Bible passages that speak of faith. He must answer hopelessness with words of hope and fear with words of peace. We gain the victory by using the sword of the Spirit.

## **4. Freedom and renewal**

As the Christian begins to retake ground from the enemy, positive results will begin to manifest themselves. In the beginning, when the process is initiated, things may appear to worsen, but do not give up. If you cling to the foundation of the cross and exercise your mind to resist the assertion of the enemy, God will soon completely deliver you and you will become the master of your own thought life. God not only wants to free the mind of the Christian from the prison bars of the power of darkness through self-control, but also wants to renew it completely, so that we are free to cooperate completely with the Holy Spirit.

## **THE LAWS OF THE MIND**

With the mind renewed, the child of God gains a sharper capacity of concentration, a more perceptive understanding and a better memory. In addition, his reasoning becomes clearer and his perspective less limited and even finds it easier to receive spiritual knowledge.

However, even if the mind has been renewed, there is no guarantee that one cannot be attacked again; therefore, the Christian should be constantly watching and praying. In order to maintain his mind in a continuous state of renewal, he must appropriate its laws. Just as the Spirit has its laws, the mind also has laws. We will mention some of them, and if you practice them, they will assure you the victory.

## **1. The mind working with the spirit**

- The Holy Spirit reveals the will of God in the spirit of a person
- Through his mind, the believer understands the meaning of this revelation
- With his will, he applies his spiritual strength to fulfill the will of God

This is the process of discernment, understanding and fulfillment in the life of a Christian. Through this process, we discover that the mind is the best helper of the spirit. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how the mind and the spirit work together.

The Bible speaks clearly about the cooperation between the spirit and the mind. First, we arrive at the knowledge of the will of God by our intuition, and afterward, our intellect interprets it for us. The Holy Spirit moves in our spirit, producing a spiritual feeling within us. Next, we exercise our brain to study and understand the meaning of this feeling. We understand as soon as the mind manifests the spirit of man. If the mind is blocked, the spirit will also be blocked from its means of expression.

## **2. The mind, the spirit and the spiritual mind**

We must be more and more conscious of the need to walk in the Spirit and of the danger of walking according to the flesh. Walking in the Spirit simply means that the mind, under the control of the spirit, focuses on the things of the spirit (Romans 8:5, 6). After being renewed, the mind now is qualified to detect each movement or lack of movement of the spirit.

Our mental faculty (the soul) resides between the spirit and the flesh (the body). We walk according to whatever we fix our mind on. If it occupies itself with the flesh, then we will walk according to the flesh. If it focuses on the spirit, then we will walk according to the spirit. We always follow the inclination of our mind. This is an unchangeable law. Why is it that the inclinations of the realities of the spirit are so important? The answer is because this keeps us in tune with the language of the Spirit. Many times, the spirit gives revelation to our intuition, but we focus our intellect on a million other things rather than the move of the Spirit.

## **3. An open mind**

Through intuition, God speaks to our spirit, which then transmits the message to our mind. When we hear the preaching of the Word by other children of God, our mind receives this truth before it reaches our spirit. If our mind is full of prejudices against the truth or against the preacher, the truth will not enter into it or into our lives. An open mind permits the light to penetrate it, but the illumination of the light of the spirit makes the truth beneficial.

## **4. A controlled mind**

Each part of the Christian life must come under our control. This includes the mind, even after we have renewed it. Peter exhorts us to maintain constant vigilance, girding up the loins of our mind (1Peter 1:13). We must control our thoughts and never allow them to run free. God's objective is that we take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. We should never allow any thought to escape our observation, control or judgment. Improper thoughts must not remain in the life of the Christian. We must reject and cast out every inappropriate thought that comes into our mind. The Christian also should never

allow his mind to become empty.

When the mind is functioning, be careful that it does not do so by itself - it must operate under the rule of the spirit. Many people examine the Scriptures by depending on their own intellectual ability. However, the truth that they claim to know is only in their heads. We must reject all truths that are merely mental, because such knowledge gives an opportunity for Satan to operate.

We speak a lot about how the mind must not be lazy or empty; however, the brain must rest. If the believer allows his mind to work unceasingly without resting, it will get sick, in the same way that the body gets sick when we deprive it of rest. The defeat that Elijah experienced under the broom tree was due to the excessive work of his mind (1 Kings 19).

## **5. A mind full of the word of God**

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Hebrews 8:10)

We must read and memorize more of the Word of God. If we read the Bible diligently, God will fill each of our thoughts with His laws. We will always remember what the Bible says when we are in need of light for our path. If we have hidden the Word in our hearts and have united our thinking with that of the Word of God, we will be able to understand the mind of God in every sense.

## **6. The cry for a pure mind**

The Christian should ask God to purify his mental life and always keep it renewed. Pray that you not merely think of Him, but that you think correctly.

# **THE ANALYSIS OF THE SOUL – THE WILL**

## **1. The will of the believer**

We all make our decisions through the faculty of the human will. We express our emotions as feelings, our mind tells us what we think, but our will expressed our desires. Therefore, in our search for spiritual growth, we must not neglect our will. The true and perfect salvation of God saves the will of man, which must harmonize itself with the will of God. Consequently, after receiving life, the believer must pay attention not only to his intuition, but also to his will.

## **2. A free will**

The believer must exercise free will. Free will means being able to choose what you want. Man is not a mechanical toy to be play around with. In Genesis 2:16, 17, God persuaded man to do certain things and prohibited him from doing other things, but never forced him to fulfill his will. In order for the believer to obey God, it is necessary for him to be willing to obey, because God never forces obedience.

## **3. The fall and salvation**

The fall of man brought great damage to human free will. Thus, the original fall of man was due to the rebellion of his will against the will of God and, because of this, his present salvation is fulfilled with the restoration of his will to obey God's will. At the moment of the new birth, the will of man is not yet united with God's will, but his fallen will has been



restored because of his acceptance of the Lord Jesus, and his rejection of Satan, his ego and the world. To have a renewed will is much more vital than the renewal of other parts of the soul. The mind may be disoriented and the emotion out of order, but the will must not be in error. If it is, serious consequences will result since it is the very ego of man, and since it controls all of the other functions of the soul. As long as the will is wrong, God will not pass over it to work in our lives.

#### **4. A submissive will**

Any evil that we tolerate in our lives is at enmity with God. Our spiritual growth will be severely dwarfed if we are not willing to deny ourselves. Once our will is completely united with that of God, we will submit ourselves spontaneously and completely to Him.

Our life in union with the Lord has two steps: the union of life and the union of the will. We united with Him in life at the new birth when we receive His life. This is an internal union. It is also necessary, that we unite with Him externally, through our will. This union indicates that our will is one with God. These two unions are related and neither one is independent of the other.

If we do not offer unconditional submission and entire acceptance of God's will, everything that we consider spiritual, whether it is holy feelings of joy or thoughts worthy of praise, nothing will be more than an exterior exhibition, even if it comes in the form of visions, dreams, voices, sighs, zeal, works, activities and labor. Unless the believer is determined in his will to finish the race that God has placed before him, nothing else has any value. If we are truly united with God in will, we will cease every activity that originates within us. In this way, everything proceeds from God. He will not question the nature of anything that we initiate. He simply wants to know in whose strength we are working.

#### **5. The hand of God**

Many believers, although saved, are not completely submissive to the will of God. He then, will use various ways to lead them to obedience. One of these ways is His use of circumstances. God places His hand heavily upon His people so that they will no longer harden themselves against Him. In order to accomplish this, God permits many things to come upon us. If necessary, He will allow us to be sad, to groan and to suffer. Our will is excessively obstinate; it refuses to obey God unless severely disciplined. We must accept the need to submit ourselves to God, because He did not save us to follow our own will, but to follow His.

#### **6. Two means**

Two means become necessary in order for us to be united with God's will. The first has to do with the subjection of our will to God and the second with the conquest of the life of our will. Strictly speaking, an obedient will and a harmonious will are much different. We can observe the obedient will of a servant by his ready execution of his Lord's command. However, the child of God that knows the heart of his Father fulfills his duty with pleasure.

We can illustrate these two conditions of the will by referring to Lot's wife, to the Israelites in the desert and to the prophet Balaam. When Lot's wife left Sodom, when the Israelites departed from Egypt and when the prophet Balaam spoke a blessing over Israel,

all acted in obedience to God's will. All of these were men and women subjecting themselves to the Lord and none of them followed their own opinions. Even so, their internal tendencies were not harmonious with His will, therefore, each one of them ended up in failure. We frequently walk in the correct direction, but we conceal disharmony with God in our hearts. Because of this, eventually we will fail spiritually.

## **7. The path to victory**

We have already established that God is not satisfied with anything less than our obedience to His will. We will now see how the will of man can be harmonized with that of God. The way to attain the peak of spirituality is to surrender the life of the soul to death. Since this is truly the "narrow way", it is difficult because the will of God must be the pattern for each step. There is only one rule: make no provision for the ego. To the extent that we lose the life of the soul, by breaking its habits, tastes, desires and longings, there will be no more resistance to the Lord. It is lamentable that so many Christians have passed through this door and walked this path while others could have entered, but they did not patiently persevere.

## **PASSIVITY AND ITS DANGERS**

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. (Hosea 4:6)

Christians today generally lack two types of knowledge:

- Knowledge of the conditions through which evil spirits operate
- Knowledge of the principle of spiritual life

### **1. The law of cause and effect**

For each of the things that God has created there is a law. Evil spirits also operate according to definite laws. Now if someone offers the conditions for the operation of evil spirits, then certainly they have yielded ground for them to operate. This is the law of cause and effect – evil spirits will harm whoever fulfills the requirements for their operation. Fire burns everything that is placed within it; water drowns everything that is immersed in it, and evil spirits attack everyone (even the children of God) that yields ground to them. Demons begin penetrating the life of any person, as soon as they obtain a basis to support their operations.

Simply put, any ground that a Christian yields to demons is sin. Every sin provides ground upon which they can operate. There are two types of sin: positive and negative. Positive sin is that which a person commits: the hands do bad things, the eyes contemplate evil, the ears listen to ungodly voices and the mouth speaks impure words. However, the Word of God also says that the omission of some things is sin (James 4:17).

The believer's passivity constitutes the sin of omission that yields ground to demons. The lack of use or the misuse of any part of our being is sin in the eyes of God. We must use all of our abilities and gifts because when we do not the devil gains access to each one of them.

### **2. The error of passivity**

Sin and passivity precede enemy invasions among pagans and even among Christians. The passivity of a Christian springs from the lack of use of his various talents. He has a

mouth, but refuses to speak, waiting for the Holy Spirit to speak through him. He has hands, but does not use them, because he expects God to do this. He doesn't use any part of his being, but waits for God to move him. He doesn't consider himself completely surrendered to God therefore; he doubts his own motivation and no longer uses any part of his being. In this way, he falls into inertia and opens the way for deceit and demonic infestation. Christians think that union with the will of God will annul their own will and transform them into puppets. This becomes a means and an invitation for the enemy to enter.

### **3. The foolishness of the believer**

We must actively exercise our own will. Jesus showed this in John 7:17, which says, "If anyone wills to do His will" and John 15:7, which says, "You will ask what you desire". We enjoy a free will and God never undermines it. He expects us to obey him, but at the same time, he respects our personality. Satan however, has no way to usurp any part of man without his permission, whether conscious or not. Satan needs to gain the permission of the Christian, but the Christian will never give it to him. For this reason, the devil is forced to use deceit in order to gain the permission of God's people before he comes into their lives.

The operation of God and that of Satan are different. God invites man to choose actively, consciously and voluntarily to obey his will, so that his spirit, soul and body may be free. Satan forces man to be his passive and captive slave. God is pleased when His people desire what He desires.

### **4. Dangers**

Here is the order of the process that causes many Christians to fall into the hands of demons:

- Ignorance
- Deceit
- Passivity
- Entrenchment

After following all of these steps, the deceit deepens, resulting in a prison of alarming proportions. A person in this state prefers to be guided by circumstances, rather than being free to choose his own direction, because he considers making a choice too tiring. In such a condition of inertia, deciding even a small matter becomes a tremendous task. The victim seeks help in every direction. Such a person feels quite bothered by not knowing how to deal with his daily business. He seems to be hard-pressed to understanding what people tell him and to remember something is extremely painful. Such a believer waits for help, for an exterior push. Are we suggesting that such a believer does not like to work? Not at all! Because when an external force pushes him, he is capable of working, but as soon as the push ceases, he stops in the middle of his work, feeling as if he has no strength to continue. This believer does not conclude his tasks.

Because his will is so passive and unable to operate, generally evil spirits guide him to a situation where the exercise of his will becomes necessary, in order to embarrass him and subjected him to ridicule. These evil spirits instigate many difficulties in order to exhaust

the energy of the believer. Sadly, many have no strength to protest or resist. Demons are able to take advantage of their victims because they fall into ignorance and deceit and from deceit to passivity and from passivity to the sufferings of profound imprisonment. Even so, many believers do not discern that God does not bring about such situations, therefore, they continue in their passive acceptance of them.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

If we offer ourselves to God and serve him merely with our mouths, but in practice subject ourselves to evil spirits, then we will not be able to escape being slaves to their will.

## **THE DECEPTION OF BELIEVERS**

It is not merely the most carnal, worldly and sinful believers who fall into the grip of evil spirits, to the contrary, many times it is the completely dedicated Christians and spiritually more advanced than most common Christians who demons attack. They fall into passivity because they do not know how to cooperate with God. They are full of good intentions, but honesty is not a condition for avoiding deceit like knowledge is. How can they expect God to protect them through their good intentions if they are fulfilling the prerequisites for the operation of evil spirits? In light of this, we will consider some erroneous ideas and concepts that Christians generally accept.

Some Christians have a mistaken notion concerning death in and with Christ. In Galatians 2:20 the Word tells us of our death with Christ. Some people interpret these words to mean self-annihilation. They consider the loss of their personality, the absence of will and self-determination to be the pinnacle of the spiritual life. They argue that since they were crucified with Christ, they no longer exist anymore. Since they have died, then they should practice death, which means that they should not have any thoughts, desires or feelings. Because Christ is alive inside of them, they believe that He will think or feel in their place. Unfortunately, such thoughts ignore the rest of the verse: "the life which I now live I live in the flesh".

Paul, after having passed through the cross, still made the claim: "now I live"! The cross does not annihilate our ego. The true meaning of our acceptance of death with Christ is that we are dead to sin and we surrender the life of our soul to death. God invites us to deny the desire to live by our own power and live by His power, depending on His vitality moment by moment.

Such a walk with God requires the daily exercise of our will, in an active and conscious way and faith for negating our own strength in appropriating divine strength. Because of the erroneous understanding of this truth many Christians cease being active, by violating the principle of God's operation. When this happens, He cannot use them and evil spirits take advantage of the opportunity, claiming that, involuntarily, their victims have fulfilled the requirements for their operation. Whenever we say that someone must deny his ego, we mean to say that he must cease any activity of the ego, and not eliminate the existence of one.

## **The operation of God**

Another text that is wrongly interpreted is Philippians 2:13, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Some people think that because God wants to operate in their heart that it is unnecessary for them to do anything. These believers do not see that the correct essence of this verse is that God works in us up to the point of our readiness to desire something and then to do it. He only operates up to that point and no further. He never fulfills the “desiring and the doing” in our place, but merely involves Himself in bringing the person to the position of readiness to will and to do His excellent will. He causes us to move towards His desire, and then allows us to make the decision. It is not the purpose of God to annihilate our will. Otherwise, we would not have to offer ourselves to God, and we would be free to make a covenant with evil spirits. The correct attitude is this: I have my own will; however, I choose the will of God.

## **THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Here are some ways to avoid the most common mistakes.

### **1. Obey the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:32)

Many Christians accept any spirit that comes to them as being the Holy Spirit. What they do not know is that the Scripture here does not teach us to obey the Holy Spirit, but God the Father, through the Spirit. In Acts 5:29, the apostle said that they should obey God. If someone makes God the Spirit, their object of obedience and forgets God the Father, his tendency will be to obey the spirit within him or around him, instead of obeying the Father that is in heaven, through the Holy Spirit. When we stray beyond the limits of the Word of God, we open ourselves to unimaginable dangers!

### **2. The standard of the Holy Spirit**

We should not expect the Holy Spirit to think through our mind, to feel through our emotions or to decide for our will. He reveals His will to the intuition of our spirit, so that we ourselves can think, feel and act according to His will. It is a grave error to think that we must offer our minds to the Holy Spirit, thinking that He must think through us. He merely acts in our spirit; therefore, he does not directly control the body of man. He never uses any part of the body of man without the consent of man's will. The Holy Spirit also does not exercise any of the physical parts of a man for him.

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE**

There are various erroneous concepts related to spiritual life. Here are some:

### **1. Speech**

For it is not you speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaks in you. (Mat. 10:20)

Some Christians think that while they are delivering a message in a church meeting, they should use their mind and will, but should merely passively offer their mouths to God, allowing him to speak through them. This text does not mean that.

## **2. Direction**

Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," (Isaiah 30:21)

Christians do not perceive that this verse specifically refers to the experience of the earthly people of God, the Jews, during the millennial reign, when there will be no satanic imitation. Not knowing this, they understand that a supernatural direction through a voice is a superior form of direction. They neither listen to their conscience nor follow their intuition. They simply wait in a passive way for a supernatural voice. In this moment, demons find fertile ground to act.

## **3. Memory**

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:26)

Christians do not understand the meaning of this verse: the counselor will illuminate their minds so that they can remember what the Lord said. They, on the contrary, think that the instruction is so that they do not have to use their memory, because God will bring all things to their mind.

## **4. Love**

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:5)

Christians understand that they themselves do not love, but they allow the Holy Spirit to pour out the love of God both in and through them. They pray asking God to love others through them. For this reason, they cease to exercise their faculty of affection, allowing this function to sink into total paralysis. This opens the door for evil spirits to substitute the unused faculty of the person. In addition, once these Christians abandon the use of their will to control their affection, demons place their falsified love within them. From then on, these Christians behave themselves like pieces of wood or stone, cold and dead to all affections. This explains why many Christians are so spiritually isolated. Mark 12:30 says that we should love with all our being. We ourselves should love.

## **5. Humility**

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. (2Corinthians 10:12)

Believers misunderstand this verse thinking that it is an invitation to negate themselves to the point that they lose all self-esteem, something that God unquestionably permits us to have. Many examples of self-humiliation are disguises for passivity. Because of this, Christians often negate themselves instead of denying themselves, God does not fill them and evil spirits prey upon their passivity rendering them useless.

## **THE STANDARD OF GOD**

The Bible tells us to submit ourselves to God in all matters, recognizing that what He decides is the best (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:6; 10). However, that is not all. We must also resist the devil while we submit to God, because the devil imitates the will of God. If we ignore the presence of a will other than that of God, we can easily accept that which is of Satan as

being of God, and fall into his trap. This implies that we must never submit ourselves to our circumstances without daily examining and testing them. Our attitude must remain the same at all times, but our practice only begins after we are sure of the will of God, since we cannot submit ourselves to the will of Satan. It is important to obey God, but is necessary to be alert. Therefore, the believer must examine actively and consciously the source of each matter in his life.

## **WEAKNESS AND SUFFERING**

The Christian understands that he must walk in the path of the cross and suffer for the cause of Christ. He is also willing to be weak and strengthened by the power of God. These are praiseworthy attitudes, but the enemy can use them against us if we do not completely understand them. To suffer at the hand of the enemy and at the same time believe that your suffering comes from God, merely concedes the right of the enemy to prolong his attack. The Christian thinks that he is a martyr for suffering for the church, but in truth, he is a victim. We must check the origin of suffering. We must not automatically accept all suffering as something that God permits and uses for our good.

As far as suffering goes, Paul was merely relating to us his experience of how the grace of God strengthened him in his fragility, for fulfilling the purposes of God. We must not understand that Paul was persuading a strong believer to choose weakness purposely, so that God can strengthen him afterward. He is simply showing the path to strength for the weak Christian.

If we choose weakness and suffering, without the necessary criteria, we will fulfill the conditions for the operation of evil spirits.

### **A vital point**

The principle involved in the cases that we have cited is that the devil does not fail to act whenever there is passivity of the will or the fulfillment of the conditions for his operation. In order to break free from these types of situations, all of those who have fallen as victims of evil spirits must ask themselves: "What have I done that has provided "cover" for evil spirits to operate in my life?" Posing this question will greatly increase the possibility of exposing demonic strongholds leading to freedom from many false and unnecessary experiences of suffering. Another thing that we must understand is that evil spirits use the truth, for this reason we must understand the basic principles of any biblical teaching so that the devil does not use the Word of God, twisting Scripture, to confuse and imprison us.

## **THE PATH TO LIBERTY**

It is possible for a dedicated believer to be deceived with respect to his passivity for some years without ever waking up to his dangerous condition. The presentation of the true meaning of consecration is of vital importance to Christians. The knowledge of the truth is essential for deliverance from passivity.

### **1. The knowledge of the truth**

The first step to deliverance is to know the truth about how to cooperate with God, how evil spirits may operate in the life of a Christian and how we should administer the

principles of consecration and supernatural manifestations. The child of God must know the truth about the source and the nature of the experiences through which God may have been testing him.

We must warn the church of the danger of supernatural experiences. We are not saying that all these experiences are bad and must be abandoned – nothing of the sort, because the Bible is full of supernatural experiences. Our purpose is to remind you that there is more than one source behind supernatural phenomena. Any believer who has not put his emotional life to death (one aspect of mortifying the flesh), but anxiously seeks out different kinds of sensational experiences, will be deceived.

Be careful and pay attention! When a supernatural experience has the Holy Spirit as its author, your mind is still able to play an active part. It is neither necessary nor commanded to be either partially or totally passive, before receiving such experiences. However, if demons induce the experience, the demons lure their victims into passivity by leading them to empty their minds and yield their actions to external demonic forces. We must always remember that the spirit of a prophet is subject to the prophet (1Corinthians 14:32). Any spirit that demands that the prophet submit himself to it is not of God.

The acceptance of the truth is the first step to liberty. It can be embarrassing for a Christian to recognize that he has been used and deceived by evil spirits, but it is necessary to recognize the truth. Doubt is the prelude to the truth. This does not mean to doubt the Holy Spirit, God or His Word, but rather the experience that someone has gone through. Such doubts are not only necessary but also biblical, because God commands us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1).

## **2. The discovery of lost ground**

We should recognize other elements beyond sin, which yield ground to evil spirits. Examples of this are accepting demonic imitations, a passive will and accepting sudden thoughts from the enemy. All of this constitutes ground that we yield to demons. The principal ground yielded is passivity.

Since passivity came in little by little, it will also be eliminated little by little. To the same extent that we identify passivity in a person, we can obtain his or her emancipation. It is always easier to go down a mountain than to climb it. In the same way, becoming passive is easy, but it takes more effort to take back the liberty after it has been yielded. The total cooperation of the person becomes necessary in order to reconquer all of the yielded ground. The child of God should call out to Him in a definite way so that His Spirit can show him where he was deceived.

## **3. The recuperation of lost ground**

Any passivity in the Christian life yields access to evil spirits, and the way back is by activating the will. The Christian, from that point forward, must learn to obey the will of God, to resist the will of the devil and to exercise his own will in cooperation with the will of other Christians. The Christian should constantly declare; “I choose liberty, I want it, I refuse to be passive, and I will use my own talents. I insist on knowing the schemes of evil spirits, I choose their defeat, I will eliminate every relationship with the powers of darkness, because I oppose all of their lies and excuses”. Just as in the beginning when the believer



permitted the entry of evil spirits, now he chooses the opposite: cutting away any root of any foundation of the enemy.

During this period of conflict, the will of the Christian should be actively involved in various operations. Besides solving and choosing, he must also resist and refuse. He resists by prohibiting further operations of evil spirits. He refuses by revoking any permission or concessions previously yielded to them. Evil spirits will not move even one centimeter from the ground that they occupy just because they perceive the Christian's new found hostile attitude against them. We must, actively expel them. The child of God must use God's spiritual power to immobilize and remove the enemy.

The attempt to reclaim lost areas and recuperate use of his faculties can be extremely difficult for the Christian. This is due to the fact that he has allowed his own will to become so weak and since he feels that he has no power to direct each part of his being, he finds it almost impossible to contend against the evil spirits with all the strength that he possess. If, for example he has been passive in the matter of deciding, now he will have to learn to cancel the ground yielded and prohibit the evil spirits from continuing to operate. He must be determined to decide for himself by resisting any interference that they attempt to throw against him. However, he discovers that he cannot decide and that the evil spirits do not allow him to decide and to act. When the Christian finally learns to refuse yielding this control and to resist them and prohibit them from occupying his faculties, the evil spirits will retreat.

In the conflict for the restoration of normalcy, the believer may think that in the initial stage of combat, the symptoms have become worse than before, as if his will had less strength and his mind had grown more confused the more that he resists. However, this is a sign that victory is near! This reveals that the resistance is producing results: the enemy has felt the pressure and is consequently mounting his last opposition. If the believer continues to offer pressure, the evil spirits will leave. During the battle, the believer should permanently appropriate the truth that he was included in the death of the Lord (Romans 6:11). Such a faith frees him from the authority of the evil spirits, since they have no power over anyone who is dead to sin. The believer must make use of the Word of God to combat the evil spirits not being satisfied with small gains neither ceasing to fight until normalcy has been completely recuperated.

#### **4. True guidance**

In true guidance, the Christian is not obligated to obey God mechanically. God simply commands the Christian to obey His will actively. In the practice of obedience, the believer goes through the following steps: readiness to do the will of God (John 7:17); revelation of this will in his intuition, by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:17); and the strengthening of God to desire and to do His will (Philippians 2:13).

#### **5. Self-control**

The pinnacle of the Christian's spiritual walk is self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23). The work of the Holy Spirit is to lead the outer man of the believer to perfect obedience through self-control. The Holy Spirit leads the believer by his renewed will. Therefore, the things that a Christian should control through his will are:

- a. *His own spirit* - the Christian should control his own spirit, maintaining it in its rightful state, that is, under the control of His will. The spirit needs the control of the will. All those who are more experienced agree that we must use our will to limit our spirit when it becomes too excited, or to activate it when it becomes too passive.
- b. *His own mind* – the Christian should control his own mind and all of the other capacities of his soul.
- c. *His own body* - the body must be the man's instrument and not his Lord, in virtue of habits and uncontrollable desires. We must subjugate our bodies (1Corinthians 9:27).

The Bible considers immorality or fornication as more serious than other sins, because they have a special relationship with our bodies, which are members of Christ. When a man sexually unites with a prostitute, he becomes one flesh with her. If he is a Christian, he is joining Christ to a prostitute.

## **SICKNESSES**

In order for us to maintain our bodies in a condition that glorifies God, we should first know what attitude to take with respect to sickness. We must also learn how to use our body and how we can receive healing.

### **1. Sickness and sin**

The Bible reveals an intimate relationship between sickness and sin. The final consequence of sin is death. Sickness falls between sin and death. If there were no sin in the world, there would be no sickness or death. However, when the Lord Jesus came to save humanity, he did not only forgive man's sin but He also healed him. In this way, the first attitude that we should have when we become sick is to examine ourselves to determine whether we have sinned or not against God.

In Isaiah 53, the Word tells us that God has graced us both the healing of the body as well as the peace of the soul. Because Jesus carried our infirmities, we no longer have to carry them. We should note that the salvation of God would not be complete if the Lord Jesus merely forgave our sins without healing our sicknesses. Today, many Christians believe in His power to forgive, but doubt His grace to heal.

### **2. The discipline of God**

The apostle Paul explains that sickness is a type of discipline from the Lord (1Corinthians 11:30 -32). God can discipline Christians with sickness when they err and move them to judge themselves in order to eliminate their errors. Upon disciplining His children, God treats them graciously, so that they are not condemned with the world. If His children repent of their sins, God takes away His discipline. Therefore, we can avoid sickness by judging ourselves! Sickness, in many cases is the open judgment of God because of sin. However, we must not infer from this that all those who are sick, are necessarily more sinful than those who are not (Luke 13:2); much to the contrary, those who are most disciplined by the Lord are generally more holy. Job is an excellent example of this.

The first attitude that we must have if we get sick, is not to run from one place to the other in the attempt to get healed and to discover ways of being healed. What we must do is to place ourselves totally in the light of God and allow Him to examine us, having the

honest desire to discover whether we are being disciplined due to sin in our life or not. In this way, the Holy Spirit will show us where our error is, and whatever He reveals to us we should immediately confess and abandon. If the sin has harmed others, then we should do our best to make restitution believing at the same time that God has accepted us. God is happy to remove His discipline when it is no longer necessary.

### **3. Sickness and the ego**

Every bad and adverse situation has a purpose of exposing our true condition. Sickness is one of God's methods by which we can know our true condition. We never know just how much we are living for God and how much we are living for our own ego until we get sick, principally if the sickness is prolonged. On good days, we may feel very consecrated to the Lord, but in sickness, we reveal our egocentricity. How sad it is when a Christian, because of his own desire, murmurs against God when God is testing him. He does not accept what God gives as best for him. On the contrary, he fills his heart with the desire for quick healing. Because of this, God needs to prolong the sickness, until he attains His purposes.

With sickness, God shows us whether we seek Him only on good days or whether we seek Him even when things go bad. He also permits sickness so that we surrender our self-love - the exaggerated concern for ourselves.

### **4. Medicine**

We do not intend on spending too much time questioning if a Christian should use medicine or not. However, if the Lord has made provision for the healing of our physical bodies in His plan of salvation, it seems like ignorance, if not unbelief, for us to seek the help of human invention through medicine. The world has invented multiple types of medicines to relieve people of sicknesses. However, the Lord secured the healing of our bodies on the cross as well as the work of the salvation of our soul and spirit. In the rush to get well, will we as Christians seek healing through human methods or will we depend on the Lord Jesus for our healing?

There is a big difference between receiving healing through medicine and receiving healing by God. The power of medicine is natural, while that of God is supernatural. When we are healed through medicine, we place our confidence in the intelligence of man. However, when God heals us, we depend on the perfect work of Jesus on the cross. This does not mean that God does not bless the use of medicine and that he does not heal through it. However, His goal is that we believe in His work and receive healing by His hand. If we are healed by dependence on God, we will gain spiritual benefit; something that healing through medicine can never offer us. The lesson that God intends to teach us through sickness is for us to cease all of our own activity and trust in him totally.

### **5. It is better to be healed**

Some Christians go to extremes. Previously they were hard and obstinate, but God has broken them through sickness. They responded well to God and because of this, they became gentle, loving and meek. Since the sickness was so effective, they begin to appreciate sickness more than health. We must understand however, that life with the Lord by no means implies living with physical infirmities. It is good to be able to support

suffering. However, it would be much better if someone would obey God when he or she is full of strength.

Sickness can glorify God, because it offers Him an opportunity to manifest His healing power (John 9:3). However, how can He be glorified if someone remains sick for a prolonged period just because he appreciates the sickness? God desires to heal us. The earthly healing ministry of Jesus was marked by innumerable healings. He has not changed, He continues to desire healing.

We cannot fail to mention that sickness had its origin with the devil. God permits Satan to attack His children because of defects in their lives. However, be careful! There are sicknesses that come from Satan; we do not need to suffer them. Some sicknesses should have been removed, because they have already fulfilled their purposes. In these two cases, we may be suffering unnecessarily. Many people are sick with no need to be sick, simply for lack of faith in the promise of God's healing through faith. We must understand that any spiritual blessing that we receive through sickness is inferior to that which we receive through restoration and healing. In order to be healed, we may either call the elders of the church to pray over us (James 5:14, 15), or exercise our own faith confidently and take possession of the promises of God concerning healing (Exodus 15:26). God will heal us.

In redemption, God treats sickness differently than he treats sin. The destruction of sin is complete, but it is not so with sickness. Timothy, for example, continued having a weak stomach. We claim however, that there should not be as much sickness as we see among the children of God. Innumerable Christians remain sick because they lost the opportunity to be healed. Unless we have the assurance that Paul had after having prayed three times, that his thorn in the flesh would remain because it was useful, we should ask for healing. Until we are, sure that God wants us to bear our weakness, we should boldly ask Him to take away and remove our sickness.

We want to emphasize the attitude that a believer should have with respect to sickness. Every time a Christian becomes sick, the first thing to do is to investigate the cause of the evil before the Lord, while not being too anxious for the healing. We must determine whether we have disobeyed God, whether we have sinned in some way or not. Perhaps we owe someone something, or we have violated a natural law, or neglected some special direction. After identifying the motives, we must assume the proper attitudes. In conclusion, we recognize that no sickness comes without a cause. If a Christian gets sick, he must try to discover its cause or causes. After confessing them one by one before the Lord, he should call the elders of the church so that he can confess his sins to them and receive prayer for healing and forgiveness. The elders will anoint the sick person with oil so that God may restore his life in the body of Christ. The influx of life will make the sickness disappear.

## **GOD AS THE LIFE OF THE BODY**

We have already seen that in the future God will resurrect our bodies, but today he gives life to our mortal bodies. Even though our bodies are still alive as part of our natural life of the soul, we no longer live through it because we trust in the life of the Son of God that infuses His spiritual energy into our physical members much more abundantly than the life

of the soul could ever do. God desires to lead us to the possession of this life of Christ as our strength.

The Word of God is the life of our body: man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Some people live merely by bread, others by bread and by the Word of God. Bread sometimes fails us, but the Word of God never fails. God hides His life in His Word; therefore, we must not receive the Word merely as a commandment or as a rule, we must receive it as life. When we feed on the Word, we receive it as life, not only as life to our spirit, but also as life to our body.

### **1. The experiences of the Old Testament saints**

It was a common experience for the saints of old to know God as the strength of their body, or to experience the life of God permeating their bodies. Abraham saw the power of God manifested in his body that was almost dead. The crucial point of the matter here is not so much the condition of our body, but rather the power of God in the body.

Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. (Deuteronomy 34:7)

The power of the life of God acted in the body of Moses. Caleb also experienced the vigor of God (Judges 14:9-11). The Holy Spirit powerfully used Samson in physical feats. There are many other examples of men of God in the past that were invigorated with the life of God.

We want to emphasize that the life of God is sufficient not only for healing infirmities, but also to preserve our strength and health, enabling us to overcome sicknesses and weaknesses.

### **2. The experience of Paul**

As we are members of the body of Christ, life naturally flows from Him to us. We appropriate this by faith. Paul prayed three times for God to remove the thorn in his flesh, yet, with no success. Should we think that he continued physically very weak, remaining in that situation for a long time? No, he informs us that the power of Christ rested over him and he became strong. Neither the thorn in the flesh, nor the weakness produced by it, ever left Paul. However, the power of Christ overcame his fragile body and gave him strength to face each necessity. The power of Christ was in contrast to the weakness of Paul. How could a man as weak as Paul accomplish a work that demanded such great physical energy? The answer is that the Holy Spirit gave life to his mortal body.

How does God heal us and strengthen us? The answer is by the life of Jesus. When our mortal flesh receives strength, it does not mean that God changes the nature of our body to immortality: it remains the same. The life that supplies vitality to this body, however, is changed. In the past, we lived by the power of our natural life, but now we live by the power of Christ who has supernatural life. The power of His resurrection is supporting our body; therefore, God enables us to fulfill the tasks that He has designated to us.

### **3. Natural power and the power of Jesus**

Someone may wonder if having the Lord Jesus as the life of the body means that God grants us a great measure of physical power so that we never have to suffer or become sick. The Apostle Paul's body was frequently weak, but the strength of the Lord Jesus

continually flowed through it. He lived each instant by the life of the Lord. Only through obedience, will we experience the reality of His life. It is reasonable to expect God to enable us to overcome physical limitations to do His work. Do you think He would give us His strength so that we could rebel against him?

#### **4. The blessing of this life**

If we receive the life of the Lord Jesus as the life of our body, we would experience the strengthening of our body and the prosperity of our spirit through Him. We already know that our body is for the Lord. However, because of our egocentricity, He cannot fill it completely. Now we deliver our all to Him, so that He can treat us the way that He desires. Now we belong to the Lord completely and nothing can therefore happen to us without His knowledge and permission. Understanding that the Lord is for the body of the Christian, we are able to appropriate all of the riches of God for our needs. For each urgent necessity there is always His provision, therefore our heart should be at rest. We do not ask for anything more than God has provided, but also we are not satisfied with less than He has promised. We refuse to use our own strength in any matter to help God, trying to resolve things before His time.

### **OVERCOMING DEATH**

The experience of overcoming death is not rare among the saints of the Bible. The Lord delivered David from the claws of the lion and the bear and from the hand of Goliath. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego suffered no harm from the furnace of fire. Paul shook off a deadly serpent into the fire and suffered no harm. These are only a few of many other examples. God's goal is to lead His children through the experience of overcoming death. It is necessary to triumph over sin, the ego, the world and Satan but the victory is not complete without triumphing in the same way over death. If we want to experience a complete victory, we must destroy this last enemy (1Corinthians 15:26). We will leave an unconquered enemy if we fail to experience the triumph over death.

If we desire to live victoriously on the earth, we must overcome the death that is in the world. Death is in our body. Ever since the day that we were born, it is operating in us. Physical death is only the consummation of a prolonged operation of death that acts within us day by day. It can attack our spirit, denying its life and power and can attack our soul, mutilating its feeling, thoughts and will, and our body, making it weak and sick.

According to Romans 5:17 death does not just exist, but reigns. As long as the kingdom of death exists, the kingdom of life also exists. The apostle Paul says that those who receive abundance of grace will reign in life. However, Christians today concern themselves so much with the problem of sin that they have failed to overcome the result of sin, which is death. Christ died to save us not only from our sins but also from death. The salvation of Christ substituted justice for sin and life for death, because the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

How can we overcome death in a practical way? We must decide to resist death in the same way that we have resisted sin: by appropriating the victory that Christ has already won for us on the cross. The author of Hebrews 2:14, 15, tells us that the cross is the basis for our victory over the power of death. There are three different paths open to us as

Christians to overcome death:

- Trust that we will not die until our work is finished
- Have no fear of death even if it comes, because it's sting has been removed
- Believe that we will be completely freed from death, raptured at the Lord's return

### **1. Death after our work has been completed**

Unless a Christian has full knowledge that the end of his work has arrived and that the Lord no longer requires him to remain, he must, resist death. Jesus resisted death three times, escaping from the midst of those who wanted to kill him, because His time had not yet come. Paul and Peter also resisted death before the time. The patriarchs only died after they attained the fullness of their years.

### **2. No fear of death**

When we speak of overcoming death, we do not mean that our body will never die (1Corinthians 15:51). Overcoming death does not necessarily mean not going through the grave, because God may require some of us to overcome through the resurrection, just as Jesus did. In passing through death, believers, like Jesus, need not fear it, because we are simply passing from one vessel to another. In the beginning we were just like those who fear death and were subject to slavery (Hebrews 2:15). The Lord Jesus however freed us and therefore we no longer fear.

### **3. Caught up while we are alive**

We know that upon the return of the Lord Jesus many will be raptured while still living. This is the last way of overcoming death (1Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1Thessalonians 4:14-17). The time of the rapture is approaching. If someone wishes to be rapture alive, they should learn here and now how to overcome death. On the cross, the Lord Jesus totally overcame His enemy. Today God wants His church to experience this victory of Christ that will strengthen us against death, preventing it from making any incursion into our bodies. Resist everything that has a disposition toward death. Face sickness, weakness and suffering in this attitude.

### **4. Mortal sin**

We will now observe specifically what the essence of mortal sin is as mentioned in 1John 5:16. Doing so, we will know how to stay far away from it, so that our flesh is not corrupted and we do not lose the blessing of being raptured before death. We must strive to complete the work that the Lord designated to us before the end of our lives and then we may pass through the grave, if He tarries. Because of the negligence of many of God's children in this matter, they have had their lives unnecessarily shortened and have lost their crowns.

The Bible is not clear about what this mortal sin is. From the Bible text, we understand that this sin may vary according to each person. A sin for some is mortal. However, for others it may not be a mortal sin and vice versa.

One of the characteristics of the Kingdom age is that there is will be no more weakness, sickness or death, because we will possess resurrected and redeemed bodies and Satan will have been crushed beneath our feet. The Scriptures teach us that we can experience the powers of the coming age right now in this present age (Hebrews 6:5).

## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Why is the mind a battlefield?

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2. How can we know if a thought is our own or that of an evil spirit?

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3. What are the causes of attack by evil spirits?

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4. Explain the difference between a passive mind and an empty mind.

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5. How can we distinguish between the action of God and that of demons?

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6. What are the characteristics of a passive mind?

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7. How can we walk the path of deliverance?

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8. How can we have a renewed mind?

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9. How can the mind work according to the spirit?

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10. Explain the faculty of the will.

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11. What are the dangers of passivity?

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12. What is the error of passivity?

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13. How is a believer deceived?

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14. What are the most common mistakes that believers make with respect to deception?

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15. What are the most common mistaken ideas about the spiritual life? Explain.

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16. How should we understand suffering and weakness?

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17. How can we walk the path of freedom?

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18. What is the relationship between sin and sickness?

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19. Explain how sickness can be the discipline of God.

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20. How does sickness deal with the ego?

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21. What is the biggest difference between receiving healing through medicine and receiving healing from God?

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22. What should a Christian do if he gets sick?

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23. How does God become the life of the body?

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24. What are the three different ways for Christians to overcome death?

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25. Explain what mortal sin is.

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## 4

### THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION



## GOD'S PLAN

In this section, we will study the plan of redemption and the full Gospel of God as touching all parts of our being. We will explain the significance of redemption, why we must be saved, from what and for what we must be saved, why God wants to save us and how He does it and what we must do to be saved. There is a long list of issues to consider. We will try to give a brief answer to these matters and we hope to offer you an opportunity to learn more about God's salvation.

It all begins with the eternal purpose of God: to form a group of people in His image and likeness. God wants to fill us with Himself in order for us to express His life and character and exercise His authority in representing Him. This is an eternal purpose because God had planned it before time began and will never change it.

Before God accomplished His purpose, Satan, the enemy of everything that God represents, came on the scene, cheated the man out of his inheritance and injected him with his own sinful life and nature. As a result, man fell into an unfortunate state of sin practicing sinful acts for having received a sinful nature that disqualified him from fulfilling the great purpose of God.

However, God cannot be defeated! Despite the fall of man and the fact that his fall caused His plan to be frustrated, He still loves man and did not allow anything to deter Him from fulfilling His purpose. Hence, God acted to save man to accomplish His eternal purpose. This action represents the Full Gospel and complete salvation offered by God.

God's final goal is the "adoption" of His people. In the Bible, this word means two main things: maturity in God and the position to inherit all that God is and has. Its meaning is not limited to simply being a child. A child has the life of his father, but is not yet fully grown, and is not yet prepared to take possession of everything that his father has given him. Each child of God will be able to receive his inheritance when he has grown up and matured. In a similar way, God chose us to be His children, full of life, grown up and mature. You can have the life of the Father, which makes you His child, but the will of God is not only for you to be His child, but to be a fully matured son of God. Only under these conditions will we be eligible to inherit all that He is and has done for us.

After the fall of man, the entire human race became sinful children of the devil (John 8:44). However, God chose us to be His children. How wonderful! Although we do not yet appear to be much like God, His choice gives us the confidence that one day we will be part of the many fully-grown sons of God, filled with His life, demonstrating His character and expressing His full authority to represent Him properly. This is the church today, the Body of Christ and will be the New Jerusalem in the future.

## THE CHURCH - GOD'S OBJECTIVE

All of God's children have God's life. In fact, the life of God is not a thing but a person, God Himself. To have this life means to have a person living in us, the living God Himself. When the only living God fills these many individual people, they become one person, one body. They make up the many members of the Body of Christ.

Observe your own body: it has one single life. When you go to school, your whole being

goes. When you go to work, your whole person goes to work. Whatever you do, you do so in unity, because within you there is just one person, not two or three, just one.

God is one, a unity of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and He expresses His purpose in this unity. When several individuals receive Him as life, they become one with God, and become part of the church, the Body of Christ. In eternity future, such people will make up the New Jerusalem.

Upon reading Ephesians 3:9-11, you will notice that the church is not something that happened only after many people came to the Lord. No, God has planned the church since before the beginning in eternity past. It was because of the church that God saved the world. Through our salvation in Christ, the church came into being in order to express God, and it will continue to be the goal and the eternal dwelling place of God for eternity, as taught in Revelation 21 and 22.

The church, therefore, is composed of people who have God as their life and builder in Christ. They are the expression of God and represent God and His authority.

## **THE CREATION OF MAN AS A VESSEL**

We can see how marvelous the plan of God is. According to this plan, God created the heavens and the earth for man, the center of His creation, whom He created in a very special way after He created everything else.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26)

Here we see that God created man unlike any other creature. He created all other things according to their own kind. God created man as the only creature in His own likeness and kind. Man is very similar to God. A good illustration of this is the hand and glove. Man is to God as the glove is to a hand. The glove is made according to the shape of the hand, so that the hand can properly fit into it. God created man in His image and likeness so that He could fill him just as a hand fills and animates a glove. We are very special to God. We were created as vessels (Romans 9:21-23), in His image, in order to contain Him and express Him. None of this happened by accident or by evolution. God planned everything to fulfill His eternal purpose.

God created man as a vessel that He could fill. For this reason, He created us with three parts: spirit, soul and body (I Thessalonians 5:23).

We have already studied the body which is the physical and first part of man. God created Man's body from the dust of the earth and it is his most superficial part (Genesis 2:7). Through our body, we can touch, see, smell, taste and hear, that is, we make contact with the things of the material realm.

The second part of man is the soul, the psychological part. Through our soul, we expresses who we are, our personhood or our personality. The soul possesses three parts or functions: the mind, will and emotion. In order to understand this study, you are using your mind. When you discover that God created you in a special way, you may feel like you are bursting with joy. That would be an example of the emotional part of the soul manifesting itself. Finally, when you decide to further study the Bible to discover more about God and



man, you employ your will in order to reach such a decision. Thus, the soul is the part of man created by God so that we can know Him, love Him and approach Him, and so that He can fill us with Himself and we can express Him.

The Spirit is the deepest part of man. The Bible calls it the "inner man" (Ephesians 3:16) the "man of the heart" (I Peter 3:4) because it is deeper and harder to understand than the other two parts. Of all of His creatures, God's only created man with a spirit able to make contact with Him and receive Him. If you never approach God, you do not even need a spirit. You need your body and your soul for your human existence, but since God made you a vessel to contain His presence if you are not filled with His presence as the contents of your spirit, you will feel a great emptiness inside. Nothing will make sense you and nothing will be able to satisfy you.

God wants to enter the spirit of man to be his contents and his satisfaction. Just as we exercise our minds in school to learn things, we must also learn to exercise our spirit, make it work properly, to get in touch with God, to know Him and have fellowship with Him.

## **THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE RIVER OF LIFE**

After creating man, God planted a beautiful garden and there He put the man that He had formed. In the garden there were all sorts of trees good for food. The tree of life stood in the center of the garden alongside a river. God put this tree before the man that He created so that he could feed from it and daily receive the life of God.

What was man's greatest need at that time? Was it a job to get money for his livelihood? No, God provided all that he needed. Did God give him instructions on how to do good and be a good man? No, the only instruction that God gave man when he put him in the garden was for him to cultivate and care for it, and bade him eat of every tree that grew there, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We see then, that God created man to serve Him, to cultivate and guard the garden, and for that to happen God needed to be his life.

In all of the Bible's descriptions of the Garden of Eden, the crucial point is that the tree of life was at its center. This tree symbolizes God as the life of man. The Garden of Eden was not only pleasant and beautiful, but it was where man could be filled with God's life in order to please Him by fulfilling His eternal purpose.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God. However, he still had not received God as life, as his contents. Without the life of God, man is totally incapable and unqualified to express Him and represent Him. For example, a light bulb has everything needed to shine, but without electricity, it will never fulfill its function. The man is a "lamp" to express God's divine light. For this, the "electricity" of the divine life of God, must flow into him.

In Genesis chapter 2:8-10 after having creating man, God did not tell him to do anything in order to express Him. Instead, God put man before the tree of life so that he could take Him as life by eating its fruit. The New Testament shows us that the tree of life is God incarnate in Christ. John 1:4 says, "The life was in him." In John 14:6, the Lord Jesus said that He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life." In John 10:10 He said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." The Lord Jesus told us in John 6:57 to eat him,

and in John 15, He is the true vine and we the branches. All these verses show that Jesus Christ is the life of man, as portrayed by the tree of life. This is so wonderful when we understand it!

The scriptures speak of a river flowing next to the tree of life. Revelation 22:1 speaks of a "river of the water of life." This river appears several times throughout the Bible. It represents the Spirit of God that fills us with life and quenches our thirst. In John 7:37 the Lord Jesus said: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." Sometimes you get the feeling that nothing else can satisfy you. Nevertheless, "the last day, that great day of the feast," Jesus said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." Today the Lord continues to offer himself as a drink that satisfies us when we drink His life into ourselves. We need to go to Him and drink!

## **THE FALL OF MAN**

There were two spiritual trees in the Garden; the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9). When the man ate of the latter, he fell and completely ruined his chances to fulfill the purpose of God. We must now understand the meaning of these two trees.

The two trees represent two principles in man's relationship to God. The principle of the tree of life is that of dependence on God. To have God as his life makes man dependent on Him. The principle of the tree of knowledge is that of independence. When we do not take God as our life, but choose to live according to our own knowledge instead, we do not live in dependence on Him.

The tree of life symbolizes the life of God or God as the life of man, while the tree of knowledge symbolizes Satan as the source of death. God told the man that the day they ate of the tree of knowledge they would surely die. This shows that, in fact, it is the tree of death. When man eats it, he receives the nature of sin within himself.

The Bible shows that Satan was originally Lucifer, the archangel of God. Lucifer means "morning star". At the time, he was the most beautiful and wise among all the creatures of God. For this reason, he aspired to be like God and like the Most High (Isaiah 14:13-14). Therefore, he rebelled, and became the enemy of God, always seeking to exalt himself and frustrate God's purposes.

Before the man could receive God as life, Satan deceived Eve who ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge and then gave some to her husband, Adam, who also ate it. Thus, Satan was able to inject into man his evil nature of sin, which now dwells in every man (Romans 7:17-20). This became the greatest tragedy of the universe. The man who God created to contain Him and express Him, now, after the fall, expresses the sin nature of Satan.

The fall produced a series of problems. The first problem is that man transgressed the righteousness of God by disobeying His commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge. As a result, man came under the judgment of God, lost his right to the tree of life, and ended up dying.

The second problem is that man now has a sinful nature within himself. This constitutes him as a sinner. As a result, he cannot do the good that he prefers, but ends up doing the evil which he does not want to do. Paul said. "O wretched man that I am! Who

will rescue me from this body of death" (Rom.7:19, 24). This is the great tragedy of history! We still see its effect on man today. Even for such a lost cause God prepared a wonderful salvation for man.

## THE PROBLEMS OF MAN AFTER THE FALL

As a consequence of the fall, man began to have serious problems with God.

### 1. Problems before God

a) *The condemnation of God* – Through the disobedience or transgression of Adam, we have all come under God's condemnation (Romans 5:18). When God created man, all men were included in Adam. In His eyes, when Adam sinned, we were included in this sin, even though we never sinned in the same manner. Therefore, when God judged Adam and condemned him, He also judged and convicted all of us through Adam.

b) *The wrath of God* - Because we have been condemned by God in Adam, we all fell under the wrath of God (John 3:36). Because of Adam's sin, all men are now under the wrath of God awaiting His final judgment.

c) *The judgment of God* - Finally, for the sin of Adam, man will be judged by God (Hebrews 9:27) and cast into the lake of fire for eternity (Rev. 20:15). The Bible says that eternal fire was prepared for Satan and the angels who followed him in his rebellion against God, not for man (Matt. 25:41). However, Satan deceived the man who then followed Satan in rebelling against God by disobeying Him, so he must also suffer the judgment of God with Satan in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

Outwardly, and before God, this is the terrible condition in which, for the transgression of Adam, man fell. Instead of enjoying the life of God and expressing it, God sentenced man to death to suffer the same judgment as Satan.

### 2. Problems within man himself

Let us use an illustration of a boy who disobeyed his mother and ended up eating poison: first, he has a problem to solve with his mother. This problem is objective, something outside of himself. Second, he also has a problem within, something subjective, which is the poison that he ingested. When he ate from the tree of knowledge, man not only transgressed the Word of God, which the forgiveness of God can solve, but he also received a corrupt and satanic sinful nature. Therefore, he perished in every aspect of his being and was ruined and corrupted.

a) *His spirit died to God* – Paul taught in Ephesians 2:1 that man is dead in trespasses and sins. The spirit of man died, and lost its function of interacting with God and receiving Him as his life. Therefore, man today has lost the ability to interact with God and as a result, many do not believe in Him.

b) *His soul was ruined* - When the evil nature of sin entered into man, it damaged his soul with respect to God's purposes. Sin darkened his mind, which God created to know Him. This leads man to walk in the vanity of his thoughts (Ephesians 4:17-18). God created man's emotions to love, but because of sin, this love was diverted to other things and went so far as to hate God (2 Timothy 3:2-4). Finally, God created man's will to choose and obey Him; however, man used it to rebel against Him (Eph. 2:2).

c) *His Body was corrupted* - The nature of sin entered the man's body transforming him

into sinful flesh. Sin now dwells in the flesh of man (Romans 7:17-18). So man's body is full of corrupt lusts, and has become the body of sin - serving sin as a slave (Rom 6:6), and becoming the body of death (Romans 7:24).

In such a miserable condition, man is utterly helpless to save himself, and utterly without hope. In this regrettable situation, as a result of Adam's sin, all men fell, including you and me. Yet this same horrible condition of man motivated God, in His love, to come save us.

## **THE SOURCE OF SALVATION: GOD'S LOVE**

The condition of fallen man is extremely bad. He sinned by disobeying God's command and came under the condemnation of God. Now he also has within himself a sinful nature that causes him to sin. The man in this circumstance is unable to save himself or others from the coming judgment of God. His final destination is the lake of fire prepared for Satan and his followers. In Adam all mankind has fallen to this regrettable and hopeless situation.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved) (Eph. 2:4-5).

God loved man before the world began (Eph. 1:4). He created the heavens and the earth for man, and because He loved him, put the tree of life before him. After the fall however, God continued to love him. He did not give up His purpose of entering and filling man with His presence and becoming his life so that he could express Him and have His authority to rule on the earth.

The object of love is usually worthy of being loved, but often the object of mercy is in a completely deplorable situation. Therefore, God's mercy reaches even further than His love. He loves us, but we have fallen into a miserable situation, to the point of being dead in trespasses and sins, so we need God's mercy. Because of His great love, God is rich in mercy to save us from our corrupted state to a proper condition for His love.

The love of God is the source of our salvation. He expressed this love by sending His only begotten Son to die for our redemption. God could have abandoned us. Nevertheless, He, the Good Shepherd, left everything and went after the lost sheep. The Holy Spirit diligently sought the lost coin and the Father went out to receive the son who was lost. In the parable of Luke 15, we see that God freely spends His divine love to redeem a single soul. Are we able to ignore such intensity of the love of God for man?

His interest in man brought Him from heaven to earth to minister to man to the point of giving His own life to rescue him. His motivating power was His great love.

Because of this love, we have become children of God. The Apostle John tells us:

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1John 3:1)

Now you can see that, thanks to the love of God, we are not hopeless. God wants to save us and give us His life. His purpose in relation to us is eternal and so is His love. He loves us eternally. Even when we fall into sin and death, His mercy reaches us. Hallelujah!

Because of His great love for us, He guarantees us that He will fill us with His life and will fulfill His eternal purposes through us.

## **THE BASIS OF SALVATION - GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The basis of our salvation is God's righteousness. Without the righteousness of God, we would not have a solid foundation upon which we could boldly come to Him in order to receive and enjoy the salvation He offers.

God is just and right. The righteousness of God is a Person, not simply a divine attribute. Christ Himself, as a person, was made the righteousness of God for us (Romans 1:17; 3:21-22, 10:3, I Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:9).

God said that if man ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil he would surely die (Genesis 2:17). Nevertheless, man did go ahead and transgress God's Word. Then, because of His Justice, He could not fail to condemn man, because His throne is a throne of justice. God would not be just if He did not condemn man. He would have lost His authority to govern, and the whole universe would collapse.

God was in a dilemma. He loved man, but could not fail to condemn him. How could He forgive the man He loved, without violating His justice? The answer lies in the double righteousness of God. This is the wisdom of God displayed in His salvation.

In order for God to be able to forgive us, Christ, the Son of God became flesh. As recorded in Romans 8:3, God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Through the incarnation of the Lord he "took on" the likeness of sinful flesh and in the flesh, He identified Himself with sinners. Except for the fact that there was no sin in Him, only the likeness of sinful flesh.

Because of the righteousness of God, the Lord Jesus died on the cross. There on the cross, He was made sin for us (2Corinthians 5:21). He died on our behalf to accomplish the redemption and meet all the requirements of the righteousness of God that condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). Now God is in the position to forgive us. In fact, He not only can forgive us, but because of His justice, He must forgive us. First, God forgives us not because He loves us, but because He is just and true to His word.

The justice of God condemns us, but because of the righteousness of Christ accomplished in His death, we are justified. This is wonderful! At the same time, God maintains His justice and shuts Satan's mouth. Now neither God (nor Satan) can condemn those who simply trust in the death of Christ. We praise God for the basis of salvation. Through His dual righteousness, we see His love, His justice and His wisdom.

## **THE SAVIOR**

In the Garden of Eden, after the man had sinned, God judged him according to his righteousness. However, because He loved the man, He promised to save him (Gen. 3:15). God created man to contain Him as his life. However, deceived by Satan, he disobeyed God and sin entered into him and thus he lost the privilege to receive God as his life.

Therefore, after the fall, God gave man two great promises: that He would rescue him from the control of Satan, and would give him His life to fulfill His purpose.

God promised that the seed of the woman would come to strike the serpent's head

(Genesis 3:15). This was the first great gospel to man! The woman's seed is Christ, who was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23). "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law" (Gal 4:4).

Based on these promises, God prophesied in the Old Testament about the coming of Christ who is God come in the flesh to save mankind. It was prophesied that He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), that He would have no desirable appearance (Isaiah 52:14, 53:2), and would be anointed by God for His ministry (Isaiah 61:1, 42:1). The year, month, day and place of his death and how he would die was predicted accurately (Dan. 9:24-26, Exodus 12:1-6, Genesis 22:2, Deuteronomy 21:23, Zech. 12:10; Ps 34:20). The prophecies also showed that He would die and rise from the dead on the third day (Matt. 12:40). When Christ came, He fulfilled all the promises and prophecies. The details with which the coming of Christ was prophesied and the way they were divinely fulfilled are amazing! The central theme of the Old Testament is the Christ promised and prophesied by God.

The Gospel of John affirms that the Word was God (John 1:1) and that the Word became flesh. (John 1:14) This Word is Christ, who is truly God and truly man. His coming fulfilled all the promises and prophecies of God. As the God-Man, He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem and lived a genuinely human life for thirty-three and a half years, yet without sin. Finally, He died on the exact date and place prophesied hundreds of years before.

The death of Christ accomplished wonderful things for us. Through His death, He redeemed, forgave, washed, justified and reconciled us to God. He redeemed us by paying a high price to buy us back to God. He justified us by accounting us righteous before God. He reconciled us while we were yet enemies of God, by bringing us back to Him, to enjoy peace and harmony with Him. Overall, however, the death of Christ bruised the serpent's head as promised in Genesis 3:15 (see Heb. 2:14).

On the third day He rose again to send us the Spirit of life (I Corinthians 15:45) to give life to man, the promise of Genesis 22:18 (see Gal 3:14). He became the promised Spirit to give man eternal life as a blessing. Thank the Lord! The man's negative problems were solved and his initial right to receive God was recovered by the death of Jesus Christ. Now man can believe in Jesus and be saved from sin and death, and receive the life of God to fulfill His eternal purpose. We should praise God and love our Savior for all that He has done.

## **OBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF SALVATION**

At this point, we begin to address the five objective aspects of the full salvation of God to solve the problems between us and God: redemption, forgiveness and the purification of sins, justification and reconciliation. The first is the redemption that Christ accomplished through His death on the cross.

### **1 - Redemption**

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (Ephesians 1:7)

What is redemption? Redemption is the noun form of the verb "to redeem". To redeem something means to buy back something that was originally yours, but for whatever reason,

is no longer in your possession. We originally belonged to God. We were his property. However, we were lost. Nevertheless, God has not given up on us. He paid a high price to get us back, retaking us as His possession at great cost (1Corinthians 6:20; 1Peter 1:18, 19; 1Timothy 2:6). This is redemption. Since man involved himself with sin and with many other things that were against God's justice, holiness and glory, our return to God was conditioned on a three-part demand: of His justice, His holiness and His glory. It was impossible for man to satisfy all of His demands. The price was too great.

However, God paid this price for us, taking possession of us at great cost. Christ died on the cross to fulfill eternal redemption for us (Galatians 3:13; 1Peter 2:24; 3:18; 2Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 10:12; 9:28). With this precious blood, He fulfilled the marvelous redemption necessary to get us back (Hebrews 9:12; 14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19). He returned us back to God and to His purpose. His precious blood was the price that was paid. We could have never paid such a high price, but he paid it for us. Our destiny was to die in sin, but now we can go back to God, receive His forgiveness and be filled with his life. What a precious thing our redemption in Christ is!

## **2 – Forgiveness**

After sinning, man needed the forgiveness of God and the purification of sins. Since we have offended God, we need His forgiveness. However, God will not forgive us unless His justice is satisfied. Moreover, to satisfy it, we must die. However if we die, God will not have anyone to pour His life into in order to fulfill His eternal purpose. The perfect solution for this problem was for Christ to die in our place. Based on His death, the demand of the justice of God has been satisfied and we can receive His forgiveness.

According to Jeremiah, when God forgives our sins He also forgets them (Jeremiah 31:34). When we forgive someone that has offended us, it is hard for us to forget what that person did. However God is different, when He forgives our sins, He also forgets them. Praise God! Because of the death of Christ and our faith in Him, God can forgive us. For Him it is as if we had never committed sin! Just by us receiving His sacrifice and by believing that He has forgiven us!

The redemption accomplished through the blood of Christ is the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:22). Christ accomplished redemption on the cross and applied His forgiveness to us now that we believe in Him. Redemption and forgiveness are in reality, two aspects of the same thing: one is its fulfillment on the cross and the other, the application now that we believe. The apostle Paul clearly expressed this in Ephesians 1:7. Therefore, once God forgives, he forgets:

Then I said, behold I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of me – to do your will, O God. (Hebrews 10:17)

## **3 – Purification**

What is the difference between forgiveness and purification? To find the answer, we first need to know the difference between sins and unrighteousness. Sins speak with respect to offenses, while unrighteousness is a stain, a mark on our conduct, caused by the offense. For example, suppose that you made two purchases, but only paid for one. With respect to the person from whom you made the purchase, you committed an offense.

However, with respect to yourself, in your conduct there is a stain of unrighteousness. For this reason, you will not be sinning, but you will be unrighteous.

In the same way, when we commit sin before God, with respect to Him, those sins are offenses. Nevertheless, for us, they are stains of unrighteousness. We need to confess our sins. Then in one sense, God forgives our sins and our offenses; but in another, God washes every stain of our unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9) [See also Zechariah 13:1; Hebrews 1:3; 9:14]

#### **4 – Justification**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26)

Justification is the act of God in approving people according to His pattern of justice. His justice is the pattern not ours. Notwithstanding, it does not matter how righteous we think we are, our righteousness is infinitely inferior to the pattern of the righteousness of God. His righteousness is unlimited! You may have lived all of your years being right and just with everyone – parents, children and friends; however, your own righteousness will never make you righteous before God. The only way that God can justify us is through our faith. The righteousness by faith represents the approval according to the pattern of the righteousness of God.

Why is that? The answer is because this righteousness is based on the redemption in Christ. Without it, God could never justify us. The basis of justification is redemption. That is why the Bible says that we have been justified by faith in Christ Jesus and not by works (Romans 3:28; 5:1).

The death of Christ fulfilled redemption for us. Based on this death God justified us.

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ((Romans 8:33, 34)

Therefore, righteousness depends on redemption, and redemption has as its principal aspect propitiation. Propitiation is a difficult word that means to sacrifice by paying a price to forgive sin. Propitiation is the principal structure of redemption, because as sinners, we have a great debt to God and we have no way of paying it. However, Christ as our sacrifice of propitiation, resolved this problem. Once propitiation solves our problem, then God redeems us. Based on the redemption of Christ, God can justify us easily and legally. The only thing that we must do on our end is simply believe in Him, praise the Lord!

#### **5 – Reconciliation**

We now arrive at our last objective point concerning the full salvation of God: reconciliation. Reconciliation is the act of restoring two parties to friendship or harmony.



Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (Romans 5:1; 10, 11).

We were not only sinners; we were also enemies of God. Through the redemptive death of Christ, God justified us and reconciled us to Himself, while we were still His enemies. This happened when we first believed in the Lord Jesus. We receive the justification and reconciliation of God by faith. In this way, He opened a way for us to receive His grace for His own pleasure.

At the fall, man did not only sin against God, but also became the enemy of God. For the problem of sins committed, forgiveness was sufficient; however to remedy the enmity, we need to be reconciled to God. Reconciliation is based on the redemption of Christ (Romans 5:10, 11) and it was fulfilled through the justification of God (2Corinthians 5:18, 19; Romans 5:1; 11; Colossians 1:20 a; 22). Therefore, reconciliation is the result of redemption with justification.

Because of reconciliation, today we have peace with God (Romans 5:1), we can glory in God (Romans 5:11) and we can still be saved by the life of the Son of God (Romans 5:10).

God reconciled us together with Himself through Christ. He gave us the ministry of reconciliation, trusting us with the words of reconciliation (2Corinthians 5:18, 19). Now that we have been reconciled, we must be faithful to the ministry entrusted to us by God and we must announce this new gospel to others: that God reconciled the world with Himself by not imputing man's transgressions, and beyond that, we have peace with God!

## **SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF SALVATION**

Besides the five objective aspects of salvation, the salvation of God also has five subjective aspects.

### **1 – Regeneration**

Regeneration means that besides the new life that we received after being born again, we received another life, the life of God. This is what the Bible means when it speaks of being born again: "You must be born again." (John 3:5-7). Regeneration is the center of our experience of salvation. It is the starting point of our living relationship with God (1Peter 1:23).

God's intent is to have a group of people that receive Him as their life, so that they may express Him in His image and represent Him with His authority (Genesis 1:26). The disobedience of Adam caused him to fall into sin and lose this birthright. The death of Christ resolved all of man's problems before God. God has absolutely brought us back to Himself. As long as man does not receive God as life, neither God nor man can be satisfied.

The next step of God in salvation is to enter into man in order to put His life within him. This is the most crucial step. Even if God completely forgave and reconciled him, man still would not be able to express God without receiving His life.

Being a Christian is not principally a matter of becoming perfect. Being a Christian

means to be born of God (John 1:13), which means that, besides receiving human life we receive the life of God. Because we all have been born into sin, we are all sinners. How can a sinner stop sinning? This is not possible. How can you tell a dog to stop barking and start meowing? Our nature determines what we do. Even though God has forgiven your sins, your sinful nature will cause you to sin again. You need another life, a life without sin. The only life without sin is the life of God. Regeneration places this life of God inside of you. Adam neglected God's life when he chose the tree of knowledge over the tree of life. Today by believing in Christ we can be born of God and receive Him as life! Praise the name of the Lord!

After receiving the life of God, He gradually expels the evil nature inside of man. Inferior and sinful men like us, can now grow in the life of God to become His children (2Cor. 3:18).

In the book of Ezekiel, the Bible tells us that we receive three marvelous things in regeneration (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

- a. *A new heart* – a heart of flesh to substitute our old heart of stone
- b. *A new spirit* – the Spirit of life renews and brings our old dead spirit to life.
- c. *The Spirit of God himself* – the third thing that we receive is the Spirit of God himself to live within us. What a marvelous salvation we have received by believing in the Lord! Regeneration is at the center of the beginning of our salvation.

## **2 – Sanctification**

Through regeneration, we received a new life, a new heart and a new spirit. That is, our spirit that had died because of the fall of man, was made alive by the Spirit of life (1Corinthians 15:45). This was the beginning of our experience of the full salvation of God. We must recognize what a marvelous new beginning God has given us!

However, there are other things to experience in the full salvation of God. We need to understand the meaning of sanctification. Sanctification is the dissolving of our sinful nature by the work of the holy nature of God within us. In the Bible the word sanctification means principally separation, to be separated from that which is common (Leviticus 10:10). Sanctification has two aspects:

- a. *Positional* – this means that we must separate ourselves from a common position in the world to a position in God, as illustrated in Matthew 23:17-19. Gold exists in almost any place in the world, but once we place it into the sanctuary, it becomes sanctified; in the same way that a lamb in the field is common, but when we change its position, when we place it on the altar, we can say that it has been sanctified. In the same way, God has sanctified us by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18) and we are in Christ (1Corinthians 1:2). Positional sanctification comes by way of the single offering of Christ (Hebrews 10:10), by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 13:12) and by God's call (1Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7).
- b. *Dispositional* – positional sanctification is objective while dispositional sanctification is subjective. The sanctifying Spirit is making each part of our being holy, and this happens by the work of day-by-day transformation (Romans 12:2; 2Corinthians 3:18). This is a long process, beginning with regeneration (1 Peter 1:2, 3; Titus 3:5), and lasts throughout the Christian life (1Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 5:26) and

will be completed at the second coming of Christ, when we reach maturity of life (1Thessalonians 5:23).

In the entire universe, only God is holy. His life and nature are holy. We cannot obtain any holiness apart from Him. We are not “holy” because we practice anything that is holy, but it is because we are full of God who is Holy. Holiness is God himself (Leviticus 20:26).

The apostle Paul reveals to us that after being reconciled, we will be saved by the life of God (Romans 5:10), that transforms our fallen nature through the filling of His holy and divine nature. Therefore, in the first place we are sanctified by the holy life of God. In the second place we are sanctified by the Word (John 17:17) and by the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16; 1Corinthians 6:11; 2Thessalonians 2:13). When we approach the Word of God in prayer we touch the Holy Spirit, we touch God himself. This sanctifies us. If we do this every day, we will allow the most holy God to sanctify us with His holy life. In this way, we will express fully His Holiness.

### **3 – Transformation**

Transformation is a result of sanctification and relates to the soul of man. Transformation is the change from one substance in nature to another. It is an internal change in nature that causes an external change in form.

This type of change is metabolic. In such a process, an organic element full of vitamins enters into our body and produces a chemical change in our organism. This chemical reaction changes the constitution of our being. This is transformation.

Suppose that you become very pale and wanted to change your appearance by using makeup. This would be an exterior change but not an organic change of life. How could you naturally restore your rose-colored cheeks? The answer is by eating healthy food daily containing organic elements necessary for health. Since your body is a living organism when an organic substance enters your body, the chemical process of metabolism begins to transform the healthy food you eat so that your body organically restores its own health and vitality. Gradually this interior process will change the color of your face. This change is not exterior but something that comes from within. It is the result of a metabolic process.

In the process of metabolism, a new element added to the organism substitutes the old element and then eliminates it; something new is created to substitute the old element that was taken away. Metabolism then includes three things: A) the supply of a new element, B) the substitution of the old element by a new element, C) the elimination and removal of the old element.

Through the process of sanctification, the new element of the life of God enters our life. This new element substitutes our old sinful, dead man. This is a continuation of the salvation of God in us. God has placed us in this process since the day that we first believed.

What is the new element that produces this interior change? The answer is Christ, in the person of the Holy Spirit. From the moment that God regenerated our spirit, His desire is that His life continue expanding from our spirit to our soul. In this way, God can transform our mind, emotion and will. God regenerates and changes our spirit, but our

mind, emotion and will are not automatically transformed and may remain unchanged. We have Christ as our life in our spirit, but we do not have Him in our soul. If we do not permit Him to saturate our soul, our spirit will become a prison for Him. We need the Holy Spirit to continue flowing from our spirit to our soul until each part of us is transformed into His image (Romans 12:2; 2Corinthians 3:18). Then we will think as He thinks, love as He loves and choose as He chooses. We will be like the Lord in our practical life because we have saturated our soul with His life.

#### **4- Conformity**

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

God predestined us to be conformed to the image of Christ. To be conformed means to place in the form or pattern of. Christ is our pattern and we must be conformed to Him. Paul speaks of us being conformed to Him in His death (Philippians 3:10). The death of Christ is a pattern to which we have become conformed, just as a cake is conformed to the shape of a cake pan. This means that we live by the life of Christ, and this life is a life of crucifixion, just as Christ lived here on the Earth. By way of His life within us, our life is conformed to the pattern of the human life of Jesus.

Each kind of life possesses its own form. The life of a dog possesses the form of a dog and the life of a duck the form of a duck. The growth of a certain life produces its full form. We are children of God and we share His life. Therefore, by the growth of life in transformation, we become conformed to the image of Christ. The power of the life of God is in His interior molding us to the image of His Son. It is not by exterior imitation that we assume the form of Christ, but is by the inner life, by the growth of life and transformation.

The firstborn son of God is the prototype, our mold and our pattern. In order for us to reproduce in accordance with such a pattern, exterior pressure is necessary. Sometimes the Lord allows us to go through suffering and tests as if through fire (1 Peter 1:6, 7; 4:12, 13), so that we take on more and more of the form of Christ. Therefore, we need the inner work of the Spirit and the external pressure and temperature.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Corinthians 3:18)

The more we are transformed, the more we are conformed, and this happens from one level of glory to another level of glory because God's objective is to glorify us (Romans 8:30). When this whole process is ended, our body of humiliation will be conformed to the glorious body of Christ (Philippians 3:21).

#### **5 – Glorification**

Glorification is the last stage of our complete salvation. To be glorified is to enter into the glory of God in order to experience and enjoy unlimited and infinite eternal life of God in Christ.

However, may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1Peter 5:10)

Here we see that the purpose of the calling of God in Christ and the purpose of giving us all grace is that we can enjoy His eternal glory. In eternity past, He predestined us according to His foreknowledge and in time called us and justified us so that we could be glorified (Romans 8:29, 30). This will happen at the second coming of Christ when we will be manifested with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4) and we will enjoy the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:21). Our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed in us (Romans 8:18), which is our own glory of God (1Thessalonians 2:12). Everything that happens to us is correctly arranged by God (Romans 8:28-30), to the end of bringing His many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Paul says that Christ is in us the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). When we hear the gospel and believe it, Christ came inside us as a seed of life. This seed is our hope of future glory. The metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly is an illustration of this. The caterpillar does not instantaneously transform itself into a butterfly, but the beauty of the butterfly is contained in the life of the caterpillar. Obeying the law of this life, the caterpillar will gradually be transformed until reaching its final state, which is its glorification.

By the same principle, Christ is with us as our hope of glory. He takes advantage of each opportunity to operate within us. One day we will be completely full of the divine glory and He will take us into eternal glory.

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:4)

When Christ manifests Himself, He will manifest us with Him in His glory. On one hand, at the Lord's return, God will lead us to His glory and on the other hand, Christ will manifest Himself through us, He Himself being the glory in which we will enter. Christ will be glorified and admired in His saints (2Thessalonians 1:10). In the future, our bodies will be completely filled with the glory of Christ and we, together with all creation, will be free of the captivity that now subjects us, so that we may enter into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. How wonderful is the fact that we, through the salvation of God, become His children, full of His glory and life in order to express Him for eternity!

## CONCLUSION

In eternity past, God established a purpose in accordance with the good pleasure of His will. This purpose is to have a group of people that possess His life, that express Him and that exercise His authority over Satan.

God created man to receive Him as life. Satan deceived the man, leading him to disobey God, transforming him into a sinner under the condemnation of God. When this happened, apparently the purpose of God was frustrated. However, He became a perfect man, Jesus Christ, went to the cross as the Lamb of God (John 1:29), as the serpent of bronze (John 3:14) and as the grain of wheat (John 12:24) that needed to die to bring forth many grains with His life. With His death, all of the objective problems between man and God were resolved. In His resurrection, the Lord Jesus sent us His Holy Spirit that gives life (1Corinthians 15:45; 2Corinthians 3:17) to regenerate us in our spirit (the first stage of our salvation). During our Christian life, He saves our soul through His life (Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:12; 1Peter 1:9), sanctifies us and transforms us (the second stage of the

complete salvation of God). Finally, at His return, our bodies will be glorified and will be conformed to His glorious body (Romans 8:29). This is glorification, the last stage of the salvation of God.

In eternity future, all of the chosen and redeemed children of God throughout all of the ages will become the New Jerusalem. There, God will dwell with man and man with God forever. This is the final objective of God, the fulfillment of His purpose, and He will finish all of His work, He will be satisfied and will rest for all eternity (Genesis 2:2, 3)!

In this way, we have summarized the plan of redemption by explaining each of these points.

LEARNING EXERCISES

1. What is God's eternal purpose? What interrupted it? What did God do to restore it?

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2. Explain why the church is God's objective.

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3. Explain why God created man as a vessel.

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4. What was man's need in the Garden of Eden?

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5. How did the fall of man occur?

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6. What problem did man have with respect to God after the fall?

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7. What internal problems did man have as a result of the fall?

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8. Explain how the love of God has become the source of salvation.

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9. Explain the justice of God as the basis for salvation.

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10. After the fall, what promises did God give to man?

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11. What are the objective aspects of salvation?

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12. What are the subjective aspects of salvation?

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THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST IN US



## THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER

The path to the character of Christ is the path of the operation of the cross in us. There is no other way for the Lord to form the marks of Christ's character within us, except by way of the cross. The cross implies the Lord's breaking of the human will and strength. God prepares circumstances and situations that deal with the human will so that it may be broken. It is through the law of the Cross (Matthew 16:24) that our Christian character is formed.

This law operates within us by molding and teaching us the life of the spirit. There is no way to control the process of the Lord's treatment in the formation of Christian character. How good it is to work with and relate to people who have been broken and made sweet, whose hearts God has thoroughly dealt with. The cross is that which operates in us the beauty of the Lord. The Cross is God's instrument that He uses to mold us into the likeness of Christ. The Cross is what enables us and gives us the character that is able to support the power of God. Before Jesus arose, He descended (Ephesians 4:8, 9). This is the principle of God.

Before we can experience power and glory, the Cross of Christ must deal with our heart. The higher that God takes us, the more He will need to deal with our character. There is a principle here: the pressures and temptations increase in proportion to our growth in God. Therefore, a person needs a greater foundation of character in the war against the spiritual world and sin. The pressure was so great when He was in the garden that Jesus sweat great drops of blood. (Hebrews 12:4).

The principle of the cross forms the character of a Christian worker. We attain emotional and spiritual maturity through the treatment of the Cross of Christ. Men of God must be men who overcome the attacks of the enemy in their minds and emotions, something that is only possible through brokenness. They cannot be fragile people that fold under the evil pressure of the flesh. The foundation of a house is the most vital and important part of the construction. Pressure does not only come with the attacks of the enemy, but also as a consequence of practicing the principles involved in seeking God. Sometimes the more we seek the Lord, the more the heavens seem to close and become as bronze.

There is a principle that we must learn: those who seek the Lord even with prayer and fasting, feel much resistance and apparently nothing happens, or sometimes the pressures and the problems increase. This principle involves the fact that in the heavenly realm, God is birthing something in the Spirit and therefore we are paying a price. Before a visitation of the Lord and revival, the men God uses always suffer, cry and groan until the hand of the Lord is free to operate. Therefore, as workers of God, we need to know and understand these ways and be prepared to face them.

## DEFINITION OF CHARACTER

Character reflects the traces of the sinful nature (influenced by the world), or traces of the divine nature (influenced by the Word of God). Character is the sum total of all of the influences positive or negative, learned throughout life and manifested through values,

motivations, attitudes, feelings and actions.

The Bible assures us that Christ is the character of God incarnate (Hebrews 1:3). Character is like a stamped impression that distinguishes a person. Just as God stamped His character on Jesus Christ He also intends to stamp it on the church, so that in this way the world believes in God. Our first decision is to believe. We must make a decision to follow Jesus by becoming His disciples and then we will be formed into His own image (Romans 8:29; 1Corinthians 15:49) and we will be identified in this way as Christians.

Character in the Greek means image. When the Word of God affirms that Christ is the very character of God, the very stamp of the nature of God, upon which God stamped or branded Himself (Hebrews 1:3). He is speaking of image.

Character is the identifying signs of the nature of any being or thing and the set of aspects that characterize the ego. God forms our character through the process of learning. Every human being beginning at birth begins to receive influences from his surroundings. We assimilate these influences as time passes and they become part of our character. This process of learning is accomplished by identification, imitation, punishment and reward. The purpose is for man to take on the likeness of the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the God man. This purpose has not changed. The fall of man did not change this plan or this purpose. Beginning with Adam, continuing through Jesus and onto the church, the plan of God has remained the same.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10)

If the church is to reach this goal, its leaders must show the way and must lead the way. The leaders of the church must allow God to develop the character and personality of the Lord Jesus Christ in their own lives before they can expect Him to form it in the lives of its members. Character possesses three basic elements:

### **1. Way of thinking**

We perceive the way a person thinks by the way that he builds his set of values. In the first place, our character is determined by the moral aspect, or by what we consider correct, wrong or forbidden. If we approve of something that is definitely wrong, then we can say that our character is defective, that our character is bad.

When we become converted, the first thing that we should do is to renew our mind. In this case, to renew means to change our way of perceiving things as well as our set of values. The will of God is that we receive the character of Christ, His mind (1Corinthians 2:16).

### **2. Lifestyle**

The lifestyle of a person is determined by his or her goals, habits and customs. If the biggest goal in life is to make money, we must develop a lifestyle compatible with this goal. We must develop the habits and customs that are coherent with what we want to reach. If I want to be an athlete and I do not train, something is wrong. If I want to develop my studies, but I do not apply myself to a studious lifestyle, again, something is wrong. Our lifestyle is part of our character. The proof of this is that normally people from the same profession share similar characteristics with one another. It is not difficult to perceive this

in businessmen, truck drivers, computer programmers etc.

### 3. Conduct

Conduct is the set of behavioral patterns that we learn and establish internally. Conduct is everything that we do, say, feel, hope for and desire. Conduct manifests itself in my relationship with other people. My behavior in front of other people manifests my character, or my way of thinking and the motives within my heart.

These three elements compose our character. Certainly, we cannot observe them separately. In everything that we do, we manifest these three aspects at the same time. All of us at conversion already possess a formed character. Everything that we have received from the surroundings in which we live contributes to the formation of our character. Much of what we have learned is correct, but God must transform part of our way of thinking, our lifestyle and our conduct that does not meet the requirements that the character of Christ requires.

Our character demonstrates the extent of our spiritual growth. If with the passing of time, we accumulate much knowledge but we do not demonstrate any change of character, this shows that whatever knowledge we were able to receive was in vain. God is deeply interested in our conduct. Jesus and the apostles spent a lot of space in their teaching dealing with fruit, behavior, and conduct of the heart:

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. (2 Corinthians 13:9)

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, (Galatians 4:19)

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, (Ephesians 1:4)

That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:17)

As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (2 Peter 1:3).

The apostle Paul said that the eternal purpose of God is to have many children, but not only that, these children must have the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29). God wants sons that manifest the character of Jesus. Man's fall did not change the purpose of God it merely delayed it. The church of the Lord must reach this goal and its leaders must show the way, they must go before the flock. God must develop the character of the Lord Jesus in the leaders of the church before beginning to form it in its members.

The scandals that have arisen among leaders that the Church has entrusted with authority before approving their character are many and widespread. A leader that manifests serious deficiencies constitutes a great obstacle in the Lord's work.

The deficiencies of character in the lives of the members of the church are due in great part to its own leaders. In a way, the church is a picture of its leadership. Hesitant leaders engender a hesitant membership. Lazy leaders engender a lazy membership. If the leadership is immature, the people inevitably will also be. We can never overemphasize the

character of the Christian worker because this determines success in ministry. Only a developed and approved character can support the pressures of the work and the difficulties of ministry.

## **CHARACTER AND GIFTS**

The majority of Christians tend to value gifts in detriment to character. This distortion of values has assailed the church for centuries. Spiritual gifts are presents that God offers to each Christian without distinction. A gift may be natural or spiritual. Natural gifts are those with which we are born such as: intelligence, astuteness, memory, the capacity to inspire, to sing, to practice sports etc. The Holy Spirit grants spiritual gifts to us as instruments in His work (1 Corinthians 12:7-10). Gifts are very useful, but they are secondary. God places life and character in first place. Everybody thinks that a certain brother that possesses great intelligence and extraordinary capacity of memorization should become a great preacher. This is a great mistake and is nothing more than human reasoning. God does not edify the church upon these things. If such a brother possesses the life of God, but does not go through the process of the cross, he will be useless for God in spite of His gift.

Another person may think that a brother with the gift of healing and discernment of spirits will automatically become a pillar in the house of God. This also is a mistaken notion. The gifts are useful, but they can never be the basis for the work of building up the church.

This is why there has been so many scandals: because we prioritize gifts over character. The gifts, whether they are spiritual or natural, must pass through the cross before becoming useful. God edifies the ministry through character and not through gifts. God will not send anyone to do anything without first dealing with his character. Gifts attract men but character attracts God.

In the book of Exodus, we find a classic example of the mistake of prioritizing gifts. The Word of God says that Pharaoh was enslaving the people of Israel. Moses was the man that God had chosen to fulfill His purpose. Pharaoh raised Moses in his palace and gave him the best instruction of the times; he was an exceptionally talented man. Moses himself had some understanding of this fact and at one point took it upon himself to free His people from slavery (Exodus 2:11-15). Moses thought that he was capable and perfectly able because he possessed an Egyptian education. God however, not thinking this, put Moses on the shelf for 40 years in the desert of Midian until He could approve his character. From Moses's natural point of view, he was ready at 40 years of age when he killed the Egyptian; but from God's supernatural point of view, another 40 years were necessary until he reached the point of no longer trusting in his own strength and talents (Exodus 3:10).

The more that a man trusts in himself and in his natural talents, the less useful he will be to God. God's criterion is always to choose the one who thinks himself fragile, incapable and disqualified. The glory of God manifests itself when people to whom we attribute no value rise up in power and authority. Then it becomes obvious that God is at work and not simply someone using their special talents.

## THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13)

We all desire to have a character approved by God. We all want to please God and for that reason, we merely wait to discover the rules before beginning to practice them.

The Christian life is not a mere fulfillment of rules and precepts, because we are no longer under the law. We can sum up the Christian life with the phrase "Christ in you", or in other words, the Christian life consists of the complete dependence on the Holy Spirit that lives within us. He changes our will and He enables us to do His will. He is all in everything. Jesus is our goodness, our meekness, our justice; he is really everything that we need. Everything that we need is already within us in the person of the Holy Spirit. It would be very easy for us to begin to exert ourselves to fulfill a set of qualities; however, this is not our purpose. Our desire is that you have the revelation of the full supply of God for your life, because to the extent that you understand this, your character qualities will develop naturally. The full supply of God for us is Christ Jesus, who lives within us. He is our life. He is our all in all.

It does no good to speak of character and conduct if we do not yet appropriate the full supply that God has for us: the deliverance from the old man from the power of sin, our justification and our regeneration in Christ, our complete dependence on the Spirit and the walk in the Spirit. We need to appropriate these great spiritual realities but not only that, we need to learn to perceive the direction of God in our spirit, to learn to separate the soul from the spirit, and learn the practice of daily renouncing the ego in the principle of the cross. We must understand all of these experiences in the spirit.

When we over emphasize recommended qualities, we run the risk of establishing a stack of rules that are not in the Bible, such as five steps to overcome wrath, 10 steps to overcome lasciviousness etc. These things do not work and divert us from the center of the Christian life, which is Christ (Colossians 3:4).

Many people think that they can be holy if they can just overcome certain types of sins. Others think that by being humble and gentle they are victorious. Others imagine that by praying and reading the Bible more, being careful to fast and pray that they will attain a holy character. Others have the idea that simply by killing the ego they will be victorious. All of these formulas have the appearance of godliness and sincerity but they are vain and useless. We cannot live the Christian life using 1001 formulas for the most varied problems. In practice none of this works. What God desires is that we understand that Christ is our life, the perfect supply of God for all of our needs.

With this understanding in mind, we will now study some fundamental principles that will increase our understanding that Christ is in fact our life.

### 1. The formation of character through God's dealings with us

The multiform grace of God enables us with gifts to do certain things that would otherwise be impossible (2Peter 1:1). God, through Jesus Christ, provides us with His own nature. God has granted us certain divine promises (2 Peter 1:4) and the power of God is our guarantee that He will operate the necessary changes within us (2 Peter 1:3).

Only through an attitude of diligence will we be able to perfect our character. We must

make the decision to assume the likeness of Christ, to have within us the maturity of the divine nature (2Peter 1:10, 11).

The Christian life is a process. We attain it gradually, each step corresponds to a new level reached and a new victory attained in a specific area. We must constantly grow.

God's responsibility is to provide His own divine nature to every Christian through the repentance of sin and faith in Christ Jesus. Man's responsibility is to apply all of God's supply to fulfill this reality in his life.

God has given every believer everything necessary for a holy life as a birthright along with power and authority. The Christian has everything he needs to develop a mature character according to that of Jesus Christ.

## **2. Describing the process**

We have all been born in iniquity and formed in sin. All of us by birth have a fallen nature that may or may not accompany us for the rest of our lives (Romans 5:12). The fallen nature of man is not in harmony with anything of God.

God has placed before the Christian the goal of perfection (Genesis 17:1; Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:40; 1Peter 1:15). Spiritual maturity is the biblical goal for all those who are in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes man's carnality does not permit him to develop his character, as the Scriptures require. God definitively treats human nature by the power of the cross, but the ego is the principal reason why man needs the discipline of God. Each Christian needs the discipline of God to motivate him to continue in the direction of spiritual perfection (Hebrews 6:1, 3).

## **3. The purpose of discipline**

The Christian needs the discipline of God in his life in order to reveal hidden areas that must be transformed (1John 1:5-7). God desires to reveal these hidden areas of sin in us, but in a way that helps us to grow. The Scriptures affirm that God reveals such secrets (Matthew 10:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 3:13).

God reveals our hidden sins so that He will not have to destroy us and our ministries. God reveals the dark areas that are present within us so that we renounce them. In order for this to happen, the Christian needs the grace of God because the human tendency is to cover up our own faults and weaknesses. Man always attempts to defend himself and to hide the motives of his heart (Genesis 3:8).

God has given His Holy Spirit to the Christian. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the spiritual needs of man, probing the heart of the Christian and pointing to sins that must be abandoned (Psalm 139:23; Proverbs 21:2).

The word "reveal" means to remove the lid and the word "conceal" means to hide, to block the vision of, or to cover up the subject. God tries to remove the covering over man, while man tries everything to retain it.

There are several men in the Scriptures that illustrate the danger of hidden sins. The Scriptures drastically contrast the beginning of their lives with the end of them. They began well but ended up tragically.

Every Christian can start out well. Nevertheless, if they have hidden sins, which they



have not confessed and continue practicing without repentance, they will destroy their lives and their ministry.

In the second book of Samuel, David, lamenting the death of Saul and Jonathan, called out three times: "How the mighty have fallen" (2Samuel 1:19). In this lamentation, David described the "mighty" in the beginning of their ministerial life as beautiful, mighty (verse 19); beloved, pleasant, swifter than eagles and stronger than lions (verse 23); they clothed the daughters of Israel in scarlet and ornaments of gold (verse 24).

Every leader needs to remember that the purpose of the discipline of God is to reveal their heart so that they themselves will not fall. The Bible is full of examples of men who began well, but finished in tragedy, for the very reason that they did not understand the purposes of the testing of God in their lives.

## **THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN DISCIPLINE**

### **1. To transform the believer into the image of Jesus Christ**

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Corinthians 3:18)

The word "to transform", from the Greek metamorphose, means a complete change from one form to another. It is the root of the scientific word used to describe the process of transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. This process takes time and expends energy. The caterpillar changes from one form to another that is completely different.

The Christian also needs to go through a metamorphosis each day, the Christian that follows the Lord and responds positively will see his nature restored and transformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

### **2. To eliminate all impurity**

God wants to make us pure. He is constantly leading His people into the fire of His discipline. All throughout the world, there is a lot of pressure and heat in the lives of the people of God. God sends this heat to purge His people. The word "to purge" means to refine, make pure, change by heat.

God prepares His people so that He can use them just as an ironsmith prepares metal for the mold. The heat of the furnace brings all of the impurities and inferior materials to the surface so that the ironsmith can draw them off the surface and throw them out. The dross, the part that has no use, is then separated and thrown out. God in these days is removing all the excess and dross from His leaders. He desires the development of character in all of His leaders (Isaiah 1:22-25; Ezekiel 22:18, 19; Matthew 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:21).

### **3. To wash our garments**

Fullers were artisans that cleaned the fibers of cloth, so that the fabric could become a beautiful garment. Frequently the artisan would establish his business close to a stream or river and after washing the fabric several times, he would spread them out on flat rocks. Next, he would beat the fabrics with a wooden club. This club was heavy and had metal spikes that helped extract the dirt from the fabric. As the Fuller would beat the fabric, all of

the fragments of dirt and impurities would rise to the surface and the current of the stream would wash them away. Through this process, the fabric was cleaned. After the cleaning, the fabric was ready for the weavers to transform it into a magnificent garment.

According to Malachi, Jesus is like "a refiner's fire and a launderers' soap." (Malachi 3:2) and He knows how to strike us without causing us harm. God has a club that he uses to extract all impurities from the life of the Christian. God does not use the club just to show His power but uses it to purify the garments of His children.

#### **4. To produce fruit in our lives**

In John 15, we have the parable of the vine and the branches. The husbandman that prunes the vine must sometimes use pruning shears. The dead branches must be cut in a way as to not extract the sap necessary for the living branches. The branches that do not give fruit are cut off and thrown away. The branches that produce fruit are pruned so that they yield more fruit. God will prune, purge, refine and cut the branches that give fruit so that they produce more fruit. The purpose of God is always positive and redemptive. Those who desire more fruit will be pruned the most.

#### **5. To prepare the vessels to serve him**

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. (2Timothy 2:19, 20)

From the minute that the potter forms a vessel from clay until the minute that he takes it out of the oven, he submits it to a rigorous process of beating and pounding. The application of the hands of the Potter over the vessel is sometimes hard and firm. The wheel in the hands of the Potter and the oven are vital parts in the preparation of the vessel. The purpose of God in this situation is to have the vessel for His honor (Jeremiah 17:1-10).

The Scriptures indicate that Judas, the fallen apostle and traitor of Jesus Christ, hung himself in a potter's field (Matthew 27:1-10). In this field, they found a rejected, corrupted and mutilated human vessel, a vessel of dishonor, like so many others.

#### **6. To bring growth into our lives**

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed: "enlarge the place of your tent" (Isaiah 54:2). Figuratively this means that God wants to increase the capacity of those who are preparing themselves to be leaders in His house, so that they may receive more of the Lord. David declared that the Lord can enlarge the steps of leaders (2Samuel 22:37). Again, Isaiah said that a person could enlarge his heart so that his spiritual deposit could also increase (Isaiah 60:5).

The purpose of the discipline of God is to enlarge us in many ways. God desires to increase our ministry and our function in His house, just as He does in our character.

God wants to expand specific areas of our lives. He wants to enlarge our vision (1Chronicles 4:10), our steps (2Samuel 22:37), our heart (Isaiah 60:5), our boundaries (Exodus 34:24), our strength (1 Samuel 2:1), our abode (Ezekiel 41:7; Proverbs 24:3, four; Isaiah 54:2), and our ministry (2Corinthians 6:11; 13; 2 Corinthians 10:15, 16).

## **7. To lead us into an intense search for Him**

The Lord will bring pressure and heat in the lives of His leaders at specific times to motivate them to seek Him more. The purpose of the pressure is not to scare them away from Him, but to lead them in His direction. Frequently, leaders in preparation misinterpret difficult times and circumstances. All of these tests are to motivate man to seek God as his only source of strength. A leader must learn to seek God in difficult times so that he can help others to do the same. Jesus learned through what he suffered. This experience enables us to lead others.

## **8. God wants more of His spirit flowing through our lives**

The Scriptures represent wine as an indication of the spirit of joy (Matthew 9:17, Acts 2:13- 16; Ephesians 5:18). Harvest time was a time of joy for the people. After a long period of waiting, finally harvest time would arrive. During this time the whole family would work together to reap the harvest.

The women and children would put the harvested grapes in baskets and carry them on their heads, they would take them to large stone wine presses where barefooted workers would begin the process of extraction of the grape juice by treading on the grapes. While they treaded out the grapes, they would hold onto a wooden beam connected to a shaft in the center of the wine vat. The major part of their weight rested on this beam so as not to step on the grapes with excessive force. If they trampled the grapes too severely, they would also crush the seeds and the wine would become bitter and would only be useful to give to animals.

There is a marvelous application here. God is the one treading out the winepress, and we are the grapes. His desire is that the wine of His Spirit flows from our lives and ministries. He steps on us, treading us out like grapes. This is a difficult and painful process, but God will never crush our spirits (the seed of the grape), because if He did then we would become bitter. A bitter spirit is no good to anyone. God does not want bitter leaders. He wants the new and fresh wine of His Spirit to flow through our lives.

## **9. God wants to give us a new vision**

The apostle Paul focuses on this reality in his second letter to the Corinthians (2Corinthians 4:16-18). All of the pressure, affliction and tests that come upon us now, serve eternal purposes. We should not look only at the present, analyzing the moment. We need to face the future, thinking of the eternal fruit that will be reproduced in us and through us in the life of others. Gifts are given, but character is developed. Character has eternal value and will remain with us for eternity (1 Corinthians 13:8; 13).

## **OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS GOD'S DISCIPLINE**

To have our character developed into the likeness of Jesus Christ is much more important than escaping the afflictions that we experience in this life. To the extent that we support these afflictions in the present, God will develop the character of Jesus Christ within us.

Our attitudes and reactions to these circumstances that God uses to discipline us with, reveal whether we accept God's dealing in our lives or not. We must develop some

attitudes in reaction to these tests: prayer (James 5:13), contrition (1Peter 4:19), reflection (Hebrews 12:3), praise (Psalms 74:21), a spirit of an overcomer in circumstances (Matthew 10:22; 1Corinthians 10:13), joy (Matthew 5:12; Romans 5:3) and willingness to change (2Samuel 12:13).

To resist generally means to reject or to be indifferent towards God's dealings. Jacob is an excellent example of someone who responded in a correct way to God's dealings.

Throughout the Scriptures God identifies himself with three men each time He says: "I am the God of Abraham of Isaac and of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). As the God of Abraham, he is the God that keeps the covenant. As the God of Isaac, he is the God of miracles, but when the Scriptures proclaim Him as the God of Jacob, it speaks of Him being the God of transformation, because he changed the name of Jacob and transformed his nature from usurper to Israel.

In reaction to the dealings of God we can take the attitude of a worm – just as Jacob compared himself (Isaiah 41:14-16) and Jesus (Psalm 22:6) - or of the serpent – representing Satan.

These two attitudes are contradictory. Some leaders respond to God as a worm, others as a serpent.

### **Our attitude as a response**

We must accept the dealings of God in our lives, believing that "all things work together for good to those who love Him" (Romans 8:28), with the aim to a faithful purpose: the perfection (maturity) of our character.

Many men of God began their ministries with the splendor of success but ended in defeat. They possessed positive qualities such as humility, wisdom, faith, knowledge, anointing, and a ready heart for God at the beginning of their lives and ministries. In spite of all the solid and strong qualities that we may possess, we must be sensitive and obedient to the Lord, even during tests in our lives.

## **CHRIST's CHARACTER AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

What do we mean when we say "Christian character"? The Scriptures illustrate the character of Christ as being the fruit of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

These beautiful natural qualities of Christ reveal His character. They are specific aspects of His life or being. That is just how Jesus is. In the same way, we must become similar to Him in our life and Christian walk.

Wherever Jesus went, the fruit of His life was a blessing. The fruit of His spirit will be a great blessing for us and for other people, but above all, the fruit of the Spirit will be a blessing to our own heavenly Father. The fruit of the Spirit represent three types of blessings:

Let us examine an outline of the fruit of the Spirit:

### **1. Internal blessings**

- a. *Love* - to be loving on the inside
- b. *Joy* - to be joyful on the inside
- c. *Peace* - to be peaceful on the inside

### **2. External blessings**

- a. *Patience* - to be patient with others
- b. *Kindness* - to be kind to others
- c. *Goodness* - to be good to others

### **3. Vertical blessings**

- a. *Faithfulness* - to be faithful to God
- b. *Meekness* - to be humble before God
- c. *Self-control* - to be controlled by God

We can easily see that these blessings are interconnected. If we are full of love on the inside, we will show love to others and to the Lord. The fruit of the spirit generally spreads in all three directions, bringing great blessings.

The above list includes many important character traits in the life of the Christian, but there are others also. Paul gives us this nine-fold fruit as an example for us to study. Note also the other Bible passages that refer to spiritual fruit: Romans 5:3-5; Colossians 3:12-15; 1Timothy 6:11; 2Peter 1:5-7.

## **A SPIRITUAL LESSON OF THE NATURAL LIFE**

We can identify natural fruit in the following manner:

### **1. It is a product of maturity**

A tree needs to be well cared for to produce good and mature fruit. It requires soil, sun and water. It needs pruning and weed removal around its roots. Maturity is a process that requires time and work. The fruit does not appear immediately. It is a product of growth and development.

The same applies to spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit does not grow overnight. Time and testing are necessary in order to grow in the Lord. Our life in Christ develops as we learn to trust in the Word of God and submit ourselves to the spirit of God in all of our daily activities. Christ forms His character in us by this process.

### **2. It is a product for our pleasure**

Fresh and ripe fruit smells and tastes delicious, it is beautiful to behold and sweet to the palate. It is a source of pleasure and delight on the tree and on the table.

Our heavenly father had great joy and pleasure in the loving life of His Son here on the Earth:

This is my son in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:17b; 17:5)

To the extent that we become similar to Jesus, we also become a delight to our God and Father. It was for this purpose that He created us.

### **3. It is a product for our daily nourishment.**

Fresh fruit is a necessary part of our diet in order for us to develop strong and healthy

bodies. Fruit contains the vitamins and minerals necessary for our development and well-being. When these nourishing factors are missing, we become sick and may even die. In the beginning of the history of nautical navigation, sailors would sometimes find ghost ships in the sea. The entire crew had died because of the absence of certain vitamins in their diets.

The fruit of the Spirit is equally important to our spiritual health and well-being. A lack of love, joy and peace can spiritually sicken a human soul. In addition, the sickness can spread to other people and terribly affect their lives as well.

However, to the extent that we share the fruit of the Spirit with each other, we can overcome these sicknesses and grow together in the glorious life of our Lord.

#### **4. It is a product for reproduction**

Mature fruit contains seeds that allow it to reproduce according to its kind. The purpose of fruit is to increase and propagate the life from which it came. A few apples can produce sufficient seeds in order for us to plant a large apple orchard.

When we minister the love, joy and peace of Jesus to others, these also become more seeds for Him. This is the law of natural and spiritual life: life produces life according to its kind. Apple seeds always produce apple trees. In the same way, the love of God always produces the life of God!

#### **5. The purpose of God for our lives**

The divine purpose for our lives, individually, and corporately, is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus. This is our destiny: for God to mold us into His image.

God himself faithfully works and cultivates our lives so that we can reproduce the life of His son:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:28, 29)

### **THREE BASIC TYPES OF FRUIT**

The fruit of the Spirit illustrates for us just what the life of Jesus is like. If our purpose is to become similar to Him in our life, we must desire to study carefully the nature of all of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit. Each one of them reveals a special quality or characteristic of His character. We will consider each manifestation of fruit organized in three categories.

#### **1. The artificial or false fruit of the world**

Artificial fruit, produced by man, can be made of plastic or wax. It has the same shape and color of the real fruit. However, it does not originate from life nor can it produce life, as we can readily attest to by taking a bite. The world defines the fruit of the Spirit in a different way than the Scriptures do. The principle may seem correct, however it does not originate from life and cannot produce spiritual life. It is a false concept and in the end only causes infirmity and spiritual death. For example, the worldly concept of love is much different from the concept of love found in the Scriptures.

#### **2. The true fruit of the Spirit**

The Scriptures defined the true fruit of the Spirit for us. It is composed of all of the

characteristics of the life of Christ that we can hear and see through His words and actions. If we want to know how true love feels, thinks, speaks and acts, at any given moment, we can look to Jesus, and observe the way that he reacted and responded in true-life situations. Jesus clearly exemplified the true meaning of the love of God through His life and death.

### **3. The rotten fruit of the flesh**

The fruit of the flesh reveals death and deterioration. Just as in life, death also has its different characteristics. Anyone can see the characteristics of someone's life by the fruit of the Spirit that they bear. The characteristics of death however, reveal the exact opposite of the characteristics of those who bear the fruit of the Spirit. For example, the opposite characteristics of love would be hate, wrath and bitterness.

It is useful to study these negative characteristics. This understanding permits us to better understand and appreciate the positive fruit of the Spirit. The light always shines more intensely in the midst of darkness.

Besides this, these negative characteristics reveal a soul that is sick and diseased. The fruit of the Spirit is the medicine of the mind. This is the basis for true "inner healing".

## **THE NINE-FOLD FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

We will now study the nine manifestations of the Spirit, according to the list that God has given us in Galatians 5:22, 23.

### **1. The fruit of love**

Jesus was a greatly loved person and He himself was a loving person! In Christ, we see the love of God in action: walking, working, forgiving, healing, delivering and restoring. We need to learn more of this type of love.

The world knows very little of the love of Jesus. Its concept of love is limited and flawed. Therefore, we will study a little bit about fake and artificial fruit that the world considers true love.

We need to learn the difference between the true and the false. To have this understanding is in fact a matter of life or death. With the love of God, the life of God follows. Without His type of love, we cannot have His type of life.

#### *a. The false fruit of love*

Love is not merely a physical and sensual attraction. The world over-estimates physical or sexual attraction, which appeals only to the sensual aspect of our nature. Physical love should be an expression of true love; however, it should not substitute it. On its own, this feeling is nothing more than egoistic and sensual desire.

The love of God does not limit itself to affection among family members. This would be merely favoritism. The love that confines itself to the members of its own family is selfish. True love goes beyond these described limits.

True love is not a sentimental pleasure which is nothing but emotionalism. Love is more than a warm feeling of pleasure. Otherwise, when this feeling fades our love will also fade. True love runs deeper than all of our emotions. True love is not a romantic fantasy or a mere false idealism. The world many times thinks that love is a romantic lifestyle, forever free of problems. The world's ideal of love is nonexistent. Real life demands the real love

that is resistant, something that will last beyond difficult times.

True love is not blind acceptance. This would be a form of deceit. Some people say that love is blind: that it cannot see nor wants to see the defects of others. Neglecting to see the true defects of others is not true love but deceit. True love sees the faults, and continues loving while seeking to redeem the faults. We cannot resolve the problems that we do not want to see. The eyes of love are always open.

True love is not permissive, which is nothing more than an act of indulgence. True love does not yield to the desires of the other person. True love does not permit or give consent to someone to go beyond set limits, which would also be an act of indulgence. True love draws a line between right and wrong and does not hesitate to give correction when someone passes the line.

True love is not passive piety. This is a sign of internal weakness. To feel pity upon someone in a weak and inactive way is not love. This type of solidarity can only cause a profound state of self-pity. True love seeks to produce an honest cure of emotional wounds through wise words and actions.

Everything described above are false concepts that the world has concerning love. True love is something much more, as we will see by the following.

*b. The true fruit of love*

The Septuagint is the translation of the Old Testament to the Greek, written in the third century before Christ. We can better understand the meaning of the key words used for love, by studying how the Biblical writers used them in the original text. As was already stated, we can define the words by observing their use.

Four basic words refer to love in the Greek language:

**Eros** (sensual) – physical

- a) Physical affection - sexual love
- b) This term is not found in the Scriptures

**Storge** (social) - of the family

- a) Family affection - social love, as for members of the same family, community or country
- b) Only the adjective "fraternal love" is found in the Scriptures (Romans 12:10).

**Philia** (emotional) – friendship

a) Affection between friends - emotional love based on the pleasure produced by a relationship.

b) Common in classic Greek, but found only 22 times in the Scriptures in its verbal form.

**Agape** (rational, volitional) – divine

- a) Noble affection - the rational and volitional love based on the character of the subject that loves the value of its object.
- b) This term is not commonly used in classical Greek, but it is very common in the Scriptures. The noun is found 113 times and the verb 135 times.
- c) This term implies a significantly more profound and divine meaning by its use in the Bible. It originates with God and ends with man.

Agape love involves reason, an altruistic choice and sacrifice. It is unconditional,



universal and eternal. God freely offers agape love to everyone. It is something that gives, forgives and redeems. Jesus gave the best and most complete definition of agape love on Calvary, when He died on the cross for our sins.

For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him shall not die but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

There is nothing weak, fragile, superficial or sentimental about the love of Calvary. It is something beautiful, holy, benevolent and merciful. At the same time, it is something frightening and terrible that breaks our hearts when we see the extent that it took to redeem us from our sins.

The love of God is stronger and more resistant than an enormous iron nail. It is as courageous and visible as a wooden cross with a dark sky in the background. Even so, it is also as pure and submissive as a sacrificial lamb.

It is no wonder that the Scriptures declare that our love for God begins with His great love for us: "we love because he first loved us" (1John 4:19). A love like this evokes a response within our hearts.

To be conformed to the image of Jesus means that we will begin to reach out to others with this type of love more and more. We choose to minister to the world because people are precious in God's eyes.

The price of their redemption cost God the life of His Son. He values our lives to this extent because He created us in His image. God still desires a family that expresses the adorable life of Jesus.

*c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

As we have already stated, the fruit of the flesh reveals death and deterioration. The characteristics of death are in opposition to the characteristics of life.

The deadly characteristics that oppose the fruit of love are selfishness, hate, wrath, fear, hostility, resentment, bitterness, jealousy, lack of forgiveness, condemnation, disapproval, criticism, rejection and many other things.

These characteristics are deadly venom that can produce all kinds of infirmities in our spirit, soul and body. We have all suffered with these negative, sad and evil attitudes and characteristics. Sometimes this has happened because these infirmities were in our own lives. In other occasions, we have had to suffer at the hands of others who have insisted on retaining these poisonous attitudes in their hearts.

The fruit of the Spirit is a description or illustration of the divine life. It is also a prescription or medicine for the sicknesses of the soul. Just as the light disperses darkness and good overcomes evil, love expels fear, hate and everything that opposes it.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1John 4:18)

Repay no one evil for evil [...] but overcome evil with good [...] for "love will cover a multitude of sins." (Romans 12:17; 21; 1 Peter 4:8)

In other words, love brings inner healing, not only in our own lives, but also in the lives of others. This is what it means to minister one to another.

It is interesting to observe that the Scriptures describe a person led and revitalized by

the Word and by the Spirit of God as a tree planted by the waters:

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord [...] Who delights himself in his word [...] For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit. [...] their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Jeremiah 17:7, 8; Psalm 1:1-3; Ezekiel 47:12; Revelation 22:2)

*d. Love - a medicine for hearts that suffer*

Many people have never experienced what it means to be loved and accepted by God or by another person. It matters not how much they have tried to please others, they were never able to receive the love, acceptance, or respect that they wanted and needed.

Consequently, these people feel that they are unloved, unwanted, unnecessary, and have never received any value at any moment of their lonely existence. They allowed their hearts to be wounded and never developed their souls as they could have and should have. Their situation is truly very sad.

However, there is good news. The unconditional love of Christ Jesus can forgive our sins; heal our broken hearts, and restore our souls. Calvary has proved how much God wants us in His loving family. We have great value in His eyes and we are dear and necessary in the body of Christ. The family of God offers fellowship that can meet the deepest needs in our lives with respect to love, joy and peace.

To the extent that God restores our own lives; we can become fruitful trees of blessing to other people who are in need. Just as Jesus expressed the love of God in His words, actions and relationships, we also can do the same. This in fact is our calling from the Lord himself.

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (John 20:21)

In truth, the fruit of love is a basic characteristic of our lives in Christ. It is the reason for a relationship with God, with His family and with the world for which Christ died.

The love of God is the source of our lives in Christ. From this life, all of the fruit of His spirit comes forth. Love, joy and peace are beautiful expressions of the life of Christ. They are also personal answers to the love of God. With this view, we will now study the fruit of this joy.

## **2. The fruit of joy**

Jesus was a joyful person! Beyond that, His desire is to share His joy with others:

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11)

From the beginning until the end of His life here on the earth, Jesus brought joy to people around him.

Then the angel said to them, "do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is one born to you this day in the city of David a Savior,

who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10, 11).

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while he blessed them, that he was parted from them and went up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continuing the temple praising and blessing God. (Luke 24:50-53).

The joy of the Lord is much different from the joy of the world; therefore, it is very valuable to our study.

*a. The false fruit of joy*

The world tries to substitute the joy of the Lord with its own earthly joy. One of the meanings of joy refers to the feeling that we have when a casual event brings us pleasure.

A treasure hunter is very happy if he has enough luck to find a hidden treasure. His happiness however, depends on the treasure. If he had found the treasure but then lost it later, he would be sad. He bases his joy upon what happens to him: if it is something good, then he is happy; if it is something bad, then he is sad. He bases his internal sense of well-being to the events of his daily life. Because of this, he is in the clouds one day but in the pits the next. Even when he is happy, there is an uncomfortable feeling that his happiness will not last for very long. His joy is not true, merely a temporary feeling that disappears as quickly as it appears.

Some people try to avoid the serious aspects of life and death through foolish conversations and behavior. They attempt to cover-up their fears and insecurities with constant joking and scoffing. There is an important place for jokes and humor in the Christian life, but there are occasions when we must be serious or somber.

Unfortunately, some people are like circus clowns. They may be laughing on the outside but they are crying on the inside. This is not true joy but a fake simulation much like what an actor does on a stage. What then is true joy?

*b. The true fruit of joy*

The Greek word translated "joy" in the way that was described in Galatians 5:22, is *chara*. It occurs 60 times in the New Testament. The verbal form *chairein*, means to rejoice, and is found 72 times. It is interesting to observe that the word *chairein* was also used as a one-word greeting that literally means "rejoice!" or "may joy be with you!" (Luke 1:28; James 1:1).

Joy obviously refers to the feeling of internal delight or contentment of the heart. Christian joy has a much deeper meaning, as we will see.

True joy is more than just a feeling; it is a person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God! He is our joy. The joy of the Lord is the Lord himself. The "feeling" of joy is our emotional response to the "reality" of joy. Jesus is this reality. Joy is an aspect of His life, a quality of His being. Therefore, when we have Jesus in our hearts, we have the true joy of the Lord inside of us.

Jesus said that He would never leave us or abandon us. In other words, the joy of the Lord is always with us, independently of what we "feel". The source of our joy is within us. Our joy is not affected or altered by what "happens" to or around us. This is the reason why Paul could so emphatically affirm:

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. (Philippians 4:4)

We do not rejoice on sad occasions or in everything that happens. However, we can rejoice in the Lord because of His presence and His promises to make "all things work together for the good". As one brother in the faith said, "the joy of the Lord is a type of solid joy". Christ is the solid center of our lives. We can always remain in His joy, and His joy can always remain in us.

The certainty of His joy in the center of our lives is a source of great strength during times of anguish and personal weakness. The following kind and conciliatory words of Nehemiah quickly come to mind:

Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

Christians without joy are Christians without power. Christians without power are Christians without joy. The positive side of the issue also applies. Joyful Christians are powerful Christians. The message is clear! Yes, Jesus is the source and the center of our joy.

We rejoice in Jesus as our Savior:

My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. (Luke 1:46, 47)

We rejoice in Jesus as our "baptizer" in the Holy Spirit:

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13; Acts 13:52)

We rejoice in Jesus as he who heals us:

the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen. (Luke 19:37)

We rejoice in Jesus as our coming King:

Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (John 16:22; Matthew 5:12)

Because of the fact that Jesus is the joy of our lives, we have a powerful remedy for the pain and anguish of the venom of self-pity.

*c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

Joy is a quality of the life of Christ. The opposite fruit of the flesh would include characteristics like prolonged anguish, sadness, heaviness, depression, self-pity and the spirit of mumbling or complaining. These attitudes can lead us to depression, desperation, withdraw and it even suicide.

We have all gone through occasions of anguish and sadness. In His humanity, Jesus entered into the deepest of our sufferings and internal pain. However, He had an internal force that led Him to great victory. What was the source of this inner strength that He carried during the darkest hours of His life? The writer of Hebrews gives us an important revelation with respect to this answer.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne

of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus looked beyond the cross to the marvelous life that would be His (and ours) in the shining glory of heaven. He was prepared to pay this terrible price so that we could enjoy with Him eternal fellowship with the Father. Truly, the prospect of what this joy represented is what encouraged Him to persevere in bearing the suffering on the cross.

What an example and comfort for all of us! Yes, we may pass through occasions of anguish, pain and great sadness. However, we are not sad as those who have no hope. We have a strong basis of solid joy in the midst of our anguish: the joy to know that Jesus went before us and obtained the victory over death and the devil. His victory over death includes the many characteristics of death that may afflict us even before we die. As was already stated earlier, these are the venomous fruits of the flesh. However, we now have a remedy against the wounds and internal infirmities of our souls.

Jesus is at the right hand of the Father in a position of victory and power. Through His Spirit, however He is present with us in our hearts to minister His love, joy and peace. These are the qualities of His life for our health and divine healing. In addition, we can enjoy these "first fruits" right now, even while we wait for the final fulfillment of our great salvation.

This is the hope that inspired the following marvelous words of the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me

To preach good tidings to the poor;

To heal the brokenhearted,

To proclaim liberty to the captives,

And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

To comfort all who mourn,

To give them beauty for ashes,

The oil of joy for mourning,

The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that

He may be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3 simplified)

We may have tears in our eyes, but even then we can see the "Sun of righteousness", which arises each day with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2). The remaining fog of the dark night soon dissipates in the light of the love of God. There is always promise of a new day in the Lord. This is our hope! This is our joy!

### **3. The fruit of peace**

Jesus was a person very much at peace! Beyond that, he wants to share His peace with others:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Many gravestones have the following inscription: "rest in peace". This is a beautiful idea,

but peace has nothing to do with weakness or death. These are in fact very powerful qualities of life. Just remove peace from people and places and observe what happens. Peace is a necessity for appropriate order and for a correct relationship. Only then can one have a feeling of a tranquility and well-being.

Yes, the peace of God is an important fruit of the Spirit and in fact deserves our study. However, we will begin by declaring what peace is not. The world has a false concept of peace, as we will soon see.

*a. The false fruit of peace*

Peace does not mean that we try to escape the duties and responsibilities of life. If we think we can live that way we will always be running and we will never reach our objective.

Peace is not "apathy" - a lack of care or interest for others. The fact that we are always "turning our back" on others when we should be involved with them will lead us to a very selfish lifestyle. However, life has a way of knocking us off balance. When this happens, a selfish person loses His peace. No one can obtain peace through the acquisition of material goods. Rich people generally do not have much peace. True peace does not depend on what we have on the outside, but on what we have inside of us.

Peace is not being free from the pressure of making decisions. We can alleviate the pressure that we are under by avoiding decision-making or even by making wrong decisions but this does not last long. We must first have peace within us before we can face the world and make correct decisions that affect the outside world.

We never attain true peace by tolerating the values of the world. To go with the flow of life's currents can appear peaceful in the beginning, but eventually, we will always reach the waterfall.

These are some of the false ideas that the people of the world have about peace. However, what is true peace? We will examine the Bible to find our answer.

*b. The true fruit of peace*

The Greek word translated "peace" in Galatians 5:22 is *eirene*. This term exists in all of the New Testament books and occurs 88 times.

This word describes the harmony that comes from correct relationships. We are at peace when we are in correct relationship with God, with others and with our own life. The internal relationships among family members, churches and nations, even with all nature are also included in the idea of this word.

When God created the heavens and the earth and made man, everything was in divine order. There was a holy harmony in all of creation. It was a profound picture of peace. God said that it was very good.

When sin entered the world through the disobedience of man, this peace was lost. Tensions, pressures and conflicts began to arise; things that up to then, were unimaginable. This affected all aspects of creation beginning with man.

Someday God will restore the peace and harmony of this first paradise. There will once again be a beautiful equilibrium when the Prince of peace finds His place in the hearts of men. The natural order of creation will also be part of this new divine order. God will heal everyone and will restore everything and peace will prevail!

The apostle Paul spoke of this new day of perfect peace in His letter to the Romans:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs. But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (Romans 8:18-22; 25)

The reality of the peace of God is not only for the future age. It can begin now as long as we permit the Lord Jesus to rule and reign in our hearts. He came to reconcile us to God so that we could have peace with Him. To the extent that we receive the forgiveness of God, we can forgive others and ourselves.

A new and divine order comes to our lives in Christ Jesus. To the extent that we submit ourselves to His Spirit and obey His word, we can be at peace, knowing that He is restoring us. The apostle Paul cited this truth that is able to transform our lives in one of his prayers for the church in Thessalonica:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1Thessalonians 5:23)

The peace of God operates in our lives and brings equilibrium and order to all areas of our lives. Without divine peace in our hearts, we are open to all of the opposite fruits of the flesh.

*c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

Peace is a quality of the life of Christ. The opposite fruit of the flesh would include toxic characteristics like anxiety, worry, fear, guilt, tensions, pressure, riots, fights, conflicts, discords and disorder. The sickness and death of the soul clearly drive all of these things.

It is no wonder that Paul exhorted the Colossians with the following urgent words:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

Many things in our daily lives rob us of the feeling that we have peace with God. It is good for us to remember that peace is more than just a simple warm feeling of internal well-being.

Peace is an expression of the life of Christ. When we remain in Jesus, we remain in His life and His peace. However, we have peace whether we feel it or not. The peace that Jesus gives us is not like the peace of the world that comes and goes with the pressures and tensions of life.

There is great power in the peace of God. It is sufficiently strong to bind all of the negative forces of the world, the flesh and the devil. Jesus stated this truth clearly in the following words to His disciples shortly before His death:

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

It is as if through His Word Jesus has given us a sign. We must lift up this sign every

time we face problems in our lives. On the side that faces the world, the flesh and the devil, the sign says, "stop!" On the side that faces us, the sign says "peace!"

This truth should always comfort our attitudes and the tendency of our minds. We are not abandoned victims to our daily tasks, because we have the promise of peace that the Prince of peace has given to us.

You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.  
(Isaiah 26:3)

#### **4. The fruit of patience**

Jesus was a very patient person. He remained at the center of the will of God during His whole life on the Earth. Faith, hope and love enabled Him to remain in line with His divine mission not caring what or who He had to face along the way.

Paul prayed that this fruit would enable the believer's in Thessalonica to remain firm while others were falling away and straying away:

But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.  
(2Thessalonians 3:3-5)

James tells us that patience perfects character:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4)

##### *a. the false fruit of patience*

Patience is not a fatalistic attitude. Fatalism tells us that whatever will be, will be, and there is nothing that we can do about it. There is no hope or sense of responsibility in this type of attitude. Patience is not a desperate resignation through which we give up and yield to everything and to everyone.

Patience is not a passive or inactive mental attitude that directs us to "smile, swallow hard and put up with it". This type of attitude has no plan, does not seek to correct the past or alter the present. These are false ideas about patience.

##### *b. The true fruit of patience*

The Greek word that refers to patience is *macrothumia*, which literally means long tempered - where temperament refers to a calm and controlled mental state. Sometimes we say that people are temperamental or that they lose or keep their calm.

In both the Septuagint and the New Testament, there is a lot of divine meaning added to this word through its use. It refers to the patience of God, which is slow to wrath and full of mercy toward humanity. However, in His patience, God does not just simply wait. He is also seeking to bring revival to repentant sinners and perfection in Christ to Christians. This is patience with a purpose. God works while he waits!

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him



for everlasting life. (1 Timothy 1:15, 16)

Jesus was very patient with all of His disciples. He waited patiently for them to respond to His message of life and truth, however, while He waited, He also carefully but firmly worked with them in their weaknesses.

Patience means that we wait in faith, hope and love so that God can do His will in a given situation. These situations involve people, places and events. We can be patient however assured by the fact that God makes all things work together for the fulfillment of His good will in Christ Jesus.

God grants us the strength of patience so that we can stand firm when He uses severe problems and difficulties to test His call over our lives. God never gives up on His purposes for our lives. Therefore, we also should never give up!

We must develop this fruit in our lives if we want our ministry to have the maximum value possible for the Lord in these important coming days. We must be patient with the Lord's dealings in our lives. We must be patient with others, and even with ourselves. The patience of God in the end produces a godly perfection.

Paul sums this up with the following words:

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Colossians 3:12, 13)

#### *c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

It is good for us to know that God has a remedy for impatience. All of us have reacted to people and situations much faster and more violent than we should have.

This generally happens when we become irritated and frustrated. When we become very irritated, we prove how much we are sensitive to everything around us. Any little insignificant thing bothers us too much. We tend to overly exaggerate our reaction to trials and testing and we act in ways that are not characteristic of Christ.

Frustration is the feeling of abandonment that we have when we are in a difficult situation that we cannot change. The only change that we can make is in our attitude. It is at this point that God wants to give us the great grace of patience.

There is power in the fruit of patience. It is the power of waiting on God while we are waiting for men. This power can elevate us above irritations and frustrations of life.

Patience flows from our faith in the power, the purpose and the promise of God. He planned and promised to produce the life of His son in all situations of our daily lives.

For this reason, it is not necessary to be afraid to pray for patience. Patience is a quality of the life of Christ that the Father is ready to supply us with through the power of His Holy Spirit. Its seed is already in our hearts ready to grow when we need it most.

### **5. The fruit of kindness**

Jesus was a very good and kind man! His goodness is another aspect of God's character that He beautifully expressed in His earthly life. This brings us a warm feeling of the moral tenderness and kindness of God. We must demonstrate this divine characteristic more in our own lives.

*a. The false fruit of kindness*

The fruit of kindness is not a weak and permissive attitude of someone who is willing to have peace at any price. Kindness does not permit others to easily transgress or brush aside principles. We must not equate kindness or docility to a sentimental sluggishness that causes our heart to control our head. This fruit possess an underlying force that God himself supports by His power and purpose.

*b. The true fruit of kindness*

The Greek word meaning kindness is *chrestotes*. In eight of the 18 times that this term (noun or adjective) is used in the New Testament, it refers to an aspect of the character of God. Kindness is the quality of the heart that attracts people with cords of love. It communicates a personal care and an interest for others. It is an affable attitude that puts others at ease and protects them from suffering. It seeks to help and to heal those who are weak and bruised.

The Scriptures generally related kindness to forgiveness. It is due to the goodness and mercy of God that He leads us to repentance to receive forgiveness:

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:4)

We see this in the life of Jesus when he dealt with the Samaritan woman by the well (John 4) and again when Jesus defended the woman at the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7).

To be similar to Jesus means to be good to others, supportive and forgiving:

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31, 32)

*c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

We have already seen through some of the Scriptures above some of the characteristics of the flesh that seek to oppose the fruit of kindness. These characteristics include the attitudes and actions that are cruel, rude, rash, rough, aggressive and unforgiving.

We cannot be kind and selfish at the same time. Kindness and the support of others, as we have already seen in the life of Jesus, walk hand-in-hand. Good leaders do not impose their ideas and desires over others in an oppressive way.

Jesus said that His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). The Greek word translated light is *chrestos*. In this verse, it means easy to place upon and well fitting. It illustrates kindness of purpose as well as practice, in planning and in positioning.

Young leaders in their zeal may sometimes be inattentive toward others. In their anxiety to do things for God, there is the danger that harsh words and actions may arise. One of the signs of Christian maturity is kindness.

Aged wine is smooth and light. It loses its harsh bitterness.

And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.' (Luke 5:39)

The Greek word translated "better" is *chrestos*. May we strive to become kind and docile

just as Jesus was, in the proportion that we mature in Him.

## 6. The fruit of goodness

Jesus was a truly good man! Goodness reveals the nature of God himself. The truth is that Jesus was the "goodness" of God in operation, walking and speaking among men.

Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. (Mark 10:17, 18)

The goodness of Jesus revealed the goodness of God to people. Jesus came to earth to do the goodwill of the Father. Therefore, His life, death and resurrection present a perfect picture of divine goodness, an example for every Christian.

If we want to follow His steps, we will want to study this fruit very carefully and with much interest.

### *a. The false fruit of goodness*

We must not equate goodness to the self-righteous acts of the so-called workers of good deeds. This refers to people who do good to others so that they can receive praise and thanks of man.

Goodness does not mean that we give something so that we can get a greater reward in return. Such an attitude is selfishness, and works merely toward our own purposes.

Goodness certainly is not a way of deserving our salvation. Our good works will never reach the height of the holy pattern of the goodness of God. They will never be able to take the place of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. God has saved us only by His goodness and mercy in our favor.

### *b. The true fruit of goodness*

The Greek word translated "goodness" is *agathosune*. It appears only four times in the New Testament. The word "good", *agathos*, appears about 102 times. It is a generic term used to express excellence or high quality.

Personal goodness according to the way that the Scriptures use the word has two important parts. One part is "character"; the other is "conduct" and describes what we are and what we do, or in other words; our attitudes and our actions.

As we have already stated, Jesus is the true pattern for a life of goodness. He is the "good and faithful" model of a servant (Matthew 25:24; Philippians 2:7). Jesus is the goodness of God in thought, word, attitude and action. The study of His life implies a search for the meaning of goodness.

It is useful to understand the way that the Bible uses the words *agathosune* and *agathos*. "Good and faithful" is one example of this.

Paul said to the Ephesians "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth" (Ephesians 5:9). In these and many other passages, we can better understand the concept of God concerning goodness. As we have already seen, goodness involves character as well as conduct. Concerning character, a "good" man is a strong man, solid, highly just and moral. He is honest, sincere and entirely correct. At the same time, he is merciful and full of compassion. He seeks the best of others, has a more generous heart and gives from his own heart. Truly, he is a man like Jesus that not only seeks to preach the

"good news", but also lives according to it:

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:14)

*c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

The opposite of good is bad, and the opposite of goodness is evil. The Bible has much to say about evil and evil men. The most evil character described in the Scriptures is Satan, who is the very embodiment of evil.

Because of the fact that the devil is evil, he is always seeking to rob, kill and destroy (John 10:10). Jesus came however to destroy the works of the devil and to give us an abundant life (1 John 3:8).

The Bible generally associates evil with men who are greedy and jealous by nature. They have small and stingy hearts and are more interested in getting things than in giving something.

The evil man is also partial, unjust and immoral. By the nature of his character, he is not interested in the well-being of others. He is not willing to abstain from robbing and destroying others in favor of his own selfish purposes.

Truly, the picture that the Bible paints concerning evil is not something beautiful to see. Unfortunately, even as a characteristic of Christians, sometimes we see similarities of these characteristics beginning to grow in our lives, and these weeds grow rapidly if not impeded. Bad attitudes can develop into bad words and actions before we know what is happening. Thank God that the Holy Spirit is quick to advise us when these evil characteristics begin to appear in our thoughts and reflect in our actions.

There is great power in the goodness of God. This fruit of the Spirit is God's answer to the problem of evil in our lives and the lives of others. Goodness is a quality of the life of Christ inside of our hearts. It provides the resources that we can use at any time, whether we are feeling good or not.

Goodness is not a feeling it is a person. This person is Jesus! By faith, we know that His spirit is within us. Contained in His spirit is His goodness and power to do good. This confession of faith is the key to our victory.

We will conclude our brief considerations about the fruit of goodness with the following good words of the apostle Paul:

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:9; 17; 21)

## **7. The fruit of faithfulness**

Jesus was a very faithful person. While he was still here on the Earth, he was very

faithful to His heavenly father:

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. (Hebrews 3:1, 2)

He was also faithful to His followers:

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2: 17)

It is useful to observe that He received a glorious title in heaven that relates to this quality of His character:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (Rev. 19:11)

In order to be like Jesus we must be faithful to God and to others in all aspects of our lives. We must know what this really means. As we have done with the other character traits of Christ, we will begin an explanation of what faithfulness means.

*a. The false fruit of faithfulness*

Faithfulness does not mean that we are so set in our ways that there is no possibility of change or variation. It does not mean that we are so established in our minds that we are unable to learn anything new. This is nothing more than pride and stubbornness, elements that hinder the work of God.

God is always operating in new ways. Therefore, we should not be prisoners to patterns that impede us from relating to the new flow of His spirit.

The Pharisees thought that they were being "faithful" to their tradition, but in truth, they were bound to a religious legalism that put them in strong opposition to the Lord himself. This is not what the Bible means by the fruit of faithfulness. What do the Scriptures really say about this fruit of the Spirit?

*b. The true fruit of faithfulness*

The Greek word translated as the fruit of "faithfulness" is *pistis*. It is the same word used for the word "faith" and the two words are related. Therefore, it is necessary to be full of faith to be faithful. However if we consider the context or the setting in which each term is used we will see that there is a difference between these two words.

"Faith" is the most common use of this word in the Bible. It refers to the confidence and the belief in God, in His word and His works. Obviously, this is true in a special way concerning our salvation and its benefits.

The Scriptures use the word "faithfulness" when they refer to the fact that we must be trustworthy, responsible and above all loyal. It means that we are worthy of trust. Truly, this is a sign of a good servant in whom we can trust with the goods of others.

Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. (1Corinthians 4:2)

Paul, Peter and John referred to their helpers as being "faithful" (1Corinthians 4:17; 1Peter 5:12; 3John 1:5). The greatest assets that a leader can have are faithful, honest and trustworthy helpers. John spoke of the servants of the Lord that they would be "faithful

unto death" (Revelation 2:10).

We can perceive strength in this fruit of the Spirit, which is highly necessary for the work of God to be successful. We should not be surprised, therefore to find the enemy trying to oppose this quality of Christ's character in any way possible.

*c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

The characteristics of the flesh that oppose faithfulness include some negative qualities, such as untrustworthiness and disloyalty. We could add other defects of character however such as tardiness, sluggishness, procrastination, negligence in the small things and never completing tasks that we begin. These negative habits are difficult to be broken.

However, there is good news: there is victorious power in the fruit of faithfulness. The chains of old habits can be broken, but generally, it is by one link at a time. We can begin with the next task of responsibility that we receive. In the power of the Spirit of God, we can begin and finish at the appropriate time. We can deal with each small detail responsibly and carefully. When we do this, we will form new attitudes and habits, and they will become part of all areas of our lives - including our work for God.

Then in that day when we are before him, we will receive a reward from the mouth of the Lord himself:

His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' (Matthew 25:23)

## **8. The fruit of meekness**

Jesus was a very meek man! He was also a very strong man always prepared to carry the burdens of others:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28, 29)

There is a divine mystery in meekness and it deserves our study. Humbleness and strength are associated with each other in a very special way in the character of Christ. As we shall soon see, many people do not possess an adequate understanding of what in fact is the fruit of meekness.

*a. The false fruit of meekness*

Meekness is not a weakness of character or of conduct. A meek person is not a weak willed person, overly influenced and unstable who gives in under the smallest pressures. A meek man is neither timid nor easily ashamed.

A meek person does not suffer from feelings of inferiority, nor does he underestimate his capabilities. A meek person does not demonstrate false modesty before others. On some occasions, he may even have the appearance of a lamb, while possessing the heart of a lion. There is a reason for the ministry of meekness, as we shall soon see.

*b. The true fruit of meekness*

The Greek word translated as the spiritual fruit of meekness is *prautes*. The New Testament uses this noun 11 times and the adjective four times. There is no word in our language that translates its complete meaning; it combines the qualities of strength,

gentleness and much more.

Greek literature used the word *prautes* in some interesting ways. It was a term used to describe trained and domesticated animals. However, this domestication is more than a simple obedience and control, because these creatures also demonstrate a docile and loyal nature. A family guard dog is a good example. It is ferocious to strangers, yet docile and friendly to members of the family.

With respect to people, the word *prautes* was used to describe people that were kind and gentle in conduct but who also held positions of power and authority. In the Bible, Moses was one of these men:

Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.  
(Numbers 12:3)

A perfect example of the New Testament is obviously Jesus. Paul associated himself with Jesus in the following aspect:

Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. (2Corinthians 10:1)

They say that a man is known by the company that he keeps. The same is true with respect to words. We can find other qualities that harmonize with the term "meekness" in the words that are associated with it. As we have already seen, meekness is associated with docility and humility.

We also find the word humility in the company of words that reveal the qualities of a tranquil, stable and controlled spirit, even in the face of wrath and violence.

The fruit of the Spirit makes it possible for someone to teach, and even oppose others in a firm yet gentle way. Maybe even more important is to be able to teach, correct and discipline others without resentment and rebellion.

To the extent that we submit to the love, the authority and the wisdom of God, we can be at peace, because we know that He is in control. No matter what we face or with whom we come up against, God will cause all things to work together for our good for His glory in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we do not have to fight for our rights with fear or wrath.

We find a good example of this in the episode where Jesus expelled the moneychangers in the temple. Besides defending those who had been mistreated, He also defended the honor of His Father's house. This episode was not an isolated act of wrath committed by Jesus because he was personally offended.

We can also compare His reaction to the cruel and unjust actions committed against Him during the crucifixion as those of a lamb lead to the slaughter. Both these events demonstrate God's power under the control of His purpose.

Meekness is principally an interior attitude of submission and trust in God. Through this source of strength, we can face the world with peace, power and purpose. We can speak and act when we must and in the way that we must or we can also remain silent and wait when this is in accordance to the will and the purpose of God.

#### *c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

Such a powerful and important fruit as meekness of course will always have strong opposition of the flesh. Moreover, this is in fact the case: self-promoting, self-serving and

proud people who are not open to teaching but rather prefer to argue their points of view without being open to the points of view of others are strong examples of the manifestation of the rottenness of this fruit. People with these characteristics have a hard and difficult time submitting themselves to authority.

When we effectively resist these people or for some reason they are not able to get what they want, they tend to become bitter and blame others. They react, fight, withdraw themselves and feed their wounds in self-pity. Just as the children of Israel, they murmur and complain when anything goes wrong.

It is no wonder that God chose Moses to guide His people out of Egypt. Only a very meek man would have the inner strength to overcome this type of opposition. The fruit of meekness had matured to such an extent in the life of Moses that God was able to use him when others would have failed.

Jesus said that the meek would inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). What a tremendous example Moses is for all of us. To the extent that we seek in our days to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people, over all the earth, meekness will make the difference between failure and success!

## **9. The fruit of self-control**

Jesus was truly a man who had self-control! He was totally submissive to the Word of God and strengthened by it and by the Holy Spirit of God. Consequently, he possessed an inner power and purpose that enabled Him to fulfill the will of His father perfectly. It is important to observe that the source of His strength and direction came from God.

### *a. The false fruit of self-control*

Self-control is not a renouncement of our personality, in the way that God has given to us. All of us are special creatures, made for a special place in God's plan.

Self-control is not a legalistic prison in which our lives are limited by the religious laws of man. The fact that we are divinely self-controlled brings us spiritual liberty and not enslavement.

Self-control is also not the control of our lives through our own strength or will power. We do not possess the interior resources of power or of wisdom sufficient to fulfill the perfect purpose of God for our lives.

Separated from the Word of God and the spirit of God, we are like a boat with no compass, no sails and no rudder. The winds of this world - the spirit of the age - always lead us away from the path of the plan of God for our lives.

It is true that we can establish and reach earthly goals through our own efforts, but these will not serve any heavenly or eternal purpose.

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? (Mark 8:36)

In addition, we are unable to break some influences and habits in our lives, no matter how hard we try. We simply cannot control ourselves with our own resources. What is the answer then?

### *b. The true fruit of self-control*

The Greek word translated "self-control" is *enkrateia*. En means "in", and *kratos* means "strength". The two terms refer to a "dominating power" that proceeds from the inside, an



interior control. The nature of this control will be determined by whatever or by whoever is on the throne of our lives. Will it be the world, the flesh (our ego) or the devil? Or, will it be our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ? The answer to this question is very important. It determines the direction and course of our lives, not only now but from now on. We cannot afford the luxury of making a mistake.

What is the biblical significance of the word *enkrateia*? How does it relate to the fruit of the Spirit and our life in Christ?

The noun form appears only two times in the New Testament, other than Gal. 5:22:

Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." (Acts 24:25)

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. (2Pet. 1:5-7)

The verb form occurs two times:

But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. (1Corinthians 7:9)

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. (1Corinthians 9:25)

The adjective form occurs one time:

For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, (Titus 1:7, 8)

The fruit of self-control clearly refers to the control, denial and discipline of the life of our ego. As I stated earlier, it is not a denial of our ego or of our personality, which God gave to us. Each one of us is a special creation of God, possessing great value in His eyes. The denial refers to the controlling discipline of our ego or the life of our soul through the Word of God and through His Spirit. Our soul is the throne of our reason, will and emotions. The Spirit of God must govern these functions if we wish to become everything that God intends us to be and reach the objective that He originally intended when He created us.

If God is not divinely controlling the life of our soul, we will be living an obstinate life that in reality is under the control of the world, the flesh and devil. Separated from God, we have neither the wisdom nor the power to fulfill our divine calling.

As strange as it may seem, true freedom comes into play, when we permit the Holy Spirit of God to become one with our spirit. He frees us to live an abundant, complete and creative life. This is what Jesus meant when he said:

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 16:24, 25)

Our cross speaks of the denial, control and discipline of our soul or the life of our ego.

The result is a life of obedience and freedom when we follow Jesus. The Lord did not come to destroy our lives but to free and redeem them:

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

To have the ego completely controlled by the Holy Spirit is the only way to true freedom for those who are completely involved in their own little world. We are not able to free ourselves with our own resources. The wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit of God are necessary for this.

*c. The rotten fruit of the flesh*

It is not difficult to define the contrary fruit of the flesh. When we speak of the flesh, we are really speaking of our abilities when we are separated from the control of God that are so easily seen in the life of those who are undisciplined, immoral and rebellious against all authority.

These people become a law unto themselves, very similar to the Israelites during the period of the judges:

In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Jd. 17:6)

In other words, there was no designated divine authority. Everyone did whatever he or she felt like doing. There were no limits, rules or control. Each person was a law unto himself.

The people soon were scattered and fell into doubting each other, disobedience, immorality and idolatry. God was far from their thoughts words and actions. The results were tragic. Their enemies attacked, defeated, and lead them captive and in many cases killed them.

What was God's remedy? He would raise up a judge that would take their focus off themselves and restore it to God. They would then repent and return to the law, the order and discipline of God for their lives. When they found themselves under divine rule and control, God once again restored them to a place of freedom and grace.

The results of the obstinate life are the same today: defeat and despair. The remedy is also the same. We can repent and return to the benevolence reign of God over our lives.

The life led by the Spirit is the true life "lived out through us". Only the Holy Spirit can free us from the slavery of the flesh and places us in the liberty and fullness of the character of Christ.

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Corinthians 3:17, 18)

## **SOME FINAL WORDS FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL**

The apostle Paul summed up - and outlined the fruit of the Holy Spirit - with the following very significant words:

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. (Galatians 5:24, 25; 6:8)

## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Explain the terms of the law of the cross and how it prepares us to live in the Spirit.

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2. Why must the cross form the character of the Christian worker?

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3. Explain the three basic elements that constitute human character.

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4. Why is valuing the gifts in detriment to character a distortion?

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5. Explain the principles of the formation of character.

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6. What is the purpose of the discipline of God in our character?

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7. What should our attitude towards the discipline of God be?

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8. What does Christian character mean?

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9. What is the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit?

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10. Why is the fruit of the Spirit a sign of maturity?

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11. Explain the three basic types of fruit.

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12. Choose one of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit and explain the difference between its types, according to the definition of the preceding question.

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## **6**

### **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**



The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure it? (Jonah 2:11)

The day of the Lord is near. He has deployed His army as a powerful invading force to devastate the forces of the enemy.

## **THE REASON FOR WAR**

### **1. It is a time of plunder**

One of the historical motives for war was to plunder and pillage (1Chronicles 20:1, 2). In spiritual warfare, there is precious pillage for us to take: lives created in the image of God. Jesus alluded to this plunder in Matthew.

Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. (Matthew 12:29)

Satan has taken lives as prisoners to his kingdom. For Jesus, each life snatched from the hands of the enemy is a stone in His crown. The army of the Lord needs to enter the house of the strongman, bind him and plunder his kingdom, delivering the precious lives therein to Jesus the King.

### **2. It is a time of revenge**

Many wars are fought because of old disputes. An army strengthens itself to take revenge upon past hurts. The Army of God has a dispute against Satan who entered the Garden of Eden when man was innocent and through deceit led him to the fall. Satan set the trap and imprisoned man. Today every sin, sickness, pain, affliction, desperation, shame, suffering, prison and death are results of man falling into this trap. God declared war between the seed of the woman and Satan. We will never forget what he did in the garden. There is a debt to be paid. We will not rest until we take vengeance upon him and his hosts for the damage he has caused us.

The story of Amalek is a good illustration of this type of vengeance. Amalek fought against Israel in the desert, attacking and wounding the weak. As a result, God ordered Moses to write a memorial so that no one forgot what he had done (Exodus 17:8-14). Generations later, God chose Saul to take vengeance upon this act (1Samuel 15:2, 3). Saul was supposed to destroy Amalek completely.

Why did God command such revenge? Deuteronomy 25:17-19 gives us an answer. It was because he acted in such a treacherous manner. We cannot spare him. Amalek is a type of Satan. We should not be satisfied until he is completely destroyed. Saul failed to take proper vengeance. The Lord had to set him aside. However, we as the church must not fail.

### **3. It is a time to conquer enemy territory**

One of the main historical motives for war is to enlarge the borders of the country. The army of the Lord must reconquer all of the territory that the enemy has invaded. Our territory has no limits we must reconquer the whole world.

I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the

earth for Your possession.' (Psalm 2:7:8)

The invading forces of the army raised up by God will subject the enemy. We will not lay down our weapons until all of the nations of the earth surrender to the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:8).

#### **4. It is a time to conquer glory & honor for Jesus**

When David heard the foolish threats of Goliath against the people of Israel, he declared:

So the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father's house exemption from taxes in Israel." Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1Samuel 17:25, 26)

David understood that by destroying Goliath he would vanquish the dishonor of the armies of the living God. The honor and glory of God were at play. He needed to show all of those pagans who the God of Israel was. God's name deserves all honor and glory. Therefore, the Army of God must remove Satan's insults, shaming him and bringing honor and glory to the one for whom it fights, the Lord of Hosts, our banner Jehovah-Nissi. The dominion, the power, the majesty and the glory belong to Jesus. We as His army will overcome Goliath and as a result, we will honor and glorify the great name of the Lord.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S ARMY**

The book of Joel speaks of an army that will precede the great outpouring of the Spirit. It will come in a time of crisis, destruction of the enemy and cries for deliverance, when the voice of the Lord will sound:

Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the LORD is coming, For it is at hand. (Joel 2:1)

This text refers to the convocation of the Lord of hosts. In Joel, we find the principal characteristics of this powerful invading force. Applying this type to the kingdom of the spirit, we see the organized armies of God invading the enemy fortresses, at the voice of the Lord (verse 11).

#### **1. A numerous people**

Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, Even for many successive generations. The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; (Joel 2:2, 11)

There is a move of God on the earth and His people are beginning to respond to His convocation. Among this generation people are rising up with distinct characteristics assuming the identity of warriors. A true army is building up and its ranks are swelling each day.

#### **2. A devastating force**

A fire devours before them, And behind them a flame burns; The land is like the



Garden of Eden before them, And behind them a desolate wilderness; Surely nothing shall escape them. (Joel 2:3)

Through the power of the fire of the Spirit, the army of God will leave behind the dethroned enemy strongholds in which men were enslaved.

### **3. A swift force**

Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like swift steeds, so they run. (Joel 2:4)

There must be a sense of urgency in the execution of the work because the day of the Lord is coming. We must snatch up lives from the darkness before that day. We must run with determination. The order is to advance quickly.

### **4. A combative force**

Like a strong people set in battle array. (Joel 2:5b)

The army of the Lord must be an aggressive force. For too long the church has sustained a passive attitude, at the most, a defensive one. Now however it is time for battle and for a decisive attack.

### **5. A feared people**

The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness. (Joel 2:10).

Demons tremble before the army of God. They tremble before the people that know who raises them up to fulfill their vocation as sons of God on the earth: "to destroy the works of the devil" (1John 3:8).

### **6. A courageous force**

They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like men of war; Every one marches in formation, And they do not break ranks. (Joel 2:7)

The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion. (Proverbs 28:1)

The boldness of the Spirit of God is a characteristic of the anointed and equipped army of God. There is nothing to fear because "greater is He that is in us" (1John 4:4). The certainty of victory and the knowledge of who enlists us and who leads the battle determine the degree of courage.

### **7. An invading force**

They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like men of war; They run to and fro in the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter at the windows like a thief. (Joel 2:7a; 9)

Satan has installed his princes, governors and forces, in nations, cities and towns. The Army of God will not respect walls and will invade each town, village, city, state, nation and continent. It is time to take the kingdoms of the earth for Jesus.

### **8. An ordered and regimented force**

Every one marches in formation, And they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; Every one marches in his own column. (Joel 2:7b, 8a)

There are positions and tasks that the Lord of hosts has delegated to each of His

warriors. Order and discipline in maintaining these positions and tasks are essential. When each one attends to his specific role and responsibility within the army, he contributes to the complete fulfillment of the mission entrusted to us as a whole.

### **9. An unbeatable force**

Though they lunge between the weapons, They are not cut down. (Joel 2:8b)

There is no retreat against a counter attack. It is certain that the enemy will come, but the Army of God will not fall back, neither will it stop in its path. There is much land to possess.

Arise and depart, For this is not your rest; Because it is defiled, it shall destroy, Yes, with utter destruction. (Micah 2:10).

### **10. An unpredictable force**

They enter at the windows like a thief. (Joel 2:9b)

There is no more successful attack than that in which we take the enemy by surprise. The church has counterattacked. Today it is time to plan surprise attacks and strike before the enemy can think of reacting.

### **11. A powerful people**

A people come, great and strong. . . Like a strong people set in battle array. For strong is the One who executes His word. (of the Lord) (Joel 2:2, 5, 11)

The strength of this Army is in God. It is created, commissioned, equipped and commanded by the Lord Himself. Its explosive power is in its devastating weapons that "are powerful in God for the destruction of strongholds" (2Corinthians 10:4); they are spiritual and proceed from the Lord of hosts. The authority of this people is in the name of Jesus.

## **MARKS OF A WARRIOR**

During the 40 years of his kingdom, David was able to subject kingdoms, amass great spoils, expand his borders, from the Euphrates to the Nile, and take vengeance on his enemies. What was the secret to his success?

David rose up and trained a regular army. Saul had soldiers that would occasionally fight, if there was a great need. David had professional warriors and regular forces trained up for battle. They did not fight only when attacked, but constituted themselves as an invading force, subjugating kings and kingdoms.

Today we live spiritually in the days of David. Satan and his hosts must be subjugated and recognize the authority that prevails on the earth. This authority belongs to Jesus Christ, exercised through His church, which is His body on the earth. Now is the time for it to rise up and eradicate the hosts of hell. In 1Chronicles chapters 11 and 12, we find a list of the mighty men of David and of the men of war that formed his regular army. Their characteristics reveal the secret of success. We will transport them to the kingdom of the spirit and embody them in our lives in the spiritual combat of the last days.

And they helped David against the bands of raiders, for they were all mighty men of valor, and they were captains in the army. For at that time they came to David day by day to help him,

until it was a great army, like the army of God. (1 Chr. 12:21, 22).

Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to David. All Israel had one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and Judah had four hundred and seventy thousand men who drew the sword. (1Chronicles 21:5).

### **1. Loyalty to the commander-in-chief**

Now these were the heads of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, and he said: "We are yours, O David; We are on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to your helpers! For your God helps you." So David received them, and made them captains of the troop. (1Chronicles 11:10; 12:18)

Jesus is the King. We must place ourselves "at His service" filled with the deepest loyalty. To unite with Him necessarily implies that we must place ourselves against the evil forces of darkness and stand in the place of constant war for the fury of battle will come, along with the temptation to give up. A strong spirit of loyalty will strengthen us in the rigors of combat because of who He is.

### **2. A sacrificial spirit**

So the three broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless David would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. (1 Chronicles 11:18)

All warriors know the importance of sacrifice. Whoever fears sacrifice is not apt to join the war. There are risks in combat. Its fruits however make it worth it. Jesus exposed himself to death. The prophet Isaiah declares:

He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)

The pioneers of evangelism manifested the same spirit. From Paul to Barnabas, the church in Jerusalem testified: "men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 15:26) War is a serious thing and full of dangers. We must not fear the enemy, yet war is not fun and games.

In World War II someone told a story about Mussolini when he challenged young people to join the Army. A teenager asked him "sir, what is our reward for enlisting?" Mussolini answered: "you will receive wounds, suffering and pain. Some of you will be mutilated and others will die, but because of you, Italy will live". That teenager enlisted into the Italian army.

We have greater reasons for accepting the challenge. We will be able to snatch millions from hell, peace without end will come over the earth in the kingdom of Jesus, our Lord, and his glory will fill the nations.

### **3. Equilibrium**

Armed with bows, using both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows with the bow. They were of Benjamin, Saul's brethren. (1Chronicles 12:2)

These men could shoot the bow from both hands. They were ambidextrous. Today

many are strong with the right-hand, but weak with the left. The church needs equilibrium. The truths and activities must be in equilibrium. There is a tendency to over emphasize one aspect of the truth and neglect others. This causes weakness, deception and heresies. We as the church must balance our presentation of the whole counsel of God.

#### **4. Training**

David trained his men well. They went through theoretical as well as practical training. In the above text, we can prove that these men were able to shoot arrows with the bow, stones with a slingshot and handle shields and spears with both hands and knew how to go to war with all kinds of weapons.

Jesus spent three and a half years training His disciples. Today more than ever the need for training is present. Only trained warriors will be successful in combat.

#### **5. Skill**

The Gadites were valiant men skilled for war (vs. 8); the Danites could keep battle formation (vs. 35), those of Asher could go out to war and were able to keep battle formation (vs. 36). All of these were men of war that were able to keep ranks and were skilled in battle (vs. 38).

Their skill was a consequence of continuous training. To keep in shape, a regular army is necessary. The Army of God needs to keep itself fit and skilled for combat at all times.

#### **6. Quickness**

The Gadites were quick.

whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as gazelles on the mountains (vs. 8b)

Victory in battle depended many times on the quickness of the soldiers. In the book "the Art of war", the great Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu, cited Tzu: "an attack may fail in skill, but it must be inflicted with supernatural quickness." What then should we say of spiritual warfare? The church has sinned through procrastination by frequently waiting too long before making decisions and putting off urgent matters with serious consequences. Many lives are lost while we fail to act.

The nations are ripe for harvest. Who will arrive first? Will the forces of the occult assail the nations or the church of Jesus Christ? We must be ready to obey and quick to attack.

#### **7. Readiness**

One of the greatest tragedies in the history of modern Israel was the war of Yom Kippur in 1973. The Army was not prepared. The entire nation was paralyzed and enemy troops made a surprise attack. Before the Israeli army could get into combat position, many lives had been lost. Readiness is important all of the time. The men of David were ready for the war. Such should be the Army of God: always ready and armed for war.

Now these were the numbers of the divisions that were equipped for war, and came to David at Hebron to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD: of the sons of Judah bearing shield and spear, six thousand eight hundred armed for war. (1Chronicles 12:23, 24)

#### **8. Courage**

The Gadites were valiant men. Their faces were as the faces of lions (vs. 8). The sons of

Simon were valiant men of war. Without courage and boldness, we cannot wage war. The Lord offered a recommendation in Deuteronomy 20:2-4:

So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

The Lord repeated the exhortation to take courage three times: "be strong and courageous; be strong and very courageous; be strong and courageous, fear not neither be afraid" (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9). One of the purposes of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to endue us with courage.

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

Fear is a terrible trap. We must never admit it into our lives. We have authority (Luke 10:19) and there is nothing to fear. The Lord's courage must be part of the character of the soldiers of His army.

## **9. A good reputation**

The virtues of character must be present in an overcoming army. The sons of Ephraim were:

mighty men of valor, famous men throughout their father's house (1 Chronicles 12:30)

It is a disgrace when we defame the good name of Christ through our attitudes. Each soldier of the army must make himself known by his good reputation. Paul upon speaking of the qualities of those in the ministry declares:

Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:7)

To be zealous of our good name is to be zealous of the name of Christ, for men through our attitudes will see Him.

## **10. Wisdom**

The sons of Issachar had:

understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. (1 Chronicles 12:32)

Victory demands a wise strategy. It is necessary to know the enemy and the right time and way to attack. A good combat depends on a correct position, and adequate distribution of the troops and military equipment. A good commander must consider many factors and will know how to order his troops and conserve a high moral. He must be firm, decided, know how to make decisions in new circumstances and resolve the problems that arise.

In the Army of God, we need wise leaders. Leadership cannot be immature, impulsive or easily deceived. We need leaders like the sons of Issachar that know the times and how to discern what the church should do. The resources of divine wisdom and the revelation of the Holy Spirit are at our disposal.

## **11. Discipline**

Discipline implies that each one knows what his position is in the army and submits himself to the recognized leadership. The greatest time of weakness in Israel was during the period of the judges, when each one did as he thought best. The need today for order, discipline and submission is great. Insubordination and rebelliousness in an army lead to judgment. The success of the army depends upon an understanding of authority and submission to it. The sons of Issachar possessed not only understanding, but they also submitted to his command.

Of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command. (1Chronicles 12:32)

## **12. Qualification and excellence**

David's men were specialists in war. They were capable and qualified professionals.

Of Zebulon there were fifty thousand who went out to battle, expert in war with all weapons of war, stouthearted men who could keep ranks; of Asher, those who could go out to war, able to keep battle formation, forty thousand. (1Chronicles 12:33, 36)

In the King James Version, it says that they were experts in war. The amplified version says that they were experienced troops. Today the Army of God must grow in excellence, specializing in spiritual battle. The enemy is highly sophisticated and experienced. The Army of God needs to attain a state of excellence, seeking out the qualification of its soldiers. We not only need an army with numerous soldiers but also a qualified one. Excellence in all things must be our goal. The apostle Paul recommended intense study so that approval does not give way to shame.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2Timothy 2:15)

Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth. (2Timothy 2:15 Amplified version)

## **13. Singularity of purpose**

Without unity it is impossible to reach victory. Everyone must have the same purpose, command, enemy and vision. The singularity of purpose and vision are essential.

Not one of the soldiers that made up David's army was double minded. They possessed the same determination and objective, and were one in heart to constitute David as king over Israel.

expert in war with all weapons of war, stouthearted men who could keep ranks; (1 Chronicles 12:33)

to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel were of one mind to make David king. (1Chronicles 12:38b)

The same text says that all of the rest of Israel was of one heart. Another version says that they were unanimous in the purpose of making David king. All of their hearts were devoted to David, as that of one man. They were in Hebron to transfer the kingdom of Saul to David.

The Army of Jesus Christ must equally be devoted to Him with a singleness of purpose, to deliver the kingdoms of this world to Him through the proclamation of the gospel.

We must subjugate the earth to Jesus Christ. God will accomplish this work through His church. If every Christian would unite himself to the cause of Christ, we will soon reach our goal of conquering the kingdom of Satan for God.

#### **14. Military material**

In order to have victory in the war it is not enough to have soldiers. It is necessary to equip them with military equipment sufficient for the challenge. The sons of Judah were fully equipped . . .

Of the sons of Judah bearing shield and spear, six thousand eight hundred armed for war; of the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, from the other side of the Jordan, one hundred and twenty thousand armed for battle with every kind of weapon of war. (1Chronicles 12:24, 37)

"Armed for war", this is a condition that is imposed upon us today. We are the Judah of God. Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah and we are His new creation. He gave us all of the weapons necessary for combat. It is up to us to arm ourselves with all of them, then the victory will belong to Jesus Christ, and then we will overcome and reign with Him.

### **THE EXISTENCE OF DEMONS**

The Bible amply confirms the existence of demons. It is part of the experience of all people and an undeniable reality. When Satan fell, he took with him a part of the angelic host, possessing today a highly organized army with the most varied levels of power.

A great part of the ministry of Jesus was devoted to the expulsion of demons (Matthew 12:22-29; 15:22-28; Mark 5:1-16). He gave authority to the disciples to do the same thing (Matthew 10:1) and saw their victory over Satan (Luke 10:17, 18). He spoke in private with the disciples about the power and the reality of demons (Matthew 17:14-20). It is clear that their existence is a fact and we must know how to deal with them.

### **NAMES OF DEMONS IN THE BIBLE**

#### **1. In the Old Testament**

Five Hebrew words are translated into the Greek for Demon (daimonion).

- a. *Shedhim* (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalms 106:37) a plural form, governor's day or lord's day Refers to idols as lords, since the Hebrews considered images as visible symbols of invisible demons.
- b. *Seirim* (Leviticus 17:7; 2 Chronicles 11:15)
- c. *Elilim* (Psalm 96:5) this passage identifies demons as idols.
- d. *Gad* (Isaiah 65:11) the god of fortune, a demon that was worshiped in Babylon. This idol worship was called Baal or bel worship.
- e. *Qeter* (Psalm 91:6) "death" (qeter) he who attacks at midday, understood as being an evil spirit

#### **2. In the New Testament**

- a. *Daimon* (Matthew 8:31) – the word demon is a derivative of this word.

- b. *Daimonion* - translated as demon 63 times in the New Testament
- c. *Pneumata* - demons are identified as "pneuma" or "pneumata (spirit)" 43 times. The context shows that these spirits were demons.
- d. *Angels* (Matthew 12:24; Matthew 25:41)

Demons are subjects of Satan and helpers in his program of opposition to God and His people. Expelled from heaven with Satan, the second heaven is where they abide. Their conflict is against the elect angels in the heavenly regions.

## THE ORIGIN OF DEMONS

All of the angels were created perfect just as Lucifer was (Job 38:7; Ezekiel 28:15). In the original rebellion of Satan, he took a great number of angels with him (Ezekiel 28:18; Revelation 12:4). Therefore, we read of the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

Two classes of angels followed Satan: free and bound. As far as the bound goes, they are in two confirmed places:

- In *Tartarus* – translated "hell" in 2Peter 2:4 apparently, they are confined until the day of the final judgment of angels, because of some terrible sin and not only because of their rebellion with Satan.
- In *the abyss* (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1-10) some of the demons that Christ expelled were sent there (Mark 9:25).

## A DESCRIPTION OF DEMONS

Demons are spiritual beings with personality. They use personal pronouns (Luke 8:27-30), have names (Luke 8:30): speak (Luke 4:33-35; 41; 8:28, 30), are intelligent (Mark 1:23, 24; Luke 4:34; Acts 16:16, 17), they have emotion (Luke 8:28; James 2:19) and a will (Luke 8:32; Mark 1:27; Luke 4:35, 36).

Some characteristics are specific to these beings. We shall look at three characteristics:

### 1. Spiritual beings

Demons and angels are called "spirits" (Matthew 8:16; Luke 10:17; 20: Ephesians 6:12) and will not cease to exist (Luke 20:36).

### 2. Morally perverted

- a. *In their personality* – they are perverted and operate in moral darkness (Ephesians 6:12) they are called "filthy spirits" (Matthew 10:1; Mark 1:23; Luke 11:24) or "evil spirits" (Luke 7:21), or even "spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12). Some are worse than others (Matthew 12:45).
- b. *In their doctrine* – they promote a system of lies (1Timothy 4:1-3). They operate in false teachers and their evil character manifests itself (2 Timothy 3:6, 8; 2 Peter 2:2, 3; 10; 13; 18). Filthy spirits promote filthy teaching and perverse teachers.
- c. *In their conduct* – they introduce false disciples and confusion (Matthew 13:37-42) and transform themselves into angels of light (2Corinthians 11:13-15).

### 3. Invisible but capable of manifestation

Just as angels manifest themselves (Genesis 19:15), demons do also. There are references of Satan manifesting himself (Genesis 3:1; Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 4:9, 10). It is



possible therefore, that demons can also appear in human form. The Bible describes their appearances in frightful forms, like animals (Revelation 9:7-10; 17; 16:13-16).

## THE POWERS OF DEMONS

### 1. Supernatural intelligence

They know about Christ (Mark 1:14; 34) and His great power (Mark 5:6, 7). They know the place of their prison and their future judgment (Matthew 8:28, 29; Luke 8:31).

They disguise themselves as angels of light (2Cor. 11:13-15). They know how to corrupt biblical doctrine (1Timothy 4:1-3). Evidently they have knowledge of future or hidden things (Acts 16:16).

Demons are creatures of superior nature with a vast experience of thousands of years of gathering information as their source of knowledge. They use all of their intelligence against God and His purposes. However, their knowledge is limited and God frustrates their plans.

### 2. Supernatural force

- To control man (Acts 19:14-16; Mark 5:1-4; Matthew 17:14-20).
- To afflict man (Revelation 9:1-19)
- To practice supernatural works (2Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13; 50) they try to imitate the miracles of God but there are limits as in the case of the Egyptian magicians (Exodus 8:5-7, 19).

### 3. Supernatural presence

Just as angels move through space rapidly, demons also can do so. (Daniel 9:21–23; 10:10–14). Since there are many demons this satanic influence can be felt in many places at the same time.

## THE WORK OF DEMONS

Demonic activities can be diverse, but they are always directed to promote injustice and destruction of everything that is good and decent.

### 1. To promote Satan's program

Demons obey Satan and serve his purposes (Matthew 12:24; John 12:31; Revelation 12:7). These evil spirits do not cease to promote deception and satanic evil.

Satan is not omnipotent, nor is he omnipresent or omniscient. However, he is able to increase his presence, power and knowledge greatly through his network of demons. There is an evident demonic cooperation revealed through various scriptures (Matthew 12:26; 45; Luke 8:30; 1 Timothy 4:1). Demons transmit the philosophy of Satan in several realms:

- a. *In the life of individuals* – the objective is to lead them to walk according to the philosophy of this world, which is of the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:1, 2). They also promote carnal and sensual desires, pride, materialism and every sort of impurity in the lives of people (John 16:11; 1John 2:16).
- b. *In national and state governments* – Satan and his demons work behind governments to influence them in their philosophy, programs and actions (Daniel 10:13; 20). Opposition to the spread of the gospel in all of its forms has to do with the

influence of demons.

- c. *In the world system* – through a spiritual system that expands the influence of Satan through the operation of a myriad of demons. In order to control the world the demons organize themselves in battle under the leadership of their leader (Matthew 12:26; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 6:11, 12; 1 John 5:19).

## 2. To oppose God's program

- a. *Promoting rebellion* – (Genesis 3; Titus 2:3, 4; Revelation 9:20, 21; 16:14).
- b. *Ridiculing and accusing* – they accuse God before men (Genesis 3:1–5; Romans 3:5–8; 6:15; 9:14; 19; James 1:13) and men before God (John 1:9; 11; 2:4, 5; Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:10). Since demons are capable of affecting thoughts they are also able to cause self-condemnation through incriminating thoughts, the answer for any accusation is in Jesus, our advocate (1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2).
- c. *Promoting idolatry* – (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalms 96:4, 5; Isaiah 65:11; 1 Corinthians 10:20; 12:2; Revelation 13:4; 15; 9:20).
- d. *Rejecting grace* – demons are irritated by grace. They are incapable of repentance and salvation. They understand nothing of grace and seek to impede man from receiving it. They distort the grace of God into a lie. (2Corinthians 4:3, 4) All of their teachings are anti-Christ, denying that Jesus, the God man, is the genuine substitutionary sacrifice for the sin of man (1John 2:22; 4:1-4).
- e. *Promoting false religions and sects* – in their lies, Satan and his demons work both inside and outside true religion. The New Testament also warns us against heresies that distort the truth while affirming a part of it (2Corinthians 11:13; 15; 22, 23; Galatians 1:6-8; Colossians 2:18-23; 1Timothy 4:1-4).
- f. *Oppressing humanity* – demons act in man in the most diverse manners through deception, degradation and destruction. They truly oppress humanity.
- g. *Operating through the forces of nature* – (John 1:12; 16; 19; 2:7).
- h. *Degrading human nature* – (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 1:18-32)
- i. *Straying from the truth* – demons blind man to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; 1 John 4:1-4)
- j. *Destabilizing the body* – demons can cause many types of physical problems.
  - Muteness (Matthew 9:32; 33; 12:22; Mark 9:17-29)
  - Blindness (Matthew 12:22)
  - Deformity (Luke 13:11-17)
  - Epilepsy (Matthew 17:15-18; Mark 9:20; Luke 9:39)
- k. *The Bible does not attribute all infirmities to demons, but distinguishes clearly between natural sickness and demonic sickness* (Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:32; 34; Luke 7:21; 9:1).
- l. *Disturbing the mind* – certain mental disorders have their origin in the operation of demons. Others are merely of a physical nature. Among demonic disorders are insanity (Luke 8:27-29) and attempted suicide (Mark 9:22).
- m. *Destruction of life*: (Revelation 18:2; 24; 9:14-19) “For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.” (Revelation 9:19).
- n. *Dominating individuals* – the agents of Satan control certain men depending on the

proportion of their immorality, false religion, involvement with the occult and other deceptions (Acts 8:9-24; 13:8-11; 16:16-19; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-18).

### 3. Opposition of the saints

- a. *Against believers in general (Ephesians 6:12)* – not every conflict is necessarily provoked by demons. Many come from the corrupted nature of human beings (Romans 7:21-24; James 1:14, 15). However, we recognize that great hosts of evil make war against us. The armor of God prepares us for such battles (Ephesians 6:10).
- b. *Against individuals* – evil spirits attack our confidence and dedication. The armor of God deflects the type of attack that we can expect (Ephesians 6:14-18). They also tempt man with sin (1 Chronicles 21:1-8; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Ephesians 2:2, 3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 1 John 2:16) and the cause them to become sick (John 2:7-9).
- c. *Against the church* – the plan of God for the church includes demonstrating His wisdom through the church to the angelic forces (Ephesians 4:3-6). Demons seek to frustrate these plans causing divisions. The church body must be united (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Demons attempt to divide and defeat plans of unity in the church, whether local or universal. They promote doctrinal divisions and speak through false teachers (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Another manner in which demons attempt to frustrate the plan of God is by counterattacking the ministry of the Gospel. Demons seek to hide the message of the Gospel from sinners. They do this by blinding their minds (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4) and by perverting the gospel (verse. 13-15). They try to prevent the ministry of the gospel from fulfilling its objectives (1 Thessalonians 2:17, 18). The last weapon they attempt to use against the church is satanic persecution (Revelation 2:8-10).

### 4. Limited by God

In spite of the intentions of Satan and his demons, God controls their activities, and many times He, uses them for good and for His glory.

- a. *To discipline the believer* – through this action, God is not practicing evil so that good may come. Instead, he permits morally responsible people to do their own will even though it is evil. Even so, His wisdom limits and controls the effects and thus fulfills His own purposes.  
Through His permission, He corrects errors. (1 Timothy 1:19, 20), discernment is created (Job 42:1–6) and dependence is cultivated (2 Corinthians 12:7-9, 10).
- b. *To defeat the ungodly*

## THE FORCES OF SATAN

When Lucifer rebelled against God, he took with him a great number of angels. The Scriptures indicate that a third of the angels rebelled with Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:28; Revelation 12:4). Jesus taught in Matthew 25:41 that He has already condemned the devil and his angels. It is certain that Satan is not alone. Paul describes his legions in Ephesians 6:10-12.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not

wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:10-12)

## 1. Principalities

*Arche* - "magistrates, powers, principalities, beginning" The word "beginning" refers here to time or order. "Principalities" refers to powerful spirits of the first echelon that revolted against God. Today they are the ones that form the governing Council of Satan. It would be his "cabinet of ministers". They are called princes (Daniel 10:20).

In Daniel 10, we see that God hears our prayers immediately. However, for the answers to reach us, angels must fight on the way and demonic forces can resist them in heavenly places.

The Bible speaks of three heavens (2 Corinthians 12:2–4). Since there is a third heaven there must also be a second and a first. We do not know if there is a fourth, fifth or sixth heaven. However, we do know that the first heaven is the firmament in the Earth's atmosphere (Genesis 1:6-8).

Between the atmosphere where men abide and the third heaven where God abides, the second heaven definitely exists. Beyond the Earth's atmosphere, there is an external space. That is the second heaven. David called it the "heavens" (Psalms 8:3).

It is in this second heaven that Satan and his fallen angels make their abode. They move to the first heaven in order to operate their work of deceit, oppression and destruction of men. Satan goes to the third heaven and accuses the saints before the throne of God (John 1:6-12; Revelation 12:10). In the second heaven, demonic enemy agents intercept the answers to our prayers, seeking to impede their arrival to us.

There is a constant war in the spiritual realm and victory begins in this realm. As the church we attain victory when we learn to recognize and prevail over principalities. In order for us to see spiritual breakthrough in the nations, and the lives of our families, in people and in ourselves, we need to recognize that the true enemies against which we fight are spiritual forces of evil all around us.

## 2. Potentates

"Delegated power"

*Exousia* - "authorities that permit or impede" Evil executive powers exist in Satan's kingdom. This group of governing spirits is the authority that delegates power. The word "exousia" is a synonym of "arche" (authority, thrones, dominions or governments) and denotes not only a court judiciary, but also the power that governs. The potentates are all of the evil authorities and powers that oppose Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24; Colossians 2:15).

## 3. Governments

*Kosmokrator* - "the lords of the world", is a juxtaposition of the words "Kosmos", which means "world" and "Krator", which means "governors". It speaks of the system of governments. Governments are responsible for fighting against the true light and for leading people into darkness, blinding their eyes and sending darkness into the souls of men.

When we pray for those that Satan has dominated by blindness or pagan religions, we are warring against this type of enemy. They govern over nations through their power to blind the minds of men. They also exert authority over different systems of government in the world.

#### 4. Spiritual forces of evil

*Pneumatikós* - comes from the root of the word "Pneuma", which means "spirit". "Poneria" means iniquity, deprivation, evil, activities of an evil nature. In other words, the spiritual forces of evil refer to someone that is not only evil, but also all of his equally evil works. Everything that he does affects others in a negative way.

"Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" can mean evil itself that operates in and inspires these principalities, authorities and governments of darkness. Just as peace, love and goodness motivate the good in angelic beings; the opposite feeling also is a reality. This terrible spiritual evil speaks of the battlefield that motivates and controls the spiritual world of Satan. They are the soldiers that execute the evil and demonic activities in the lives of men.

In the punishment of Egypt, it appears that God used demons (Psalm 78:49). Demons will lead a rebellion of the armies of men against God in the battle of Armageddon, where great destruction awaits them (Revelation 16:13-16).

The righteous Son of God demonstrated His power over the evil forces when he cast out demons, both personally, and through His disciples. The righteous judgment of God will be demonstrated in the final defeat of demons when they will be cast into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). The cross of Christ and the lake of fire indicate the permission of God for their existence and activity. Through their punishment, God demonstrates the futility of evil and its final defeat.

### DEMONIZATION

The New Testament makes it clear that there is the possibility of demons entering into people and manifesting themselves. The expulsion of demons by Christ and His apostles is strong evidence of His identity and that he is the Messiah (Matthew 12:22, 23; 28, 29; Acts 2:22; 10:38).

The apostles and evangelists substantiated the truth of the Gospel through miracles among which included the expulsion of demons (Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:12).

#### The biblical term

The Bible does not use the term "demonic possession". The word in the Greek "daimonizomai" means to have a demon or to be demonized. The Bible speaks of people possessing demons and not demons possessing people. We will see all of the examples given in the Gospels.

The term demonized means "under the power of demons". Some English versions translate the term "possessed of demons", or "those who had evil spirits" (Matthew 4:24; 8:16; 28; 33; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15, 16; 18 Luke 8:36).

The rest of the Scriptures translate the term as "to have a demon" (Matthew 11:18; Luke 7:33; John 7:20; 8:48, 49; 52; 10:20, 21), "a man who had an unclean spirit" (Luke 4:33), "a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time" (Luke 8:27).

Observing biblical teaching, we conclude that the term "demonic possession" is incorrect, since it is not a demon that possesses the man, but the man that has the demon. This means that a demonized person has an evil spirit inside of him.

## **CASTING OUT DEMONS**

Jesus entrusted the authority of His name along with the weapons from God to the Church for the task of freeing the captives. The Ministry of deliverance is the responsibility of the church. Deliverance is the process by which God uses his servants to free human beings from the influence and power of demons. Jesus delegated His authority over Satan and his hosts to the church (Matthew 10:1; 18:18; 28:18; Mark 3:14, 15; 16:17; Luke 10:19).

### **1. The authority of the name of Jesus**

The casting out of demons was an important part of the ministry of Jesus (1 John 3:8). Freeing the oppressed from the hands of the devil was an integral part of the activities of Jesus (Acts 10:38). Luke recorded the reaction of the people during this ministry.

Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." (Luke 4:33-36)

### **2. The endowment with power**

In a large measure authority and power are proved by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). This is the result of a relationship. The seven sons of Sceva attempted to use the name of Jesus to cast out demons, but they did not obey. They did not know Jesus. Our power and authority are a result of our relationship with Him. In the new birth, God regenerates us, in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we submit ourselves to Him as the baptizer.

Jesus made it clear that the power to cast out demons comes from the Holy Spirit:

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matthew 12:28)

But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Luke 11:20)

The Spirit of God is the finger of God. The finger of God is the word of command given in authority. The church has the Spirit as well as the Word.

### **3. The name of Jesus**

Jesus is in the highest position of authority: at the right hand of the father. Every name is subject to him.

Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:21)

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every

name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (Philippians 2:9, 10)

Since the church is the body and extension of Christ here on the Earth, Jesus entrusted it with the authority of His name. In a manner of speaking, he has given the church His power of attorney. The church operates on the earth in the name of Jesus (Mark 16:17; Luke 9:49; Acts 16:18). We must operate the work of deliverance in the name of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

## **DELIVERANCE OF NON-CHRISTIANS**

The deliverance of nonbelieving captives from demonic oppression requires that we lead the person through the following steps.

### **1. Receive Christ as Lord**

Only after the new birth is a person able to face and overcome demons. First the person needs to be freed from sin (John 3:3–7; Ephesians 1:18–21; Col. 1:13; 2:15; 1 John 3:4, 5; 18).

### **2. Confess sins**

We must judge all involvement with occult practices as rebellion against God and a terrible sin, placing it together with everything else associated with Satan (1 John 1:9). We must orient those who seek deliverance to confess all generational sins beginning with the fourth generation (Ex. 20:3–5).

### **3. Renounce the devil and his works**

Especially when there are satanic pacts and involvement with the occult, an official renouncement of Satan and his claims over a person is necessary. A command to Satan and his hosts to retreat becomes necessary. This must be done in the name of Jesus in dependence upon His power, as the apostles did (Matthew 8:16; 32; Acts 16:16-18).

### **4. Destroy all objects of the occult and their ties**

(2 Kings 14:2-5; 23:16, 17; 9:17-20)

The presence of such objects is an invitation to demonic powers to concentrate their efforts in the destruction of those who possess these objects. Any contact with leaders of the occult and relationships with them must also be broken.

### **5. Rest in Christ and resist the devil**

Christ promises forgiveness to all those who trust in Him. To assume a new position in Christ is to rest in this vital new relationship (Colossians 1:13; 2:9-15; Hebrews 2:14-18). It is equally necessary to assume your authority, resisting the devil and his forces (1 Peter 5:8, 9; James 4:7).

### **6. Submit to Christ and His Word**

A serious study of the Bible must soon take the place of any activity of the occult for spiritual strengthening (Romans 12:1, 2; James 4:6, 7; John: 31, 32).

### **7. Receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit**

The fullness of the Spirit is the secret to a victorious walk (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:18-33).

## PERSONAL DELIVERANCE

Personal or self-deliverance is possible to every born-again Christian. Jesus gave us the authority to use His name. The power of the blood of Jesus belongs to us. Demons obey commands spoken in His name and respect the power of the blood.

The following steps may be used:

### 1. Repentance

Repent of the sin that opened the door for the demons to enter. This implies recognition of the sin and the willingness to break with it.

### 2. Confession of sins

Confess all sins, both their own and those of their ancestors, because they may have yielded a stronghold for demons to enter. We must verbally confess all sins of any form of involvement with the occult.

### 3. Forgiveness

Ask for the forgiveness of the Lord and the purification through the blood of Jesus. Take refuge in Him, abandoning the strongholds of the enemy.

### 4. Renunciation

Renounce any association with sin, with evil or any evil thing. Tell the enemy that you have nothing more to do with him and he has no place in your life.

### 5. Consecration

Confess the Lordship of Christ over all words, actions and thoughts. Abide in the truth and you will discover that darkness and deceit will no longer have a place in your life.

### 6. Deliverance

In faith, command the evil spirits to leave your body in the name of Jesus.

## WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

Preparation for war involves more than just physical training and a disciplined life. The weapons with which soldiers are equipped are extremely important.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2Corinthians 10:3-5)

### 1. Defensive weapons

- a. *The blood of Jesus* - the blood as a covering for our sins. It brings the purification that attests to the end of the lordship of Satan over our lives. He can no longer accuse us. The blood guarantees us the victory.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. (Revelation 12:11a)

- b. *The Word of God* - the word of God is the truth. Satan attacks with lies, trying to distort the truth, but the Word exposes the lie.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth (Ephesians 6:14a)



... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17b)

The application of the word frees us from all bondage. The Word protects us from all of the attacks of Satan, his lies and deceit.

c. *The breastplate of righteousness*

Stand therefore ... having put on the breastplate of righteousness. (Ephesians 6:14)

Justice is our breastplate and as such protects our heart from being condemned by our conscience (1John 3:19-22). "Not having our heart condemn us" means to have a clear conscience (2 Timothy 1:3), a conscience without offense (Acts 24:16). Righteousness gives us confidence before God.

We can only belong to the Army of God with the garments of justice. John envisioned the army of Jesus in garments of fine white linen, which speaks of the righteousness of the saints (Revelation 19:7, 8; 11; 14).

d. *The shield of faith*

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (Ephesians 6:16)

e. *The helmet of salvation* - our mind is a constant battlefield, but we have "the helmet of salvation" (Ephesians 6:17).

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (1Thessalonians 5:8)

The helmet protects the head. The word "salvation" here comes from the Greek "*soteria*", which means physical and mental well-being. In the face of many attacks, we see the salvation of God. This is deliverance. Isaiah 26:1, 3, 4 tells us that the salvation of God is our protection.

God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. (Isaiah 26:1)

The helmet protects our mind in times of attack because our hope rests on the salvation of God. This hope guards our minds in perfect peace, which is a great weapon of protection.

f. *The preparation of the gospel of peace*

And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (Eph. 6:15).

The sandals represent the gospel. The preparation spoken of here is the need to always be watching and praying. Satan tries to bring complacency and contentment with the situation and the love of comfort. Ezekiel 16 speaks of the sins of Sodom, that reflect the love of the easy life (Ezekiel 16:49). When we shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the sins of Sodom will not be able to trap us.

## 2. Offensive weapons

a. *The name of Jesus* - This is the power of God granted to the believer with the purpose of edifying and expanding His kingdom. His name is a strong and powerful tower, a refuge and protection.

This name comes with such authority and power that it is above every name. Demons retreat at the mention of the name of Jesus. (Philippians 2:9-11; Mark 16:17, 18; John 16:23, 24)

- b. *The word of faith* - To have faith in God is our defensive weapon against doubts. The faith of God is an offensive weapon (Mark 11:22). The word of faith means to speak with the faith of God.

To have the faith of God is to possess the type of faith that God has. Faith believes that the word that leaves our mouth will not return empty, but will fulfill the purpose for which it was sent (Isaiah 55:10, 11).

Jesus used the faith of God when He spoke to the fig tree (Mark 11:20). Jesus said, as sons of God, we must have the same kind of faith (Mark 11:22-24). We must use commands such as "I command", or "I cast out", or "I bind", with the word of faith.

There are many examples of the word of faith spoken in the Bible. Elisha commanded fire from heaven (1Kings 18:37, 38); Joshua commanded the sun to stop (Joshua 10:12, 13); Elisha said that it would not rain (1Kings 17:1), and it did not. Jesus constantly used the word of faith.

- c. *The Word of God* - The word of God is a sword, both offensive and defensive. With it, we attack the enemy in a precise manner. In order to use it well we must invest time to study it and memorize it. Therefore, at the moment of attack it will be easy. Jesus used the word to defeat Satan when he was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). Therefore the sword must be used in the mouth (Revelation 1:16).

- d. *Praise and worship* - God is enthroned in the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). The second chapter of Chronicles is a good illustration of how praise afflicted the adversary.

Through the praise and worship of the name of the Lord, not only do we knock down the walls of the enemy but we also break the chains over our own lives and of those who surround us. Praise opens the doors of the prisons and frees the captives (Acts 16:23; 25, 26).

## HOW TO PUT ON GOD'S ARMOR

Armor: To gird ourselves with the truth

- Affirmation: Jesus is my truth.
- Promise: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6). Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. (Psalm 51:6).

Armor: To put on the breastplate of righteousness

- Affirmation: Jesus, you are my righteousness.
- Promise: For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2Corinthians 5:21) In addition, you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (Col. 2:10).

Armor: Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace

- Affirmation: Jesus you are my preparation.
- Promise: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Armor: To embrace the shield of faith

- Affirmation: Jesus you are my faith.

- Promise: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20). So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (*rhema*) of God. (Romans 10:17).

Armor: To put on the helmet of salvation

- Affirmation: Jesus you are my salvation.
- Promise: And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. (Psalm 140:7).

Armor: To take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God

- Affirmation: Jesus you are the living word.
- Promise: The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63b) And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me." (Isaiah 49:2).

Armor: praying at all times in the spirit.

- Affirmation: Jesus you are the one who baptizes me in the spirit.
- Promise: He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matthew 3:11b) Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:27).

## KEYS TO VICTORY

How can we gain the spiritual victory? There are certain prerequisites that the Army of God must meet. We have seen the characteristics of David's army. Below we have listed more spiritual keys to victory.

- Holiness: separated unto God (Romans 1:1; Romans 6:11).
- Faith: (Hebrews 11:6; 1John 5:4; Romans 10:17; Daniel 11:32b; Heb. 11:33, 34).
- Prayer and fasting: (Matthew 17:21)
- Sacrifice: (2Timothy 2:3, 4)
- Courage: (John 1:5-9; Deuteronomy 20:1; Acts 4:29; 31)
- Unity: (Leviticus 26:8; Matthew 18:15-35)
- Perseverance: (Ephesians 6:10, 11; 13)
- Do not spare the enemy (1Samuel 15:18, 19; 26; 1 Kings 20:42; 1Peter 2:11).

## PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

There are important principles that the Army of God must apply to succeed in combating the forces of Satan.

- Identify the enemy (Ephesians 6:12).
- Know who you are in Christ and what you have (Matthew 16:19).
- Cover the most vulnerable areas (Ephesians 6).
- Train your group.
- The best defense is to attack or as the saying goes "the best defense is a good offence"

- The battle does not belong to the strongest. The battle belongs to the Lord. When God is on our side, he gives us the victory (1Samuel 17; Deuteronomy 11:22, 23).
- Have unity and strength (John 17).
- Have the correct strategies (Genesis 14).
- Discipline yourself. This requires total submission obedience to each command without question.
- Persevere (Matthew 17:12). Certain types of evil spirits are cast out simply by prayer and fasting. Perseverance in seeking the Lord, strength and power will lead us to victory.

## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Why should we be involved in spiritual warfare?

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2. What are the principal characteristics of the Army of God?

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3. Site the inherit marks of a warrior

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4. Does the Bible confirm the existence of demons? Explain your reply.

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5. What are the Hebrew names of demons in the Bible?

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6. How did demons originate?

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7. How does the Bible describe demons?

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8. Cite three types of demonic powers?

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9. What is the work of demons?

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10. What are the evil forces of Satan?

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11. What is demonization?

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12. Explain how demons are cast out

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13. How does deliverance of non-Christians occur? How does personal deliverance occur?

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14. What are the weapons of our warfare?

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15. How can we put on the armor of God?

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16. What are the keys to victory?

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17. Explain the principles of war.

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**7**

**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**



True prayer is the secret to victory in the workplace and personal life. It is the most powerful weapon against the powers of darkness, and the key to success in each area of life; and it is the key that opens the treasures of heaven to man. Any effort in the kingdom of God will only be successful if it originates through prayer and supported by prayer since all success in the Christian life is proportional to the time spent in prayer: 10% time spent in prayer, 10% success; 50% time spent in prayer, 50% success; 100% in prayer, 100% success. Luke spoke of the need to pray always without fainting (Luke 18:1); Paul taught us to pray without ceasing (1Thessalonians 5:17) at all times in the spirit (Ephesians 6:18).

## **SEVEN DEFINITIONS OF PRAYER**

### **1. Prayer is a way of living**

It is the communication between our re-created spirit and the Spirit of God. Prayer is the expression that results from an intimate relationship with the Lord who resides in our hearts by the spirit. Thus, our life can be a prayer.

### **2. Prayer is fellowship with God**

We must establish our entire life upon the foundation of a personal, profound and intimate fellowship with God. Prayer is a permanent connection (1Corinthians 6:17). Prayer is a meeting of the Heavenly Father with His children in loving fellowship.

### **3. Prayer is communication with the personal God who is worthy of trust**

God is a person! God is worthy of trust! He is a personal God that relates to us on a personal basis. Our natural eyes do not see Him, but He is real and communicates with His children. Erroneous and religious concepts portray Him as an unreachable impersonal distant god that may or may not be interested in our lives. Out of this mindset, arise prayers that are mere religious expressions, destitute of meaning and possessing no practical value.

### **4. Prayer is communion with a resident God in the heart of the Christian**

In the Old Testament, God was in the midst of His people. He was for the people but was not in the people. In the New Testament God is not only in our midst, and is for us, but He is in us through His Spirit that resides in our spirit.

### **5. Prayer is the first step to an encounter with Jesus**

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

Man goes to Jesus in prayer and his whole life is rooted with Him in prayer.

### **6. Prayer is the way to know God**

It is the way to completely know Him and gain access to His promises. It is the means to bring the soul to its knees, and the way for man to understand the plan of God for his life.

### **7. Prayer is the key to the miraculous**

Through prayer, we grant God access to our needs; it is true spiritual respiration. In short, prayer is a lifestyle in an intimate relationship with God.

## WHY PRAY?

- Because God insistently commands it in the Bible (Luke 18:1; 1Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 6:18, 19; 1Timothy 2:1; Matthew 26:41; Colossians 4:3; 1Thessalonians 5:25; 2Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 13:18)
- Because it is the God ordained way for the Christian to receive the things that he needs (Isaiah 19:22)
- Because prayer is the God ordained way that Christian's joy may be full (John 16:24; Proverbs 10:20)
- Because prayer is the way out of problems, and the cure for all concern and worry (Philippians 4:6, 7; Psalm 55:22)
- Because answered prayer is the only irrefutable argument against asceticism, unbelief, modernism and unfaithfulness (Hebrews 11:6; 1Kings 18:36-38; Judges 6:12, 13; Exodus 8:19; Daniel 2:47; Acts 13: 6-12)
- Because prayer is the path to the power of the Holy Spirit in Christian service (Luke 11:13; 1 Chronicles 7:14; Habakkuk 3:2; Acts 1:13, 14; 4:31; 8:14-16; 9:9; 11; 17; 13:1-4; Ephesians 1:15-19; 3:14-19).
- Because "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13)

## ENEMIES OF PRAYER

The purpose of God is to hear all prayers. Jesus said "And I know that You always hear Me" (John 11:42). However, there are obstacles, problems and enemies that infiltrate themselves in the life of prayer and hinder the manifestation of the power of God. We will see some of these.

### 1. Wrong relationships in the family (1 Peter 3:1-7)

Failure to fulfill conjugal duties between couples hinders prayers from reaching heaven. Christian couples must entrust their marriage relationship to God. If God is not answering their prayers, there may be flaws in the conjugal relationship.

### 2. Lack of forgiveness (Mark 11:25)

God hears our prayers based on the forgiveness of our sins; but God cannot deal with us upon this basis of forgiveness if we hold grudges against others and cultivate a spirit of animosity or revenge against those who have offended us. God closes His ears to the prayers of anyone who cultivates a bitter spirit against another person.

### 3. Wrong motivation (James 4:3)

A serious obstacle to prayer is to ask God for things that we really do not need with the purpose of satisfying our selfish desires with a selfish motivation. In 1Corinthians 10:31 we are taught, "Whether we eat or drink, whatever we do, we must do all things for the glory of God." We cannot ask for things in prayer, even if they are in line with the will of God, if we have the wrong motive. There will be no answer. The first purpose of prayer must be to the glory of God.

### 4. All forms of disobedience to God (Isaiah 59:1, 2)

An attitude of rebelliousness or disobedience to the Word of God closes the heavens to

us. Any un-confessed sin becomes the enemy of prayer. The life of obedience to heaven opens the way for God's answer.

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (1John 3:22)

**5. Idols in the heart (Ezekiel 14:3)**

An idol is any and every person or thing that takes the place of God in someone's life. It is that which the supreme object of affection becomes. An idol is that which occupies our thinking. God must be supreme in our lives.

**6. Lack of generosity to the poor (Proverbs 21:13)**

The refusal to help those who are in need, when we can do something, hinders the answer to our prayers.

**7. Doubt and unbelief (James 1:5-7)**

Doubt is the thief of the blessings of God. Doubt comes from ignorance of the Word of God. When you know that God answers prayer, yet you do not apply His Word to your experience then you have permitted doubt in your life and have become an unbeliever. To disbelieve the promises is to doubt the character of God calling Him a liar.

**8. Depend on the faith of someone else**

God has given a measure of faith to each believer. It came to us when we became a new creature in Christ and received the nature of God. Just as we develop our physical and mental capabilities through exercise, we develop our faith by aligning ourselves up to the Word of God (John 15:7).

**TYPES OF PRAYER**

Paul advises the church to pray continuously and at all times:

As you pray at all times, with all kinds of prayers and requests, in the Spirit, vigilantly and persistently, for all God's people. (Ephesians 6:18 - Complete Jewish Bible)

Pray at all times with every kind of spiritual prayer, keeping alert and persistent as you pray for all Christ's men and women. (Ephesians 6:18 - J.B. Philips)

Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out (Ephesians 6:18 The Message).

Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people). (Ephesians 6:18 - Amplified)

We customarily define a relationship with God in one word: prayer. Prayer is an art of which many speak but of which few know. In order for God to answer our prayers, we must offer them in accordance with the principles established in His Word.

Prayer is a very serious, specific and objective thing, which follows the laws and

principles of the Word of God. Any attempt to pray in disharmony with these principles will result in a frustrating experience of not having your prayers and supplications answered.

The verses we read in Ephesians say that we must pray with all type of prayer. We know that there are different types or kinds of prayers. Each kind of prayer follows clear principles. There are established rules in the Word of God for these different types of prayer. It is in this point that there is great confusion.

Everything that we ask of or say to God we call prayer. Yes, it is all prayer but there are different types of prayer. Think of a pharmacy, where we find all types of medicines. Everything is medicine but there are a great number of different kinds of medicines, each one developed to treat a certain type of infirmity. The same thing happens in the world of sports. There are different types of sports, but each one of them has its own rules. Just think of the confusion there would be if someone tried to play football using the rules of basketball! What would happen if someone tried to buy cough syrup to put in their ears and rubbing alcohol for stomach problems? This is exactly the type of thing that many Christians attempt to do in the area of prayer. No wonder they get no answers to their prayers.

There are prayers that do not necessarily seek anything from God. The purpose of our prayers is to alter the circumstance in our life or the life of someone else. God desires to hear all of our prayers: "O You who hear prayer, To You all flesh will come." (Psalm 65:2), "But the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Proverbs 15:8b).

### **THREE CLASSES OF PRAYER**

We can classify prayers in three different levels: there are prayers that have God as the center, others with us as the center and still others in which those around us are at the center. Within each one of these levels, there are different types of prayer.

#### **1. God as the center of our prayers**

Some prayers are directed to God, and have God as their center: who He is, what He does and what He has done. The only thing we seek through this type of prayer is to express our gratitude praise and worship. Within this level, there are three types of prayer:

- a. *Thanksgiving* - the expression of our recognition and gratefulness to God for what He has done for us. The prayer of thanksgiving expresses gratefulness to God for the blessings that He has poured over us.
- b. *Praise* – the prayer of praise is a step beyond the prayer of thanks. Praise expresses what God does. Praise is to gather all of the works of God and express them in words, in an attitude of thankfulness.
- c. *Worship* – this type of prayer exalts God for who He is. It is the entrance into the holy of holies to respond to God's love. It speaks nothing of man, but of God. It is the recognition of who God is. It is the answer of our love to divine love.

#### **2. Us as the center of our prayers**

Here we go to God to present our personal needs. Although it is speaking to God, the focus and attention is on satisfying our needs. We go to God to seek an answer to change some circumstance in our life. On this level, we also have three types of prayer.

- a. *Petition* – this is a formal request to a higher power. It is presenting God with a request, with the view of satisfying a personal need, having as a basis a promise of God. In this type of prayer we already have the knowledge of the will of God, for which the request will be made in faith, certain of the answer even before the manifestation (Mark 11:24).
- b. *Consecration or dedication* – expresses the attitude of submission to the will of God. This prayer is for occasions in which the will of God is unknown. It requires waiting, consecration and an entire disposition to know and follow the will of God.
- c. *Surrender* – this is a turning over of all care and anxiousness to God. It is a casting our care upon the Lord, with resulting rest. Christians offer prayers of surrender when a care, a problem or anxiety knocks at the door.

### 3. Others at the center of our prayers

Intercession – In this type of prayer, we approach God as priests, as intercessors, bringing with us the needs of other people. Our first motivation is to see circumstances changed in the lives of others. This is the prayer of intercession: putting ourselves in the place of others and pleading their cause.

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. (Psalm 100:4)

Thanksgiving is one of the virtues that best represents the Christian character and expression in a warm heart full of love and the words of God. Paul declared:

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:16)

Paul's advice for us to be thankful (Colossians 3:15) should be embraced with joy, because thankfulness not only pleases the heart of the Father, it also enriches our lives. Thanksgiving is the act of expressing gratefulness to God for blessings that He has poured over us. These thanks can be mental or vocal. Thanksgiving is different from praise because in praise the focus is on what God does, His works and accomplishments, while Thanksgiving focuses on what God has given us and done for us. We can call it a confession of blessing. We can attest to the fact through a series of biblical passages that:

This attitude was present in the life of Jesus (John 11:4; Mark 8:6; Matthew 11:25) and will be present in heaven (Revelation 4:9; 7:12).

Thanksgiving was a type of offering given in the Temple (Leviticus 7:12; 2Chronicles 29:31; 33:16). This was also one of the functions of the singers in the Temple (2Chronicles 5:11-14).

Thanksgiving was present at the restoration of Israel (Isaiah 51:3; Jeremiah 17:26; 30:19; 33:11); and occupies a very important place in the Temple (Nehemiah 12:46; 2Chr. 7:6).

Thanksgiving is a spiritual sacrifice to God (Psalm 50:14, 23; 116:17) and constitutes

the way to praise (Psalm 69:30; 95:2; 100:4; 147:7).

We must include thanksgiving in all of our prayers (Philippians 4:6); both before we receive each answer to prayer as well as after we receive them (Colossians 4:2).

It is God's will for His children to give thanks (1Thessalonians 5:18); in an abundant way (2Corinthians 4:15), it must permeate our conversation (Ephesians 5:4) and we must grow in it (Colossians 2:6, 7).

All of these observations give ample basis for the affirmation of the importance of the prayer of thanksgiving. Let us now see some further principles about this prayer of thanksgiving.

We find the first principle in 1Corinthians 10:10. Thanksgiving protects us from the destroyer. The Bible mentions the name of many demons: Legion, Apollyon, Destroyer, Dagon, Ashtaroth etc. However, here we see the demon called destroyer mentioned who brings ungratefulness and murmuring. Many people fear the demon called destroyer and that is why they pay their tithes, but still they forget that an ungrateful heart is an open door for the destroyer.

In second place, we can see the power of thanksgiving protecting us from evil influences. Paul said that we sanctify the food we eat when we receive it with thanksgiving. There is no need to be rebuking demons constantly, it is enough to have a grateful heart and God will protect us. Did you ever think of how many sicknesses we could avoid if we were just more thankful for our meals?

In the third-place, thanksgiving has the power to multiply blessings. When Jesus went to multiply the loaves of bread, He did not say a prayer of faith, He simply gave thanks to the Father (John 6:11). Many people do not prosper because they have not learned to thank God for the five little loaves and two fish. If we are content with a little, the Lord will multiply it and we will see the abundance of God.

## **PRAYER OF PRAISE**

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. (Psalm 34:1)

We offer the prayer of praise when we consider all of God's works that we can recall and express in an attitude of exultation and glorification of His name, which is worthy to be praised. We should offer praise to the Lord as part of our lifestyle (Psalm 145:1-7). Concerning praise the Word of God teaches us several lessons:

- Praise is a spiritual sacrifice that God demands Christians to offer (Hebrews 13:15).
- The primitive church was always praising (Luke 24:53), because it knew that God abides in the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3).
- Praise is adequate attitude of those who go to a church meeting (Psalm 100:4).
- Praise is the door that opens to worship (2Chronicles 5:13, 14).
- Praise is a spiritual weapon against the enemy (2Chronicles 20:21, 22).
- Praise is a source of joy (Psalm 9:1, two; Psalm 33:1; 35:27).
- Praise many times is associated with songs (Psalm 40:3; Psalm 92:1-4).
- Praise is associated with physical manifestation like dancing (Psalm 150:4), the



raising of hands (Psalm 63:3, 4; 134:2).

- Praise should be growing (Psalm 71:14).
- Praise is an invitation to all flesh (Psalm 145:21; Revelation 19:5).

## PRAYER OF WORSHIP

We recognize whom and what God is through our worship (Revelation 4:8, 11). There is a hunger within us, which springs from a source that we do not always know how to discern. We seek satisfaction in many places but the hunger continues. This reveals a latent necessity within us for God, which God himself has placed in our hearts. The spirit within us seeks to free itself from captivity to fly in the direction of His presence just as birds seem to be compelled to answer a call to migrate. It is God attracting us.

There is an inherent desire in us to worship God, but the ability to do that was lost at the fall of Adam. The spirit of God however enables us to enter the holy of holies, the abode of God, where finally we encounter our reason for living: to worship God.

Worship is one of the principal themes of the Bible. There are 270 references to worship. Worship speaks of our love responding to the love of God. It is not an imperative since God does not impose His love; it is a voluntary response to a spiritual stimulus. Jesus tells us that the love that we feel is the flow of the spirit that we experience finding its expression in satisfaction when we free ourselves to return to God in worship (John 4:23).

There is no definition of worship in the Bible, because we cannot define love. The most common word in Hebrew is *shachab* (172 times), translated as "worship", "to bow down", "prostrate oneself". In the Greek, the most common word is *prokneuo* (59 times), composed of two words: *pros* – which means "to", "in the direction of" – and *beneo*, which means, "to kiss". Some scholars give the meaning to be "to kiss the hand with admiration", others "to kiss the feet in homage".

Etymologically, worship is "to bow, prostrate oneself, kiss the hands, feet or lips, with the feeling of respect and devotion", while serving the Lord with all the heart. It is an attitude expressed in action, which implies a deep notion of closeness of the partners in a covenant relationship. It involves motion and emotion, but true worship is deeper than that and simply uses these expressions to release a deep love and devotion that draws the believer to the presence of the God of love.

### 1. The expression of worship

We can better understand worship in the Bible by observing how the worshipers behaved before God. In 1Chronicles, we find a type of order of service and how to proceed in worship (1 Chronicles 29:20-22): a) they praised the Lord; b) they bowed their heads; c) they worshiped (*shachab*); d) they sacrificed to the Lord; e) they offered holocausts; f) they ate and drank before the Lord; g) they did all of this with great rejoicing. The closest definition of worship is in Mark 12:30, 31. The passage presents a love that liberates all worship from the heart and that expresses all the attitudes of the soul, all the determination of the mind and utilizes all of the strength of the body of the worshiper. This is worship.

Worship is a response to our relationship. It is love responding to love. It happens when our spirit meets the spirit of God.

## 2. Elements of worship

- Prayer - we need to communicate with God in order to enter into communion with Him. Prayer is essentially communication.
- Praise, confession of sins and confession of faith
- Scripture reading
- Preaching
- Communion (the Lord's supper)

These elements can be part of worship, but are not in themselves worship, nor are they a substitute for worship. They are simply guides, elements that awaken the heart to enter into the presence of God and respond to His love.

## 3. Attitudes of worship

Luke 7:37- 50 reveals the attitude of worshiper, the attitude of the spectator in the attitude of Jesus. We will concentrate our attention on the attitude of the worshiper.

- Brokenness* - the contrast between the holy and perfect presence of God and our smallness is heartbreaking. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart --- These, O God, You will not despise." (Psalm 51:17). "Shabot" – means "to fear, to break in pieces, or to reduce". "Dakah" - means, "to smash, to break, to hurt, to wound and to humiliate". "Contrite" - used to describe the process of making powder (talcum). Worship requires brokenness. Many people build walls of protection around themselves and do not allow God to free them in love, tenderness and worship.
- Humility* - Mary let down her hair in an inappropriate place, according to custom (1Corinthians 11:15). She put her reputation aside to worship the Lord in the way that Jesus deserved to be worshiped. She used her hair to dry His dusty feet. She took her glory (her hair) to wash off the mud (Isaiah 57:15; 1 Peter 5:5). Worship without humility is like love without commitment.
- Love* - Her attitude was filled with love: "she loved much".
- Giving* - she did not limit herself in the expression of her emotions, she also gave a tangible evidence of her love, devotion and worship. Giving is associated with worship (Exodus 23:14; 44:20; Deuteronomy 16:16; Psalm 96:1-9). The attitude of Jesus in response to this worship was, "your faith has saved you; go in peace". (Luke 7:50) – Faith, freedom and peace
- The object of worship* - or in other words, God himself It is only by the Holy Spirit that we can worship (Romans 8:16).
- The place of worship* - in man's spirit where the Spirit of God abides
- True worship* – True worship must flow from a genuine relationship with God, "in spirit and in truth". A good relationship with the church can produce a good worker, but only a warm relationship with God produces a true worshiper. Fervent spirits produce worshipping hearts. The motivations also must be correct in true worship. The objective is to give to the Lord and not to get from Him. The motivation for worship is the overflowing love of the spirit as streams of living water.

#### 4. Differences between praise and worship

Praise prepares us for worship. It is the prelude, the front door to worship (Psalm 95:1, 2; 6; Psalm 96:4; 7-9). However even though worship can depend on praise, praise is no substitute for worship, but a precious supplement. Although it is a supplement, there are still some differences between praise and worship.

a. *In its motivation* – Generally we worship with the motivation of receiving a blessing from God. There is a desire to awaken the agreeable emotions that praise produces. In praise, we draw near to God with an enthusiastic and happy heart to enjoy the pleasure of His presence. However, in worship we present something to God in love and in an expression of our profound appreciation for whom and what He is.

The key to worship is to give, not to receive. Worship gives glory of God and does not seek to receive the glory of God. The worshiper goes to Him not to receive a blessing, but to bless, not as an asker, but as an admirer.

b. *In its thrust* - the first thrust of praise is a positive response to God based principally on His works rather than His person. The psalmist invites us to praise God for His mighty works, Moses praised God for deliverance (Exodus 15:1-18) and Anna praised God for Samuel (1Samuel 2:1-10). This thrust of praise is profitable and it is a step beyond thanksgiving. However, praise concentrates itself more on the present (gift) of God than on His presence. It is possible to go to the presence of God and present an appropriate praise, seeking more to receive than to give, without ever passing from praise to worship. Many times beginning with praise we move on to petition, instead of moving from praise to worship.

In praise, the command is "to praise for". Worship moves in the direction of the person of God, adoring him. Praise begins by applauding the power of God, and frequently brings us so close to God that worship can respond to this presence.

Praise looks to what God has done, while worship looks to who God is. Praise concentrates on the accomplishment; worship concentrates on the person. The thrust of worship therefore is higher than that of praise.

c. *In its source of inspiration*

Praise is a fundamental exuberance of the soul and of the spirit of man expressed to God. Worship flows from the Spirit of God and resides within the spirit of man. Praise is the redeemed man calling upon God, while worship is God calling to God within the redeemed man. Praise frequently has its origin in the soul, but true worship always originates in the Spirit (John 4:24).

While praise is more an act of emotion, worship is an act of devotion. Praise looks to the hand of God; worship looks to the heart. Although the same body manifests praise and worship, they spring from different sources from within our being. However, the manifestation does not always reveal the source, since we can express them by the same physical postures or actions.

d. *In its depth of dedication*

Praise is an expression of our life, but worship is a style of life. A true worshiper is a worshiper all of the time, even when he is not involved in the act of worship. Worship is a lifestyle that cultivates the presence of God in all activities of daily life. In praise, we

express our deep appreciation to God for what He has done for us, but in worship, we "live for the Lord".

e. *In its proximity of God*

Worship is not always about the works of God; sometimes the view goes beyond what God has done and praises Him who has done the works. Normally we give this response because of the distance from which we have come, but worship, before it can flow, requires that a person be in the real presence of God. Worship in the Temple occurred in the holy place. In temple worship the people offered praise from the outer courts. Worship requires an intimacy that is not required for praise.

f. *In its form of expression*

The body must express praise and worship. Just as there are many similarities between them, there are also many differences. While praise is more vocal, worship is frequently devoid of many words. Two lovers on a walk have a lot to say, but when they embrace, the words become superfluous. With worship, it is no different.

Praise is usually demonstrative, with much physical action while deep worship tends to manifest a physical submission, instead of a physical action. As praise tends to be more emotional, it ends up being louder and more exuberant. Worship however is devotional, quieter and contemplative.

We could say that praise expresses love in words and actions, and worship expresses it by touch and relationship. Both are important but worship is more intimate.

## **PETITION AND SUPPLICATION**

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. (Mark 11:24)

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (Philippians 4:6)

God is the source of all blessing and has a solution to all of our problems. He has infinite resources to satisfy each one of our needs. "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19).

The Word of God encourages us to present our requests to the Lord, knowing that He is ready to answer us. There are some principles that must govern our prayer, especially petition, in order for us to receive a favorable answer.

### **1. Defining what you want God to do in clear terms**

Form a clear image of your desire and express it in objective words. The Bible teaches that prayer should be specific and objective (Luke 11:01-12; James 1:5). We have many biblical examples of objective prayers: Eliezer (Genesis 24:12-14); Elijah (1Kings 17:1) and Elisha (2Kings 2:9).

A definite answer requires a definite request (Luke 18:38; 41-43).

a. *What is wrong with an indefinite prayer:*

- Frequently it is a mere formality. People pray for things that they really do not desire.
- Many Christians offer prayers only to impress others. They are indefinite and

insincere, not really expecting anything from God. For this reason, they receive nothing from God.

- Indefinite prayer reveals that there is no cry within the soul, no urgency in the heart. There is no burden in the prayer or real desire
- Formal prayer is indefinite, general and vague, because it does not proceed from the Holy Spirit's direction. It reveals a lack of knowledge of the mind of God. Those who Holy Spirit leads knows what they want because they know what God wants and know that He is willing to give the things that we request in prayer.

b. *How to be definite:*

- Analyze your prayers. Put aside those prayers that are insincere or those that are inspired by mere obligation. Separate the things that you really desire and have a burden for in prayer: that which is truly in your heart and for which you expect a specific answer.
- Wait in the presence of God until you clearly have in your mind that for which you must pray. Allow the Spirit to speak to you and place within you the desire of your heart, until you can be bold in your asking. Specific prayer is not an attempt to make God agree with your desire rather it is to discover God's desire for you so that you can pray in accordance with His desire
- Write down your desire. This will help you to be specific and to be convincingly prepared in presenting your request in such a manner that you will receive a specific answer. We can also do this in agreement with other people. The recording of specific request to God and their answers helps you to develop your faith and to grow a successful prayer life.
- We must offer all prayer in accordance with the revealed will of God in the Word. Look for Bible texts that refer to what you desire, whether in promises or in principles. Once you identify the need, search the Word and select the text that refers to the subject.

## 2. **Pray according to the will of God as revealed in the Word**

Faith begins when we know what the will of God is. He reveals His will in the written Word. God is "a prisoner" of His Word. The Word expresses what God is. He is absolutely faithful to what He has promised.

You should not be interested in desiring what God does not want for your life. As you search the Word, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, you will discover that your desires should be abandoned or if they are worthy of being transformed into an object of prayer.

Without the foundation of the Word of God, it is impossible to pray in faith. However, the knowledge of the will of God, revealed in His Word, will give you the certainty that your request will be answered (1John 5:14).

The knowledge of the promises of God related to your desire, will awaken and feed your faith (Romans 10:11). The promises will be a safe weapon against the attacks of Satan while you wait for the manifestation of God's answer to your request (Luke 4:-12).

a. *Prayers based on the Word of God*

The Bible has many examples of requests to God based on His promises. Note the

following examples:

- David prayed for his house so that it would be stable and endure forever. The Word of God supported this prayer. The prophet Nathan transmitted the promises of the Father to him and He prayed according to them (1Chronicles 17:23; 26; 27).
  - At the dedication of the temple, Solomon presented his requests according to the promises of God (2Chronicles 6:14-17).
  - When the enemy troops threatened Jehoshaphat, he went to the house of the Lord and cried according to the promise (2 Chronicles 20:6-12).
- b. *Examples of needs and the respective promises of their fulfillment*
- Needs of an appointment (Philippians 4:19)
  - Prosperity (Daniel 28)
  - Health (Isaiah 53:4; 1 Peter 2:24)

For each request that we make to God we must have a biblical passage that supports it. No one presents a request before a court of law without first invoking the support of a law. In the same way, our requests before the throne must have the support of the written Word of God, the Bible, which is the Constitution of the Kingdom.

### **3. Ask God in a simple and clear manner, reminding Him of what He has promised in His Word**

If you already know what you want from the Father and you have verified that He has made a promise in His Word, all that is lacking is that you present your case before Him, by way of a request.

The Word encourages us not to be anxious about anything but to make our requests known before Him. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;" (Philippians 4:6).

Petition is the God given way for us to satisfy our needs as His children.

Ask and you shall receive. (Matthew 7:7)

For everyone that asks receives. (Matthew 7:8)

Ask and you shall receive. (John 16:24)

You have not because you ask not. (James 4:2)

How much more will your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him? (Matthew 7:11)

And everything you ask in prayer believing you shall receive (Matthew 21:22)

How much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13)

If you ask me anything in my name I will do it. (John 14:14)

The priestly prayer of Jesus in Chapter 17 of the Gospel of John is full of requests to the Father. He asked:

- For himself: "glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (Verse 5).
- For the unity of His disciples: "I pray for them, that they may be one as We are"

(Verse 9; 11).

- For the joy of His disciples: “that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves” (Verse 13).
- For the protection of His disciples: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (Verse 15).
- For the sanctification of the disciples: “sanctify them in the truth” (v. 17).
- For the results of the work of the disciples: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;” (vs. 20)
- For the spiritual unity of the disciples: “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (vs. 21).
- For the participation of the disciples in His glory: “may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me” (vs. 24).

#### **4. Based on the Word, believe that God answered your request and the answer is already on the way.**

Faith has the faithfulness of God and His Word as its foundation (Numbers 23:19). Faith is a precursor of all answered prayer. It is a bold confidence in God, an anticipated certainty of the miracle that will come (Mark 11:23, 24).

True faith is that which appropriates the promises in the kingdom of the spirit before they manifest themselves before our eyes (Hebrews 11:1; 6). The only prayer that God hears is that which we offer in faith.

The limit of what one can reach through prayer lies in the faith of each person. The prayer life of a person will be just as strong as the faith that they have in the person of God (Matthew 17:20; Mark 9:23; James 5:15). What is it like to grow in a stronger faith?

- Remember that each person has a measure of faith (Romans 12:3).
- Study the Word of God (Romans 10:17), because faith is based on the promises of God: to the extent that we become familiar with the nature of God as revealed in the Bible, our faith will be developed (John 15:7).
- Submit yourself completely to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the will of God. The Spirit interprets the word in our hearts.
- Act according to the measure of faith that you have.

##### *a. Some negatives to consider*

- Do not force yourself to believe; simply act in accordance with the Word.
- Do not be double minded in such a way that one moment you confess: "yes He heard my prayer. I am cured!", Or "I have the money.", or even "I got the job", and then at another time begin to question how all of this will happen or what needs to happen so that these goals can be reached. Your last confession will destroy your first. A wrong confession destroys the prayer of faith.
- Do not trust in the faith of other people, have your own faith. In the same way that you have your own clothes, you should have your own faith. Act according to the Word on your own.
- Do not speak in unbelief. Never admit that you are a "doubting Thomas" because

this is an insult to the Father.

- Do not speak about sicknesses and problems.
- Never talk of failure. Speak about the Word, its absolute integrity and about your confidence in it. Speak of your readiness to act according to the Word and stick with your confession that it is faithful.

*b. Some principles for reflection*

- You cannot build up your faith without practicing the Word.
- You cannot develop a life of prayer that is nothing but words, unless the Word of God plays a real part in your life.
- If you live the Word, you will practice the Word.
- You may be a Bible teacher, you may know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but this does not mean that you walk by faith. Do not live in the kingdom of feelings. Rather live out the Word according to the size of your faith. My prayer life only has value to the extent that the word in my lips is something living. Moreover, it only lives if I practice it (James 1:23, 24).

*c. The practicing believer*

- Is a new creation in Christ.
- Is a member of the body of Christ. Is a child with a legal position and the ability of God, yet remains as a human being. Has open access to appear before the throne whenever He wants.
- Has the justice of God that enables him to present himself in the presence of the Father with the same freedom that Jesus had.
- To be a doer of the words of Jesus is the real secret to a life of prayer.

*d. The non-practicing believer*

- Lives as a common person and when a crisis comes, seeks out someone who can believe for him.
- Offers prayers that are nothing more than empty words, when they could have been full of faith, born of real fellowship with the Father.
- Is a negligent hearer, someone who confesses God but does not walk in the Word.

## **5. Confess with your mouth that God has heard your request**

We determine our faith or belief by our confession. Few people perceive the effect that the spoken word has over their own heart and over the adversary. The enemy hears our conversations and apparently never forgets them, while we descend to the level of our confession.

The Word only becomes real when we confess its reality "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." (Hebrews 4:14).

We express our faith by the confession of our lips (Romans 10:9, 10). Whatever the lips speak should agree with the faith of the heart.

Words contrary to the promise destroy and neutralize the prayer. Words are seeds, but words that we confess are seeds that we have planted. Repeated confession is watered seeds. We must water the seeds of faith with the confession of the promise.



Your confidence is not on the prayers of other people, but on the unchangeable and indestructible Word of God. Therefore, refuse to permit your lips to destroy the effectiveness of the Word. Guard your confession well, even though it seems to human eyes that God has not answered your prayers.

## **6. Reject all doubts that attack your mind**

Allow each thought, each image and desire to affirm that you have what you asked for. Do not look to the circumstances, to the symptoms, but fix your sight on the Word and this will keep the doubt away.

Between your request and the effective manifestation of the answer, there is a time that may be more or less prolonged. During this period, Satan will try to cast doubts upon your mind. It becomes necessary to maintain a firm attitude so as not to accept them but to keep the faith.

Doubt is a thief that steals the blessings of God. It is the number one enemy of faith (Matthew 14:24-31).

Doubt hinders answers to prayer. It is the mother of defeat (James 1:6-8). When we doubt the Word of God, we believe something contrary to it. To doubt the word is to doubt God himself.

Any substitute to faith in God and His promise destroys the life of faith; destroys prayers and brings the burdens back. Doubt and faith cannot remain together. If one comes in through the door, the other leaves through the window.

### *a. How to overcome doubt*

- Keep control over your mind. Doubt operates on the level of the mind; the Word of God and faith operate on the level of the spirit. It is therefore necessary to use the available weapons to overcome thoughts of doubt (2Corinthians 10:3-5). Be ready to refuse any thought or image contrary to your prayer. Control your thoughts in accordance with Philippians 4:6-9.
- Use the promises of God as weapons against the attacks of doubt. The Word of God confessed with authority and faith keeps the enemy away (Matthew 4:1-11).
- Concentrate on the faithfulness of God and His word. This strengthens faith and pushes doubt out of the way. Our faith is founded on that which God is (Romans 4:19-21). It is your assurance in the Word of God that guarantees the victory against the attacks of doubt.

## **7. Continue meditating on the promises that serve as a basis for your request**

My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; Proverbs 4:20, 21

When God fulfills His promises before our eyes, we exchange the image of the problem for the image of the promise. This is fundamental. We reach our victories or defeats first in our mind. The circumstances that surround us will try to impose their images. However, if the Word of God is before our eyes it will compose images of the promises that will overcome. We feed these images by meditating on the promises that serve as the basis for our prayer. We meditate and ruminate when we pass the Word through our mind over again and absorb all of the spiritual nutrients from it. It is to have a promise present and

living in the memory.

Through meditation, we internalize the promise and thus we assure the certainty of its manifestation (Judges 1:8). Meditation favors the permanence of the Word, which is a condition for the answer to prayer (John 15:7).

We demonstrate our love for the Word through actively meditating on it. The psalmist exclaimed how he loved the law and how it was his meditation day and night (Psalm 119:97-148; Psalm 1:2). The constant meditation on the Word generates images within us of the abundant promises of who we are in Christ. This ensures that when we have a specific need we will readily offer a prayer in accordance within divine principles.

Through meditation, God warms our heart and nourishes our faith: "My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue:" (Psalm 39:3).

Meditating on the Word leads us to a greater knowledge and intimacy with God because the basis of faithfulness in the fulfillment of the promise resides in the person of God: When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. (Psalm 63:6). If I know God then I know that His promises are faithful and true.

To meditate on the Word requires a firm decision. It is a question of choice and discipline (Psalm 119:11; 27; 48; 78; 145:5).

The habit of meditating on the Word makes us wise and gives us the knowledge of the ways of God: "I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation" (Psalm 119:99).

## **8. Have an attitude of praise and gratefulness to God until the answer has materialized**

You must not wait for the manifestation in order to give thanks. Give thanks immediately because your conviction is that God is faithful to His Word and materialization of the answer is just a matter of time.

Praise is an expression of faith in God based on the promises of God. However, praise also strengthens faith (Romans 4:20). Praise must accompany prayers (Philippians 4:6, 7). Every petition must be marked with thanksgiving.

Praise for the answer to prayer before seeing its manifestation liberates the operation of the power of God. Jesus before the open tomb of Lazarus said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me." (John 11:41). Lazarus was soon outside of the tomb, alive.

The thankful heart that waits for the physical manifestation of God's answer with praise and thanksgiving enters into the rest of faith.

## **CONSECRATION**

There arises occasions in our lives in which we must make some decisions and follow a certain path without the will of God in that area being clearly revealed in His word. It is when instead of beginning to ask we must seek His face and wait on His presence so that we can discern the will of His heart for that specific situation. This type of prayer is more than an attitude of submission, dedication, surrender and obedience to God than a request. Once we know His will then we simply follow it.

In this type of prayer, a readiness to do or to accept anything may be the will of God in

that circumstance.

This is the only type of prayer where we should use the phrase "if it is your will". We may use this type of prayer in situations in which we are seeking to know the will of God when He has not yet revealed it. We should do this with the deepest attitude of submission to God.

The prayer of dedication harmonizes our will with the will of God in order to bring success in a certain situation. The will of God is always for our benefit. This type of prayer places God and us in line with the same goal.

Jesus prayed this prayer in Gethsemane: "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." (Luke 22:42). Consecration is more of an attitude of submission and obedience than words. It demands a greater time of seeking, repeated times, until we arrive at a conviction of the plan of God.

Consecration requires a renunciation of our own will. We must empty our mind of personal preferences in order to accept the plan of God, no matter what it is. Once we know what the plan of God is, it is no longer about receiving something, but about doing something in accordance with the received direction.

## **SURRENDER**

The prayer of surrender also speaks of an attitude of the heart. Whenever the cares, worries and weights knock at our door, we transfer them to the Lord who has the means to bear them and then we have the means to enter into the rest of faith (1Peter 5:7; Matthew 6:25-27). We can surrender our cares and our worries to God. Then we can enjoy His divine peace (Psalm 37:5).

God is against worry. Worry produces nothing but stress, exhaustion and death. Jesus preached against worry. Paul preached against worry. The Bible is against worry because Satan birthed it.

We must eradicate each care from our lives (Philippians 4:6, 7). The power of God begins to operate when we cast our cares upon him. Worries only block this operation. The surrender of burdens to God brings rest (Psalm 37:7).

## **INTERCESSION**

God called the body of Christ to the ministry of intercession in favor of all men (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

God is about to bring a great outpouring of His Spirit in these last days with great demonstrations of power. Intercessory prayer is the instrument that the Spirit of God will use to bring this outpouring.

God calls upon us to intercede because God does nothing on earth without the cooperation of man. God reveals His purposes to His servants so that they speak on the earth in accordance with these purposes. In this way, each one of them through intercession becomes an instrument to birth and give light. Man still has authority on the earth. God has placed him in this position. God seeks intercessors as we can see in Numbers 16:48; Job 9:32, 33; Isaiah 59:16, 17; Isaiah 64:7.

Jesus the intercessor provided by God intercedes for us in heaven (Hebrews 7:25;

Romans 8:34). The Holy Spirit is also an intercessor. He intercedes on the earth inside human temples, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Romans 8:26).

Today God needs servants that stand in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30, 31). Intercession is entering into birth pains until the purpose of God is fulfilled upon the earth (Jeremiah 30:6; Isaiah 66:8; Colossians 4:12).

### **1. Indispensable elements of intercession**

- Identification: intercede and take the place of others pleading their case as if it was our own (Exodus 32:31, 32).
- Love (Romans 5:5).
- Compassion (Matthew 9:36-38; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34)

## **METHODS OR FORMS OF PRAYER**

### **1. Private prayer (Matthew 6:6)**

Each child of God has the right to enter the presence of God with confidence (Hebrews 4:16) and present his prayers.

### **2. Agreement in prayer (Matthew 18:18-20)**

In the amplified version of the Bible, some commentators translated the phrase in verse 19 as "to agree and harmonize with or to make a Symphony together". The Symphony is when all the instruments play in harmony. Therefore, agreement involves:

- a. To agree with the Word of God – have a full conviction that the Word of God is true and will be fulfilled.
- b. Agree together in one mind – to think the same thing. The mind is a battlefield and we must control our thoughts so that they are in harmony with God and the Word. Something that helps us to have a firm mind is to write down the object of agreement. When the mind drifts in the other direction, we must bring it back into agreement with the Word of God.
- c. To agree with another believer with whom you are praying – this agreement is more than words. There must be harmony (Mark 11:25, 26). There is power in agreement.

### **3. Collective prayer (Acts 4:23-31)**

This implies that the body prays together in perfect agreement with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. This type of prayer has tremendous power (Acts 5:12).

## **RESOURCES FOR PRAYER**

### **1. Pray the Word**

When we pray the Word, we already begin with the answer (1Thessalonians 4:15, 16).

### **2. Pray in the spirit (1 Corinthians 14:14; Ephesians 6:18; Judges 20)**

In the areas known by the mind we can apply the written Word of God. However, in those areas that are beyond knowledge or when we do not have conviction of the will of God the Holy Spirit comes to our help (Romans 8:26:27). The inexpressible groans mean groans that we cannot express by articulate words.

Prayer in the spirit besides being a great help in all types of prayer, is a powerful weapon

against the forces of darkness.

## **A WEAPON AGAINST INTERFERENCE TO PRAYER**

We have God given authority to close doors (Matthew 16:19). The life of prayer is a battle (Ephesians 6:10-18). Time spent in the presence of God is like having our batteries charged. God supplies us with resources for the battle through prayer.

The enemy must face spiritual weapons: The Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). He must face the authority and the name of Jesus to whom everything subjects itself (Mark 16:17). The enemy is confronted by a higher power (Matthew 12:29).

We must face the enemy and speak directly to him. Exercise your faith in the work of Calvary. Neutralize enemy forces so that the answer to your prayers will not be deterred in the heavenly regions (Daniel 10:12-21).

## **IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER**

- Pray to the Father in the name of Jesus (John 16:23, 24). The name of Jesus guarantees God's answer.
- Believe that God answers your prayers (Mark 11:24; 1John 5:14, 15). Prayer without faith produces no results.
- Forgive all those who have offended you (Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:14, 15). A lack of forgiveness prevents God's answer.
- Depend on the Holy Spirit in your prayer life (Romans 8:15; 26, 27). Without help, you cannot stand before the throne.
- Learn to pray for others (Ephesians 6:18). There is a law of sowing and reaping in the kingdom of the spirit. When I involve myself in the body interceding for it, God will raise up others in the body to intercede for me.
- Edify yourself by praying in the spirit (June 20; 1Corinthians 14:4).

## **PRAYER AND FASTING**

### **1. Why fast and pray?**

For what motives should Christians sometimes go without food, rest, adequate clothing, family life or other comforts in order to dedicate themselves to prayer? Men and women used of God all throughout the Bible, fasted: Moses, David, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Paul. Jesus began his ministry with 40 days of fasting.

There is no command in the Bible for us to fast, but Jesus made it clear that fasting is part of the Christian life when He said, "When you fast" (Matthew 6:16) and "in those days they shall fast" (Luke 5:34, 35).

The primitive church practiced fasting (Acts 13:2, 3).

### **2. What is fasting and praying?**

Fasting is not simply abstaining from food or something else. More than anything, it is recognizing that God is supreme and occupies the place of supreme honor. Fasting places prayer in first place.

There are times when we should eat and drink with joy and gratefulness (Psalm 103:2; 5). There is a time when we should sleep (Psalms 127:2; 3:5). There is a time when we

should enjoy the pleasures of our family (Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 18:22). Every blessing comes from God and should be enjoyed, so that through them God may be glorified. However, there are times when we should turn our backs on all of these things and seek the face of God for some time. For such God leads us to focus all of our attention and energy on the Lord, praying and waiting on His presence.

Sometimes we fast abstaining only from food (Matthew 4:2). However, there are occasions when we must go on a complete fast, abstaining from both food and water (Esther 4:16). In a partial fast, we only take the necessary nourishment to maintain our health (Daniel 10:2, 3).

Sometimes there is the abstinence of sexual intercourse between a husband and his wife (Exodus 19:14, 15; 1Corinthians 7:5).

The spirit of fasting is a burning desire to be with God in prayer for a specific reason, greater than any normal desire.

Fasting means persistence in prayer. We may pray frequently without praying very much. To separate a time for fasting and prayer is to make yourself available for serious work with an undeniable persistence. Persistent prayer abandons everything else and gives God His proper place. Persistent prayer frequently involves fasting. Fasting is a deliberate effort to remove any obstacle to prayer. To fast is simply to push aside all the weights and all the distractions that impede our prayers.

Fasting manifests the intensity of desire, the greatness of determination and the power of faith. Fasting however reveals the fervor and seriousness of a search for answers to prayer.

### **3. Motives that lead people to fast in the Old Testament**

- A search for help in time of affliction (Psalm 50:15)
- Joshua and the elders of Israel after the defeat at Ai (Judges 7:6)
- The tribes of Israel when the tribe of Benjamin went against them (Judges 20:26).
- Esther, Mordecai and the Jews, upon the threat of destruction (Esther 4:16)
- Ezra when he feared the enemies in the desert (Ezra 8:21-23).
- Confession of sins (1 Samuel 7:6; John 3:5-8)
- Prayer for healing (2Samuel 12:16; 21, 22)
- Contrition and brokenness (1Kings 21:27)
- Intercession (Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:2-19)
- For revelation (Daniel 10)

### **4. Fasting in the New Testament**

There is no command in the New Testament for the church to fast nor are there any established norms for fasting. However, it seems that fasting was part of the normal life of the people in Bible times. The Jews fasted weekly and the Pharisees fasted two times per week.

Jesus fasted after His baptism (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2). He spent nights in prayer apparently without eating, but He did not practice the type of fasting that the Pharisees or even John the Baptist practiced. However, He left teachings about fasting.

Jesus said that there would be a time, after His ascension, when the disciples would fast

(Luke: 33-35). There are times when fasting is not necessary (Matthew 17:21).

Fasting must be for the Lord, without the motivation of impressing anyone (Matthew 6:16-18). When He said: "when you fast", He was implying that fasting should be an unarguable practice of the disciples. Perhaps for this reason there are no commandments to fast in the New Testament.

*a. Fasting in the book of Acts*

Saul fasted after his meeting with Christ when he continued his way to Damascus (Acts 9:9). The motive was to wait on God and seek revelation. Cornelius was fasting when the angel brought him a message from God (Acts 10:30). He fasted as a spiritual exercise before the Lord.

The prophets and teachers in the church of Antioch also fasted (Acts 13:1-3). The reason for fasting was to minister to the Lord, lay hands on the apostles and send them to their missionary work.

Paul also fasted before choosing elders in the church (Acts 14:23). The people that traveled with Paul to Rome fasted because they were days of great danger (Acts 27:9; 33, 34).

*b. Fasting in the epistles*

Paul fasted frequently: by the instructions given to couples in Corinth, we conclude that this practice was normal in the church in those days (1 Corinthians 7:4, 5).

**5. Biblical reasons for the believer to fast**

Fasting puts the flesh in subjection and helps discipline it, but it does not at all alter God. He is the same before, during and after my fasting. The benefit of fasting is for me, because it helps me to be more sensitive to the Spirit of God.

When a necessity of waiting more on God arises then the Holy Spirit leads us to fast, this is an example of the clear need to fast. The New Testament does not establish a program of fasting. The Christian is guided by the Spirit and it is He who will show the way, how and when to fast (Romans 8:16).

We fast for ministering to the Lord and for separating a time of fellowship without any interruption (Acts 13:2).

## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. What are the seven definitions of prayer?

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2. Explain why we should pray.

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3. What are the enemies of prayer?

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4. Explain the different types of prayer.

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5. Explain the three classes of prayers.

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6. Explain the prayer of thanksgiving.

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7. What is the prayer of praise?

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8. What is the prayer of worship?

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9. What is the difference between petition and supplication?

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10. Explain what consecration is.

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11. What do you understand by surrender?

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12. How can we make intercession?

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13. Site the methods or forms of prayer.

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14. What are the resources used in prayer?

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15. Explain the weapons against interference to our prayers.

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SPIRITUAL MATURITY COURSE

16. What are some important aspects of successful prayer?

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17. Comment about the importance of prayer and fasting.

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# 8

## FAITH



## THE TRUTH ABOUT FAITH

The Word of God tells us that "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Based on this verse, as Christians we need to have understanding and revelation of what faith is.

Why must we have understanding? The reason is that it is through our mind, with our intellect that we can understand that faith is that which pleases the Lord. Why must we have revelation? The answer is that without revelation of God in our spirit, we may understand what faith is, however this mere intellectual understanding will only produce mental knowledge, but it will not produce life within us. Only under the light of God can we really have a living faith that is effective and agreeable to Him.

We cannot think about wanting to know something about faith unless we believe that God exists (Hebrews 11:6). Although God has also provided this ability for us, He gave each man an initial faith (Romans 12:3b) so that he could believe in his existence and that He resurrected Jesus, His son and savior (Romans 10:9), but is also the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

The Bible defines "faith" as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). To be sure of is to be confident of, to bring into existence, to materialize. Faith is the certainty of the realities that we cannot see nor feel and the giving of substance to anything for which we hope. From where should we hope for something? The answer is from where apparently nothing exists, from the invisible realm. Some things exist but we do not see them with our natural eyes, or we fail to take possession of what rightfully belongs to us although it is already ours, as in the case of physical healing, since God's Word already confirms that Jesus has already healed us (1 Peter 2:22-24).

Faith is a conviction, a certainty acquired by a demonstration and testifies of the fulfillment of the promises of God to His people, even in this age, when we see the acts of God whether through deliverance, provision or healing. Through these proofs we can be certain that God is powerful to fulfill His promises (Romans 4:21).

Faith is the surrendering of ourselves without reserve to the realities of God, to His ordinances, His commandments, to obey His will faithfully above all, and to act in coherence with our inner conviction. Finally, faith is acting in accordance with the Word of God. We cannot disassociate faith with His word, since faith is putting the Word of God in action.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAITH AND HOPE

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1Cor. 13:13)

We can conclude that faith is different from hope; otherwise, there would be no reason for the author to separate them. The majority of Christians err concerning the fact of this difference.

Let us examine a clear example of this difference. If you are sick, do you believe for healing right now or do you hope that one day you will be healed? If it is a chronic sickness, you may even hope to be healed. However, in some cases such as when the sickness is terminal, either you get healed or you die. In such a case would you be so cool as to say that you hope to be healed, when you are desperately praying for God to heal you

immediately, before it is too late?

We must separate faith from hope. While the first is for right now, for the immediate moment, the present time, the second speaks of the future. For this reason in Hebrews 11:1 it says that "faith is the substance (taking possession) of things hoped for". To hope is to wait, and faith is grabbing on to the unrealities of hope and bringing them to the dimension of reality.

Faith is active, while hope is passive. Faith needs an active attitude, a decision on your part. For example, suppose that you believe that God can help you find a job, however, if all you do is wait (hope), you will continue to be unemployed. However, if contrary to this, you search for a job diligently, then God will act and you will find that for what you seek. This is faith. It is to act in accordance with the Word of God.

There are various examples in the Bible of people who have had faith, and in these passages, we can perceive something common in all of them. In all of them, after hearing a Word, the hearers took action in accordance to what they heard. There is a good example of this in Luke 5:18-25, when the Lord Jesus healed the paralytic. Jesus said, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Verse 24). What did he do? Verse 25 answers: "Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God." He acted in accordance with the word that he had received.

You can see for yourself in various other passive Bible passages where someone was able to do something or to receive something, whether divine healing or a victory in God, Just as David overcame Goliath and Joshua in the victory over Jericho etc.

Hope as we have already said is passive. Hope does not require us to take action. Yet of course, hope is necessary in the Christian life. How can we live without the hope of one day seeing God face-to-face, that Jesus will come back and that we will be with Him praising and worshipping Him? However, we must have faith to experience our salvation and healing and not only hope of being saved or healed. We are baptized by the Holy Spirit by faith and not by hope.

Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. (Mark 11:24)

See how the verb "to receive" is in the past tense, therefore, this means that He gave it to us at the time that we believed in our hearts. For this reason we should not hope to receive what we ask for, because if we truly believe in our hearts, the answer is for the present and not for the future. Most Christians are defeated at this point: because they don't believe in their heart, they don't take possession of this word. Most of the time, they make requests in prayer with a mere mental acceptance devoid of any faith for receiving an answer. To accept the Word of God merely with the mind is not to believe in the heart.

In Romans 2:29 we read: "but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter". We perceive then that to believe in the heart is to believe with the spirit, and also with the inner man through an inner conviction. This is true biblical faith: the kind of faith that God has, that says: "let there be light! And there was light."

In Mark 11:25, we have a condition for the answer. It deals with withholding



forgiveness to someone who has offended us. In this case yes, the lack forgiveness can block the answer. However, if this is not true in your case and if you are in fellowship with your brother and with God, the Word guarantees us an answer. Let us take possession of the truths and promises of the Word of God!

Faith is remembering that in the kingdom of God everything is based on promises and not on emotions. When you take possession of healing by faith, for example, you may not feel any emotion. You may still feel symptoms of sickness in your body, but you have an attitude of healing, of certainty that you have received the answer and above all you trust in God and in His Word.

May God speak precious truths such as these to our hearts. May we take possession of these rich spiritual truths and be led into a life of victory, abundantly full of faith and hope.

### **WHY MUST WE GROW IN FAITH?**

Once we understand that faith pleases God, it is logical to think that the greater our faith, the more we will be pleasing to the Lord. We know that all of us, at the new birth, have already received a portion of faith, however it is not correct to affirm as some people do that they don't have any faith. What these people really need is to increase their faith, not for us to pray with them so that they have faith, since they already possess it.

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

When someone eats bread it enters the body and gives it energy and strength, building its muscles and enabling it to performing the physical activities of daily living. The Lord's statement shows us that His Word can feed our spirit. The faith that we receive at the new birth, enables us to overcome in the daily battle of our faith.

In Romans, the Scriptures assure us: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17). Therefore, we can perceive that the faith that God initially gave us can be increased, since the Scriptures affirm that faith comes by the Word of God. We see then that the Word of God is a source of nourishment to increase our faith. We need to understand the need to feed ourselves on His Word.

### **CONFESSION, THE SOURCE OF THE ANSWER**

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. (Mark 11:23)

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

We can observe by analyzing these two verses that believing in the heart is intimately related to what we say. This means that moving in faith and believing in the heart, is related to speaking, which is the same thing as confessing. Confession means to say the same thing.

We must confess our faith in God and in His Word. Confession is the spoken testimony of our faith, it is simply agreeing with God, repeating His Word, saying the same thing. In

Revelation 12:11 it says that those who overcame the devil overcame him "because of the blood of the lamb and because of the word of their testimony". To confess the Word is to testify or give testimony to what we believe: that God is powerful to do what He promised (Romans 4:21).

Confessing activates faith, but we must not confess anything or any thought. We must have correct thoughts, since whoever thinks correctly, believes and acts in the same way: correctly.

### **Five biblical truths for a confession**

Our confession must line up with five biblical truths:

- What God has done for us in Christ in the plan of salvation
- What God has done in our inner man by the Word and by Spirit in the new birth and in the filling with the Holy Spirit
- Who we are in God the Father through Jesus Christ
- What Jesus is doing for us at the right hand of the Father
- What God and His Word can do through us when we confess it

The Old Testament offers various testimonies concerning confession and answers to prayer. We can see the correct confession in David's victory over Goliath when the giant challenged the armies of Israel.

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. (1 Sam. 17:45, 46)

What is your confession when you face a conflict? Do you position yourself just as David did, completely believing in God?

Another example is the woman that suffered a hemorrhage for 12 years (Mark 5:24b-34). She was healed by the Lord Jesus when she touched His garment. She had heard of His fame and said: "if I but touch the hem of His garment, I will be healed". We truly must believe that if we merely touch the Lord in prayer, believing in our heart, that is, with our spirit, He will hear us and respond immediately from His throne.

### **FOOD FOR YOUR FAITH**

We have already mentioned that Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). With this, we can affirm that the Word of God sees our spirit and consequently, the more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the greater our faith will be, the more revelation of God we have in our spirits, the greater our faith will be.

We have seen that the Word of God is food for our faith. However, it is not enough to know the Word, we must believe, act, correctly confess and train our spirit to receive revelation, as well as put into practice what we know.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)

## 1. Possessing knowledge of the Word

*The Word is worthy of trust*

For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

If the Word of God is worthy of trust, it has a firm foundation. Everything else may pass away, but the Word will remain forever, because it is not a mere book. More than a book, behind its words written with paper and ink, is a person: God himself. Don't think of the Bible therefore in terms of paper and ink. Think of God and of what He said. The Word is an expression of God and reflects His character; if He has said something, we can stake our own lives upon it.

Many times, we tend to analyze circumstances and our own experiences and from these we begin to establish a faith based on what we see and experience, rather than what the Word of God says. Here is an example:

The Word says, "by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

The believer says, "I'm sick".

The Word says, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:37).

The believer says, "I am a failure".

The Word says, "I have been crucified with Christ; therefore, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:19b, 20a)

The believer says, "I am so weak, a miserable sinner. I always fall".

Do you see the difference? Whoever acts like the believer above looks at the Word of God in a superficial manner, as if it was speaking of another person, and does not take it as the truth. This such a believer does not see himself through the eyes of the Word, but through his own failings; then he opens his mouth to say what is not harmonious with what God has said. Worse than that: this believer confesses what Satan would like to see in the life of each believer. You must know that God is true. Our feelings can contradict what God has said and Satan can try to close your eyes, but God is faithful. Boldly open your mouth and say "Amen" to everything that God says.

When the Bible declares a truth, do not say: "and if..." or "But ..." Expressions like these can give a foothold for Satan to bring doubt and rob that which already belongs to you in Christ Jesus. Since the Garden of Eden, he casts doubt in the mind of man about the integrity of God and His Word. Unfortunately, many Christians are full of doubt concerning many promises of God. And when you doubt the promise, you'll never have an attitude of faith to claim it. As a result, that which is yours by right of inheritance as God's child is lost to the enemy.

The Word of God is the Lord Himself speaking. He is alive. Since He is not an abstract idea, do not look to the words of the Bible as something abstract. Jesus declared: the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). The Word is living and births life, life that brings life to the spirit, the soul and the body. The Word is the power of life, the seed of life, life itself. This is the reason why when someone believes in Jesus, opens his

mouth and confesses Him as Lord, they are born-again. It is the Word producing life.

The Word of God is living and active perfect, efficient, powerful, able. The Word of God transforms nature, any situation or circumstance.

For with God nothing will be impossible. (Luke 1:37)

The Word of God is sharp. It brings to light the hidden motives of the subconscious, that which is hidden inside of man. The Word penetrates the most obscure places of the personality. It goes where nothing else can go. It reveals the roots of all physical, emotional and spiritual evil.

The Word of God is a two-edged sword. It operates in the hearer, as well as the speaker. It penetrates all things discerns all things and sees all things. Wherever the Word encompasses, there life, light and victory are produced. This Word is blessed, living and powerful. No one can ever understand its depths or discover its full glory. The Word is the infinite God himself. We can trust in it and follow it whatever the cost!

This blessed Word is the basis for our faith. Our thoughts, feelings, whatever anyone else says, crises and circumstances of life can never serve as a basis for faith. Again, the infallible Word of God is the basis for our faith. If we want to know God or His will, we will have to know His Word, because it expresses Him and reveals His purposes for our lives. He speaks to us in various ways, but the principal way is through His written word.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

Who is the Son, who is Jesus, but the living Word? John declared speaking of him:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1, 14)

Jesus is the Word and through Him God speaks to us. In the Old Testament, the Word was written on stone tablets, but in the New Testament, we have the living Word, in the flesh, Jesus. And He abides in us by His Spirit. The Word is in us and speaks with in us in perfect harmony with the word on paper and ink. In the Old Testament, it says, "I hid your Word in my heart so that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). What word you may ask? The answer is the written Word of God. However, today the living Word lives within our spirit, not in letter, but in spirit and life. In the Old Testament, they used to memorize the words but did not understand their meaning. Today, the Spirit is inside us, the Word moves inside of us and guides us; God has made it real to us. To deal with the Word of God is to deal with God Himself.

In this matter, many Christians commit mistakes by searching for spiritual guidance in sources other than the Word of God. Many Christians do not completely trust in the promises, nor do they follow the principles of the Word, they run after any and every type of voice in order to ask what the Word of the Lord is for their lives. It is in this way that they may hear a strange word.

The written Word is in their hands and the living Word is in their heart, and God reveals Himself to you in a personal way through His Word, and He will give you sure direction that will never leave you confused. Whenever He wishes, He will manifest

Himself in other manners, like through visions, dreams or prophecy. However, you must know that all of these manifestations must pass the approval of the written word, because God never reveals himself in disharmony with the Word. Whatever does not pass through the filter of the written word, is not genuine and must be rejected; because instead of bringing life it brings death.

Take note of this: if you pray the Word of God, it is worthy of confidence, you will be stepping on firm ground. As long as you walk on this ground, you will be successful. However, if you abandon the Word, you will be walking on slippery ground, and will be condemned to fail. Therefore, trust in the integrity of the Word of God and allow it to be your platform of prayer. Remain steadfast upon it and refuse to abandon it. Discipline your mind and allow words in line with what God says to flow from your lips.

## **2. The Word of God is the source of prayer**

There are particular spiritual principles that govern our life with God. We want to stress the importance of obeying the principles revealed in the Bible concerning prayer, so that our prayer life can be effective and fruitful. As a golden rule base your prayers on the Word of God. He has exalted His Word above all things (Psalm 138:2). God manifests himself in His Word. The Word is God himself, the manifestation of His person. God's integrity is manifested in His Word. Behind every Word of God written with ink and paper, stands His character and His throne. Without the word, there would be no foundation for prayer.

Our whole relationship with God must be solidly built on His Word. Whenever we approach Him, upon the foundation of His Word, bearing what He has said in our hearts and on our lips, there He will be present, because God is present wherever His Word is present.

But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word. (Isaiah 66:2b)

It is imperative that we reformulate our prayer habits and change our language. Many prayers stem from frustrations, wrong concepts of God, unbelief and doubt, and these are all reasons why people do not pray more. If you want to see God acting, you must read the Word, feeding upon it and making it your source of meditation and conversation. To sum it up, we live the Word and base our prayers upon it, because the only thing that God confirms is His Word.

We must base our faith on God and His Word, because believing is to take it as the truth. Faith will grow in the proportion of our knowledge of the Word, how else can we exercise our faith in something that we do not know? We cannot believe in a promise that we do not know. It is the knowledge of the promise that leads us to the boldness of faith. If God has said that something is ours, then it is. We must believe and take possession of that with the Word says is already ours. If God promises a blessing, it is because He wishes to give it to us. The Bible says that He will hear us in everything that we ask in prayer believing that it is based on His will (1John 5:14).

How can we know what is in the mind of God? How can we know what His will is? The answer is by hearing what He has said. The Word of God is what God has said. The majority of the things that God wants to do in our lives, have already been revealed in His

Word. Even those things that are not clear, are adjusted to revealed principles. Therefore, as we know the Word, we will know how to discern the will of God, and as we pray in accordance with His Word, we will be praying in line with His revealed will, and in this way we can be confident that He has already answered our request, even before we see its manifestation.

### **3. Praying in harmony with the Word**

Let's imagine that you wish to pray for salvation, and you want to pray in harmony with the Word of God. How should you proceed? First you must know what the Bible says about the subject, what requirements are demanded for someone to be saved. In Romans God gave us the recipe for salvation:

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9, 10)

After this, pay attention to the conditions to be followed. Do what the Word of God says about the subject. In the case mentioned, believe that Jesus arose from the dead by the power of God and confess that He is Lord of your life. This speaks of faith from the heart and confession of the lips.

Thirdly, we must pray the word. You can pray in this manner: "Lord, I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is your Son, that you resurrected Him from the dead, and He is alive, and is the Lord. I confessed my with my mouth that He is the Lord".

After this, the fourth attitude is you must believe that your prayer was answered. "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." (Mark 11:24). Note: you did what the Word says: you believed and you confessed. The Word affirms that you are saved.

Therefore, praise God because He heard based on His faithfulness to His promise. Praise is an expression of faith and is the fifth requirement. You prayed according to the will of the revealed will of God and His Word (Romans 10:9, 10); therefore, He heard (1John 5:14). It is not necessary to hear an angel saying: "you are saved". You only need to know that God is faithful.

Finally, the sixth attitude is to see yourself as a new creature. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17). Appropriate the fact that the person you were formerly died on the cross, in Christ, and was resurrected to a new life, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:4). This really happened! You prayed in accordance with the Word of God; therefore, you were saved.

Whatever the area of necessity is, this is the way to pray. Apply these principles in your prayer life. When we begin prayer with the Word of God, we begin with the answer. Notice for example, the prayer of David in Psalm 23. He did not pray: "God, meet my needs. I need you so much! I am tired, I'm hungry; take me to a place where I will be satisfied. Free me from death, stay with me. Take care of my enemies". No! David prayed the Word of God he prayed the answer:

"God is my shepherd! I lack nothing. You have made me to rest in lush meadows. I am

filled and supplied. True to your Word, you given me rest and sent me in the right direction.

Even when I pass through dark valleys, I am not afraid when you watch at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.

You serve me a six course dinner right in front of my enemies. You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing. Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I will live in the house of God for the rest of my life" (Psalm 23 - The Message).

You are invited to do what David did. Pray the Word and see God act in your life. Do not cry, sob and murmur. Open your mouth and confidently confess before God that which He has already said. Confess that you believe that everything that He has promised is yours. This is the way that we return the Word of God back to Him and His Word will not return void.

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10, 11)

All of the great feats in the life of God's servants resulted from the faith in the written Word. True prayer is to take the Word of God to the throne, and by repeating with their lips what God has said before His throne, calling His attention to the promises that He himself has given. A study of the prayers of the saints of the Bible will shed much light on this point. They always put before God, and prayer, His promises and we were able to receive the promised answer.

#### **4. Redeemed by Christ**

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), (Galatians 3:13)

What is meant by Christ redeeming us from the curse of the law? Redemption is easier to illustrate than to define in the New Testament. God created the earth, formed man and delivered all things into his hands, so that he could enjoy the blessings of creation. The man then committed high treason against God and delivered the authority over the earth to Satan, thus becoming his slave. Because Adam did that, Satan became the "God of this age", the "Prince of this world", freely operating on the planet. The result is that the man, made in the image and likeness of God, lost fellowship with his Creator, the holiness and glory with which he was created, his personality entered into disharmony, transforming himself into a slave and experiencing death. Finally the very earth, from which he took his bread, became hostile to him.

When God gave the Law of Moses, He gave various rules for redemption. Whenever a person became poor, he could sell his property or even himself, but in the year of Jubilee, which occurred every 50 years, everything would return to the original owner. People would be set free and properties were returned to their original owners. The 50th year therefore was sanctified as the "year of Jubilee", and liberty was proclaimed. Everyone returned to their own possession and their own family. During that year, there would be no

slaves and no land in the hands of strangers (Leviticus 25:10).

If someone because of dire poverty, had to sell himself as a slave or all of his property, he could have the hope of getting everything back even before the year of Jubilee. This was determined by the law of redemption. A close relative that had the means would redeem the person or his property. All he had to do was to take the slaves owner or the one who purchased this property, the right price, and the person was freed or the land was returned. That close relative was called the Redeemer. To redeem therefore was to pay the price for the liberty of a slave or a property that had been sold (Leviticus 25).

In order to have redemption, three things were necessary. First: there had to be a Redeemer able to pay the price who was a close relative. He had to pay a price to the one in possession of everything that originally belonged to the person that was being redeemed. Third: the person being redeemed would take back complete possession of that which he had lost.

This illustrates exactly what happened to us, because of sin. We sold ourselves to Satan, with everything that God had given to us and became his slaves. We lost God's life and fellowship with him. Our bodies experienced death, our personality entered into disharmony and the very earth experienced a curse. Satan began to exercise authority over us and over the earth, becoming "the prince of this world" and the "God of this age".

However, Jesus Christ came in the flesh, and became our brother. As such, He could be a Redeemer. Therefore, Satan has no claim over him, because He was a legal Redeemer. He paid the price for our redemption on the cross and gave us back everything that belonged to us, which our former Lord had taken. This means that we have the right to redemption, to take back full possession of everything that is ours in Christ Jesus. We can live the life of God, have fellowship with Him, and receive restoration of everything that we have lost including the image and likeness of God.

Many Christians are still living as slaves, without taking advantage of the rights of redemption. If Jesus already paid the price of your redemption, everything that results from sin in your life has been legally eliminated. You were truly a slave of sin, of Satan and his works, but Jesus paid the price for your complete redemption. It is no longer necessary that you be a slave of any circumstances or sin, or even Satan. You have a Redeemer, and the price of redemption was already paid by His death on Calvary. Christ has redeemed you from all curses, becoming a curse in your place.

Paul spoke to the Galatians concerning this redemption:

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13, 14)

The price has been paid. The curse has no more legal authority over us who believe. We no longer have to be slaves to Satan, nor live in his territory under sin, defeat and curse. We have a new Lord. He is both our Redeemer and our redemption.

In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (Ephesians 1:7)



## 5. Free from the curse of the law

The Bible says that Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law. And just what is the curse of the law? If you read Deuteronomy chapters 7 and 28 and Leviticus chapter 27, you will have a good example of the process through which Jesus brought us through when we were yet weighed down with curses. Christ freed us from these curses taking them all upon Himself, so that God could make all of the blessings available to us.

The blessing of the law or of the covenant is, summed up as, fellowship with God, prosperity, health and victory over the enemy. The curse, contrary to the blessing, is spiritual death, poverty, sickness and defeat.

Notice what Paul says: "Christ delivered us from the curse of the law" (Galatians 3:13). In the Greek, "cursed" is "*katara*" the same word appears in Deuteronomy 28:15, in the plural: "*katara*". What does this mean? It means that none of the terrible consequences of sin has legal authority over you. This means that all curses are illegal over your life.

A believer may live in sin, in misery, in poverty, or in defeat, if he is ignorant of his rights of redemption and if he does not hold fast to the Word of God. The enemy will easily imprison him and deprive him of the blessings of the covenant. Simply by his ignorance, unbelief or disobedience, of that which is his because of the blood that Christ paid for by His redemption. However, you can rise up, open your mouth and declare before Satan and before hell, "Stop right there! That's enough! I have been released from the curse of the law in the name of Jesus, I cast out the thief. He has no more legal authority over my life. Jesus paid the complete price for my redemption. Get out of here right now, in the name of Jesus, and take all these curses with you. I have been redeemed to enjoy fellowship with God, prosperity, health and victory over sin, in order to have an abundant life, and not to live like an old slave of sin, in deceit, in misery and in spiritual death". Acting in this way, you enter into the place of the full possession of your redemptive rights. You must recognize that the price of your freedom has already been paid and you have no need to live as a slave to anyone. If you want to live as a slave, be a slave of Jesus Christ.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

If we are in Christ, everything that is the result of sin is illegal in our life. However, there are so many redeemed Christians that still live as slaves, ignorant of their rights of redemption! Romans chapters 6-8, revealed to us in a unique way, that we are in Christ. All that remains is for us to take possession of our full redemption.

When the price of redemption was paid, the document was signed, sealed and made official and attested to by several witnesses. In case the previous owner tried to deny the rights of the redeemed, the seal was broken and the force of the legal document assured the rights of the redeemed to take possession of what was lawfully his, not because he deserved it or had paid for it, but because of the Redeemer.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, also has a document that guarantees that He has paid the price for our complete redemption as our older brother. To open this document before the "thief" allows us to take possession of everything that the blood of the lamb has paid for.

Just think about it: what is a slave? The answer is that a slave is a servant. Does a servant do what he wishes? Of course not! To whom does a slave or a servant belong? He belongs to the one who owns him. And why does a slave belonging to that particular owner? The answer is that because he was purchased, or was born in the owner's home, or in the home of another one of his slaves. Okay then, Jesus is now your Lord! But He is not a dictatorial Lord. What does that mean? This means that you are his exclusive property, because He purchased you. Satan no longer has any claims or rights over you.

I will say it again so that this truth is planted deep within your heart: you are the property of God because of the price of redemption that Christ paid on the cross. The Holy Spirit testifies that you have a new Lord and God knows how to take care of his property. Satan no longer has any authority over your life. The only authority that he has over you is whatever you give him. But if you understand that you have been redeemed, you will give him absolutely no authority. Let us put an end to this blindness! Let us put an end to blind Christians who program themselves for a fall, and who accept defeat. The Spirit of grace groans and cries out: "my people perish for lack of knowledge!" So step into your true position, open your mouth and declare, "The blood of my Lord Jesus who redeemed me from the curse of the law, becoming a curse in my place so that the blessing of Abraham can be mine, and that I may receive the promised Spirit by faith. The Spirit is in me. He has sealed me (Ephesians 1:13). I have nothing to do with the "god of this age", nor with the sin of his dark works. I will not serve the world, with its lusts. I have been redeemed and I will live as a free son (Romans 6:11; 14; 22). I am a partaker of the nature of God and I will live, act and speak like Jesus, the first begotten Son of God, that took me as His brother, and son of the eternal Father (2 Peter 1:4; Romans 8:29). I am free from the power of darkness and live in the kingdom of the Son of God's love, that through His blood redeemed me" (Colossians 1:13, 14).

Am I one of Jesus's brothers? Yes, that is right. He sealed you, and marked you by His Spirit. This is what Paul meant to say when he affirmed:

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, (Hebrews 2:11)

Jesus has sanctified us. We are the "sanctified" that He speaks of in the text. We have the same origin: God the Father. Naturally, Jesus is God and He has existed since the beginning of eternity. However, He was begotten on the earth as a Son, so that through His substitutionary and redemptive death, He could beget sons and daughters to God, redeemed from sin and re-created through His power.

Hide these truths in your spirit and you will live in victory, walking in fellowship with the Father. Consider what the Bible says in Colossians:

Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:12-14)

Whoever has received Christ as Lord is free. A slave does not do what he wants. However, you are no longer a slave of sin and no longer have to obey it. Even if someone

is a Christian can he live in sin? That is not what the Bible teaches. It teaches that each tree produces according to its kind. If you are a son of God, you will produce the fruit of the Spirit and not the works of the flesh! "Because sin will no longer have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14).

The Holy Spirit in us is a guarantee of our complete redemption, "you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13b; 14). The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that Jesus can give us everything that He has promised.

The blood of redemption is the basis of our victory. He has purified us from all sin (1 John 1:7). If the devil has planted sin in us, Jesus, by His blood, has remedied this, because He is the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In the Old Testament the blood of animals was spilled in order to "cover sin", but in the new covenant, by the blood of the eternal covenant - the blood of Jesus - sin is not only covered, it is eliminated. Jesus takes away, eliminates, and destroys the power of sin within us. There is no need for any further sacrifice. The work is complete. Therefore, redemption is complete. Jesus does not prune the tree of sin in us, he yanks it out by the roots and plants another seed in its place: the living and eternal Word, which is Jesus. His life lives within us.

Because of this you are not your own. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1Corinthians 6:19). When temptation comes, you can say: "get out of here, in the name of Jesus. He has purchased me and I am His property. My obligations are exclusively to Him. My body is now the vessel through which His life and work may be manifested on the earth; I am no longer a vessel for sin".

Did you know that the power to resist temptation is within you? The living Word, in the power of the Holy Spirit, resides in you. Take advantage of this power. 1Corinthians 10:13 clearly says, that God will never allow us to face temptation that is greater than the ability that He gave us to resist it. Jesus did not only redeem us, he gave us weapons to overcome each attack of the enemy, of sin and through which He keeps us free and victorious from the attacks of the enemy (2 Corinthians 10:2; 4).

The divine seed and the living and eternal Word which is Jesus, caused us to be born again (1Peter 1:23), this is what it means to be redeemed, purchase from sin and the power of Satan. We were transported from the kingdom of darkness to live in a new kingdom (Colossians 1:13). We can draw near to God with the living confidence, because he lives in us and we belong to Him by right of creation and redemption. We return to the original owner.

Conscious of this redemption, our prayers will be more powerful and we will be more able to identify the true origin of problems.

## **6. We are a new creation**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2Corinthians 5:17)

We are new creation in God in Christ Jesus. What does this mean? The man, that God

created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), fell into sin and lost the glory of God. He acquired a sinful nature and was distance from fellowship with his Creator. But God, in Christ, put the tremendous plan of redemption into operation and has re-created lives through the miracle of the new spiritual birth.

When Adam sinned, his seed became corrupt and his children assumed the likeness of sinners. God had established the principle that every living thing reproduce according to its own kind. Therefore, each seed produces after its own kind, after its own likeness, the same type of life or nature. In this way, fathers have transmitted the inheritance of sin to their sons, and all of us have been born into sin, with a fallen nature, separated from the life of God. David the Psalmist had already said: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5).

Adam lost the glory of God and the authority that had been given to him. Instead, he received the principle of death within his nature, and from that moment on, began to beget sons in his own image:

"And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." (Genesis 5:3).

You were born in the image of your father, of the corrupted human seed. In the quoted passage, Paul said that we are a new creation and everything has become new. How did this happen? You are a tri-part being, that is spirit, soul and body. Your true self is your spirit. Your body is a temporary home where your soul resides on the Earth, but you are not your body, you are a spirit. The human spirit is born dead to God. This does not mean that you do not have a spirit, but that spiritual death is within it. Death is the spirit of evil within the human spirit. When someone is born, they certainly have a spirit, however the seed that produced the person carries with in it the principle of sin, in other words, rebellion, pride, and independence from God. This is death and separation from God, devoid of the quality of His life and fellowship with Him.

This is the reason why people do not understand the things of God and are unable to relate adequately to Him before they are born again. However, they have no difficulty at all in manifesting evil and the life of sin. The type of life that resides within their spirit is not the life of God, but of the rebelliousness that proceeds from the devil. For this reason, the most natural thing in the world, for such people is to sin. If it is natural for an orange tree to produce oranges, or an apple tree to produce apples, there is no choice for the sinner other than to produce sin and to have children who are sinners. No one becomes a sinner because they kill, steal or lie. On the contrary, people kill, steal and lie because they are sinners. We must conclude that to have different fruit, we must have a different tree. In order to produce the fruit of the Spirit of God and not of sin, man must go through a radical metamorphosis.

God formed man on the earth in His image and His likeness His nature and His glory. But the man committed high treason, allowing the poisonous seed of rebellion and independence of God to lead him to experience a different birth, no longer as a son of God but as a son of wrath, sin and death. Man was transported from the kingdom of light to the kingdom of darkness. But God brought another son to the earth, a son of His own seed (Genesis 3:15). This son would beget other sons for God, a generation of descendants

and sons that would share His nature (2 Peter 1:4), because He would beget them of His divine seed, as Paul affirmed through inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. (1Peter 1:23)

Jesus said, "The seed is the Word of God". In Genesis chapter 3:15, God declared that the seed would come. Isaiah the prophet prophesied that the seed would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). The Word affirms that when God called Abraham and gave him promises, He had a seed in mind, and in that seed all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 3:16; 22:17, 18). So then in the fullness of time, in accordance with the promises, God sent His seed to the earth, in the form of the spoken word, through the mouth of an angel, to a virgin of the house of David: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS." (Luke 1:31).

Mary would conceive a son, but not of the seed of men, since man's seed had been corrupted. How would this happen? The seed of God, which is the Word and the Holy Spirit, would be conceived in Mary's body, would be born and manifest Himself in fleshly form. "And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35). Why the son of God? Because He would be begotten of God's very seed, incubated by the Holy Spirit. Herein God has revealed a great principle: from the union of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, life would spring forth. In this way the new seed, the promised son, came into the world. The Word became flesh and abode among men (John 1:14). Jesus was man, but the life that was in Him was from another species: He had the characteristics of Him who had begotten Him on the earth. Jesus was the life of God Himself, for this reason He is called the Son of God, because a son is the one who descended from the seed of the father.

Jesus was on the earth as the only begotten son of God, manifesting the glory of the father that Adam failed to manifest (John 1:14). However, He did not come to remain alone. The "seed" fell to the ground and died. But, springing from death, something marvelous happened: Jesus became the first born of God, among many brothers that He had begotten because of His seed" (John 12:24; Romans 8:29).

*The new birth* - how can we be born again? Through the divine seed planted within our spirit and made alive by the Holy Spirit. We received the Word, which is a seed. The Spirit of God goes into action in our hearts, and a new son is born to God on the earth. We are born again, we are re-created by the power of the Word in the spirit of God, and we become a new creation in Christ Jesus (Corinthians 5:17). We are in him, since His seed begat us and we are of His species. His life is in us.

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1John 5:11, 12)

Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:18)

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever. (1Peter 1:23)

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (1John 3:9)

By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, (2Peter 1:4a)

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

We could include other passages. However, we have enough to make it clear that whoever is in Christ is a new creature in God, and partakes of His life.

Man's greatest need is to experience the new birth (John 3:7). Many people are religious, and are even members of Christian churches, but they have merely gone through and intellectual or emotional experience. They were never re-created in their spirit. They do not possess a new nature, and that is why they have such a hard time understanding the things of the spirit and growing spiritually.

## **7. The power of the name of Jesus**

Adam had authority upon the earth that God has delegated to him. Jesus had the authority of heaven and reconquered the authority over the earth, overcoming Satan. In order for this to happen, He had to become a man because God gave the earth to the sons of men (Psalm 115:16) and the enemy controlled territory, He not only had to face the enemy, but He had to overcome him in all areas. It was in this way that Jesus became sin in man's place (2 Corinthians 5:21) and experienced death. However, He also broke the chains and triumphed over death. After this, He met with the disciples and breathed on them, saying to them: "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). At that moment, they were re-created and reborn. It was a new generation of the sons of God. To the sons He gave the following commission and declared:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus was delegating His authority and the power of His name to His disciples. They would be His ambassadors on the earth and would represent him. An ambassador of the nation represents the chief of state and the nation. If an ambassador of the United States is in another country, his voice is the voice of the nation. If someone dishonors that ambassador, they have dishonored the United States or the president of the nation, because he bears the name of the nation that he represents.

In the same way, we as ambassadors of God carry the name of the King of Kings, our Lord Jesus Christ. When we pray "in the name of Jesus", the authority of God's throne and the power of His forces stand behind us. All contrary forces are subject to Jesus, and this should be branded upon our hearts in letters of fire. We must allow this truth to be engraved by His spirit in our hearts: "I am an ambassador of the all-powerful Lord (2 Corinthians 5:20) and I carry the name that expresses the greatest authority of the universe. In him, I am invincible".

A name represents a person. When you were born as a son of God, you received a

name. You were born as a son of God. When you were born here on earth, you received the name of your father that indicates which family you belong to. Because you are a son, you use that name, and have the right to everything that belongs to your father. Everything that is his is yours. But you do not only use the name of your family, you are that name, it is your identity. The name indicates the identity and through the name that you have received, you answer when it is called. For example, suppose that your name is Paul Jones. If you hear someone calling out John Smith, you will not answer. You will only answer when someone calls out Paul Jones, because that is your name.

The same thing has happened through your spiritual birth. You are of the family of God and have received a name that indicates your new identity. You not only have the right to use the name of Jesus, but you also have access to everything that this name represents. You have become part of Him. This is your last name. Because you are the son of God, you can you use the name of Jesus. In the kingdom of the spirit you will only answer to your new name: "son of God". Only eternity will reveal what is behind this name.

The name of Jesus is indescribable. The meaning of this name is the fullness of God Himself. "And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus has a name that God has exalted above all names.

On the earth, Jesus has received the name that speaks of salvation. "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21). He is the Savior because He is the Lord. "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The name of Jesus is the only hope of salvation, "and in His name, the Gentiles will hope" (Matthew 12:21).

The name of Jesus speaks of the presence of God with us. Jesus is the Lord God himself, living in a human body, to meet men and restore him to his original position and expression of the image and likeness of the invisible God. "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (Matthew 1:23). Emmanuel brings life to man.

The name of Jesus is the expression of life itself, because names express who the person is. He is life and light. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4). "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31).

The name of Jesus is exalted above all names. Jesus always existed, since He is God, but He humbled himself, taking on human form to serve mankind. In becoming man, He took upon himself everything that constituted man including His fallen nature and destroyed it through the power of His expiratory death. But He rose again and was exalted in glory.

Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Jesus is in a position of supreme authority. Since the authority of Jesus covers all of

heaven and earth, we can use His name to come before God the Father with our requests, as well as face Satan demanding that he get out of the way. At the name of Jesus, the heavens bow and hell retreats.

The name of Jesus is the key to the answer of our prayers. This key opens all of the doors of the kingdom and the gates of heaven, and binds the forces of hell.

*All of the treasures of heaven belong to Jesus.* - We have contributed nothing to this treasury and we have no right, in ourselves, to benefit from these riches. Just think of a bank account. If someone deposits a sum of money into a specific account, we can make no withdrawals from it. A person has a right to withdraw only what is deposited in his name, or what he has inherited from someone. As the owner of everything, Jesus made us children of God by faith in His name, and has opened to us the door of the treasury of His possessions for our use as members of His family.

Before the Lord delivered His life for us, on the night that He was betrayed, He gave His name as a key to prayer that receives answers. "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:13, 14). "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:23, 24). This is just as if He gave us power of attorney over a blank check. We have access by His name to everything that is His.

What a glorious experience to have your prayers answered! This brings joy to the heart. And what is the purpose of Jesus, other than that His church which is His body, the expression of himself, the extension of himself on the earth, live in complete joy? However, this is reached exclusively by the name of Jesus in our requests to God the Father.

Jesus established an unchangeable principle: our prayers and requests are directed to God the Father in the name of Jesus. Naturally, we should converse with Jesus, love him, have fellowship with him but as far as requests in prayer are concerned, He said that they must be directed to God the Father. It is wrong to direct our requests to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. We must follow the rules of the Word of God, if we wish to see results in our requests. The Father will hear us because we go to Him in the name of Jesus. He will be happy to hear us, because when He hears us He is glorified in the Son.

*The name of Jesus binds the powers of darkness* - Luke 10:17-19 talks about this power of binding the forces of darkness using the name of Jesus. In the amplified version of the Bible, we read the following verses in the Gospel of Matthew:

Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:18-20)

The name of Jesus has all authority, and whatever is done through Him (what He represents), is supported by the throne of God.

At the name of Jesus, demons flee. At the name of Jesus, demons retreat. When He



commissioned His disciples (Mark 16:15-18), He told them, "in my name you will cast out demons". Because of this authority, we see Paul delivering a woman from the affliction of troubling spirits. "And she did this for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour" (Acts 16:18). This is how we must deal with satanic forces. In the name of Jesus, they subject themselves to us. The Lord is raising up a people with the revelation of who they are in Christ: a combative people that go forth in the authority that God gave to them to subject the enemy underneath their feet.

If a police officer approaches someone and says, "you are under arrest in the name of the law!" There is no escape, that person is officially under arrest. If the person tries to resist, there will be worse consequences because of this attitude. The police officer, in his own right may have no importance whatsoever. However, he represents the authority and strength of the law of the land. The divine authority that you represent guarantees that your word must be obeyed.

Jesus gave us authority to arrest, neutralize and bind the forces of Satan. Demons bow before the powerful name of Jesus, spoken by our lips with boldness, faith and dignity. We are nothing of ourselves, but Jesus lives within us by His Holy Spirit, and said that we are to go forth in His name and cast out demons. There is nothing to fear. The name of Jesus is the correct key.

*The name of Jesus carries the power of healing* - The name of Jesus is a powerful weapon against sin, Satan and all of his works. Sickness is one of the evils that resulted from the curse of sin that afflicts the earth. In the same way that Jesus cast out demons, He healed the sick. Before He left the earth He said: "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:17, 18). Later James spoke of the importance of anointing the sick and praying for them in the name of Jesus. (James 5:14, Mark 6:13). Soon after the beginning of the church, we see the disciples using the name of Jesus to take healing to the sick.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. (Acts 3:6b; 16; 4:7-10)

Be aware of the fact that when God gave you the right to be called His son (John 1:12), He also gave you His name, with everything that it represents. This marvelous name, which is yours by right of redemption, carries with it the tremendous power in the kingdom of the spirit. By way of His name, you have access to the throne of grace and fellowship with the Father.

## 8. The righteousness of God in Christ

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

How would you answer someone who asked, "are you righteous?" Many people upon reading James 5:16 "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." think, "if only I could find a righteous person to pray for me!" What if you knew that you could write your name in front of James 5:16? This is just one of the tremendous truths that strengthen our faith for a life of complete victory in prayer. Of course we are referring to someone who is already had the experience of the new birth.

*Jesus exchanged our sins for His righteousness* - Jesus was the righteousness of God in person. Man is an exact expression of sin, corruption and rebelliousness. How can man approached God? God did something in Christ that the human mind may think absurd. He took upon himself the sin and the curse of the sinner, in order to transform him into a holy and righteous man. Jesus was absolutely righteous and in Him was no shadow of sin. Man however was completely sinful without a trace of righteousness. The righteousness of God was in Christ but sin covered the life of man. In light of this fact God put the great plan of redemption of man into operation, by which his sin would be eradicated and God's justice would be imputed.

On the cross of Calvary, Jesus became what man was, taking upon Himself man's guilt and becoming sin in his place. For what purpose? So that man through faith in God could be made the righteousness of God and become a son of God, able to enter His presence without any condemnation or feeling of guilt, just as if he had never sinned.

We can approach God without fear. The way back to the Father was open by Jesus. He became our substitute exactly for this reason. Now when God looks at us, He sees Jesus. Just as He looked to the cross and saw the sinner nailed to it, when He looks at the redeemed sinner, He sees His own son. We were there on the cross with our sin and curse and we were in His son on that terrible cross. There on the cross, sin was judged and the righteousness of God was satisfied, so that the same righteousness could be imputed to all those who believe.

The righteousness of God in us is a gift. It is not a stage of spiritual growth, but a position that He granted to us by grace. He will not do this in the future, it is already a fact in the present. Paul made this very clear when He said, "much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17). God gave us His righteousness as a gift. You can do nothing to become righteous in Gods eyes. When someone is born as His son, God himself spreads over him a garment of righteousness, as a sign, a gift destined to the members of His family begotten in Jesus Christ.

*A righteous conscience* - Many people in spite of the fact of being believers develop a greater consciousness of sin than of righteousness. We must understand that the righteousness of God is in us, God no longer sees in us the old sinner in Adam, but the new man in Christ. He sees the righteousness of Christ since this righteousness now covers what we inherited in Adam.

Speaking of the armor of God, the apostle Paul taught that righteousness is the

breastplate that covers our vital organs, "having put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14b). Protected by the breastplate of righteousness, spiritual death can no longer reach us.

We are aware that this righteousness is not our own, but it was given to us, so that we can enter into God's presence. We can draw near to God because we know that we are accepted, not based on our own merits but on the merits of Christ, that allowed us to become the justice of God. Because the blood of Jesus was spilt, the price of redemption was paid, sin was judged and the righteousness of God was satisfied. Paul teaches:

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:24-26)

The amplified version translates verse 26, "it was to demonstrate and prove at the present time (in the now season) that He himself is righteous and that He justifies and accepts as righteous him who has [true] faith in Jesus". This is the recipe for someone to be made righteous by God: true faith in Jesus, in the blood of redemption. Living in this way, we will be people with the new nature.

*Believers and unbelievers: the contrast* - In 2Corinthians 6, Paul shows the contrast between the believer and the unbeliever, emphasizing that there can be no fellowship between the two. Read the text and see the qualifications of both:

Believer (verse 15)	Unbeliever (verses 14, 15)
Righteousness (verse 14)	Iniquity (verse 14)
Light (verse 14)	Darkness (verse 14)
Christ (verse 14)	The evil one (verse 15)
Temple of God (verse 16)	Idols (verse 16)
Temple of the living God (verse 16)	Impure (verse 17)

If I am light, the temple of the living God, son of God, of the people of God, in Christ, I am also the righteousness of God. Christ is in me in the person of His spirit and now I can manifest the life of the one that created me. Learn to see yourself as God sees you and you will bring joy to God's heart.

Only when the believer begins to see himself through the eyes of divine revelation in God's Word, will he be able to rise above the accusations of the enemy and live in God's presence without condemnation or guilt, and victory over sin, the flesh, the world and the devil. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1).

*How to deal with a fall* - You may be thinking, "I understand. When I came to Christ, He gave me His justice, He buried my past and forgave my sin. But what should I do when I am accused and when I commit mistakes after knowing Christ?"

It is possible that the accuser, Satan, will whisper things into your ears like, "when you converted, it is true that your sin died, but do you remember that this morning when you got up, how you lost your temper? Remember yesterday when you used a swear word?" He also accuses us before God. In fact, one of his names is "accuser" (Revelation 12:10). The

way to deal with sin is to not listen to the accusations of Satan and the suggestion to flee from fellowship with God. There is provision in Christ for us to get back up immediately after a fall, repenting of our sins and confessing them to the Lord.

*Jesus came to change our nature* - In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices covered man's sins, in the New Testament we are freed from sin and purified from unrighteousness. The psalmist declares:

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. (Psalm 32:1)

Today however we have a deeper experience. Jesus came not only to cover our sin, but to purify us of all unrighteousness. In the Old Testament, sin was covered without changing the people's nature, but Jesus came to change our nature and purify us from that which leads us to sin.

#### *Sin and sins*

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, (Rev. 1:5).

The amplified version says that we were freed from our sins "once and for all". The same version registers the text of 1John 1:9 which was written to the church in this way:

If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, he is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [everything not in conformity to His will and purpose, thought, and action].

The unregenerate man does not need to confess his sins when he comes to Jesus. He is completely in sin, belongs to sin, and sin is his master. He must simply reject that master, sin, repent of it (sin as a spiritual principle) and receive Jesus as his Lord, "that takes away the sin of the world". Sin is a principle of evil. It is the state of evil of the soul and the personality. We could say that the principle of evil is in the spirit of man, and it is with this evil that Jesus deals with pulling it out by the roots in completing the work of purification, re-creating and rededicating to the Lord. However, in the case of a son of God committing a sin, he must confess it (we are referring now to sins in the plural). All sins in the life of a believer must be confessed and abandoned, since the child of God has been born of God and was not regenerated to practice sin.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (1 John 2:1; 3:9)

The believer receives the righteousness of the Lord Jesus in order that he may live as He lived. But if for some reason you should fall there is a remedy, confess, because He is faithful and just not only to forgive our sins, but also to operate a work of purification in our nature, in order for us to not return to the practice of the same transgressions. To confess means, "to agree with God". To agree that what He considers a transgression is in fact a sin and to agree with the provision for the believer in case he falls, which is not a blank check to sin? However, in case of a fall, there is no need to despair and allow the accusations of Satan to destroy you. We may run to the arms of the father, repenting and

contrite confession to receive forgiveness.

*A gift of God* - We have already said that the righteousness of God within us is an undeserved gift, as an expression of boundless grace. However, with if we are in Christ, we must live a righteous life, purified before God, in such a manner that the enemy has no true motives for accusing us. We must live the reality of Gal.2:19-21 in our daily experience

For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

Righteousness is by grace and grace alone. Because of this unprecedented grace, the righteousness of God was implanted within us. Our life because of this has been hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). We may boldly confess: "it is Christ lives in me, the Hope of glory, and this is the foundation of my life with God. Hallelujah!" The righteousness of God is imputed to us as an expression of God's grace and love.

## 9. The Holy Spirit abides in us

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (1Corinthians 3:16, 17)

We are the habitation of God on the earth. Paul declares, "For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." (2Corinthians 6:16). This is a tremendous privilege and a great responsibility. Since the Holy Spirit abides in us, what type of life should we live?

You are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. This is a great and an incontestable fact if you have been born again. However, does your life really resemble someone who has been born again? Has the incense of your worship to God continuously flowed out of your mouth? The first vocation of the sanctuary is the worship of God. He is in us, or in other words we are His sanctuary, should not the incense of praise and worship constantly rise from the altar of our hearts to the throne of the most high?

The revelation of these things must affect our way of living. Mental knowledge is not enough. We need a perception within our spirit to understand the feeling of these deep truths, so deep that our human feelings cannot explain them, but that the re-created human spirit, full of the Holy Spirit, can perceive. When we are made aware of these truths, we are responsible for living in accordance with the light that they shed. Knowledge makes us doubly guilty if we sin against it.

*God abides in the holy of holies* - In the Old Testament, God manifested His presence in the holy of holies, in a temple made with human hands. The nation of Israel experienced this presence of God in a different manner than we do. God abides in the midst of His people, in the sanctuary that He commanded to be built. He fought for the people, but He was not in the people.

The temple where the people would go to worship God was in Jerusalem. If the people were outside of the city, they would pray with their faces towards Jerusalem. Even today, the place of the Temple is a symbol of the presence of God to the Jews. He will establish

His dwelling place in the holy of holies. Only the high priest, once per year on the day of expiation, after offering sacrifices for his own sins, would enter into this place with the blood of animals. So then, he would sprinkle the blood of atonement on the covering of the ark where the tables of the law were contained, to make atonement for the sins of the nation. This was a figure of what would happen to Christ. But since all of that was merely a symbol of what would come, this ceremony was repeated each year, since the sin would only be taken away, and not only covered, when the perfect sacrifice of which all the others were a type was offered by God (read Hebrews 9).

The Israelites had no access to the most holy Place, or the holy of holies. They remained outside with the expectation that God would accept their offering for sin, by the hands of the high priest.

A thick and impenetrable veil separated the holy place from where the priests were. It was 4 inches thick. Under the penalty of death, no one else would enter there, not even the high priest, other than on the date of atonement. However, God had promised through the mouth of the prophets that he would establish a new covenant. In this covenant, God would abide in His people, inside of each person. He would write His laws on their very hearts (spirit). He would give His people a new spirit, and in the new spirit, He would put His own spirit.

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:25-27, see Jeremiah 31:33, 34)

*God built a new Temple* - God build a new temple for His dwelling place on the earth. When Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary, as the perfect and last sacrifice offered by God, whose blood being spilt, fulfilled all of the figures of the past. The blood of the new covenant was poured out (Acts 20:28), because it was God's life that flowed from His veins, the blood that purifies all sins (1 John 1:7), the blood of eternal redemption.

And when Jesus was crucified hanging between heaven and earth, He called out in a loud voice: "it is finished!" Just what had been finished, terminated? The plan of redemption, no, because he still had to deliver His spirit, be buried and rise from the dead. When He said that it was finished, He was referring to the Old Testament's system of sacrifices, He being the last sacrifice that was placed on the altar. A "new era" then would begin in the plan of redemption. And Jesus called out a second time: "father, in your hands I deliver my spirit" (Luke 23:46), and then he died. Then God tore the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom. The way of the sanctuary was open; God's habitation on the earth would no longer be limited to a temple made with human hands. God would now abide in the hearts of those for which the blood of His Son was poured.

It was Friday, three o'clock in the afternoon, the Day of Atonement in Israel. At the same time, the priests were in the Temple. It was the hour of sacrifice. The people were there and there must have been many candles lit because there was darkness upon the earth. The sun refused to shine at the horrendous sacrifice on Calvary. All of Hells curses, horrors and agony had fallen upon the Son of God, who was made sin in our place. The

people in the Temple were blinded to what was going on. The darkness of that afternoon gave witness to their blindness.

Then something terrible happened in the priest's opinion: The veil was torn! A new day arose upon the earth! Access to God was now open forever! Those who were in the Temple were shocked! Nobody died, but God had just left the physical Temple of stone, wood and gold to establish his new home in hearts regenerated by His power through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Now all men could truly live unto God! The life of God would enter into the hearts of those who were made His children. Jesus died our death so that we could live His life in the power of the resurrection.

*The perfect exchange* - When the Lord Jesus broke the chains of death, and the throne Satan and his angels of all authority, he passed on His own life to His disciples when He declared: "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22), breathing on them, as God had done at the beginning when He formed man. This was when He put within them a new heart, and formed the abode of God within the human spirit.

Jesus was God; He was spirit and had no body. Us humans were dead in our sins, destitute of life and the glory of God and separated from His fellowship. However, He experienced everything that man could experience even death, but overcame it all! Praise His name! And returning to His glory, He did not leave the same man that He formerly had taken upon himself. He glorified Him and took Him to heaven. Today He is still the God man. At the right hand of God is man's representative and intercessor. There is a human body glorified in heaven. But Jesus did more than taking upon himself the nature of man. Once He was glorified in heaven, He sent His Holy Spirit to earth to express himself through His people.

Just as God in Christ took on a human nature and body, man in Christ participates in the divine nature and receives the spirit of God. Just as there is a man in heaven in Christ, God is here on the Earth, in the person of the Holy Spirit that lives within us and represents God among men. Jesus carries man in himself in glory. The Christian carries the Holy Spirit of God within him, on the earth.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33; 36)

We are now the Temple where the Spirit of God abides (1Corinthians 3:16). Our re-created spirit is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and our body is a Temple in which God abides. The Temple is a place of worship, praise, and of glorifying God. It is a place where God speaks and communicates. It is the holy place. May the Holy Spirit of God Himself open our eyes to these spiritual realities and lead us to live them.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:15; 17; 19, 20)

We must glorify God in our body, because we carry Him in our spirit to be a channel of the life of Jesus, and the power of His resurrection. Our body must not be an instrument of sin. Paul declared speaking in the context of the body as an instrument of glory:

Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! (1 Corinthians 6:13; 15)

Your body is a member of Christ. Therefore, take your position as a habitation of the Holy Spirit and Temple of God. Your body transports the Lord, by His spirit, here on the Earth. You have been born again, received the righteousness of God in order to be a channel through which the life of God manifest itself on the earth.

You must see yourself as one with the Lord. Be conscious of the holiness of this presence and do not profane the Temple of God, which is your body. In addition, know that everything that does not glorify God contaminates His Temple.

May he grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [holy] Spirit [himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]. (Ephesians 3:16 amplified version)

Do you not discern and understand that you [the whole church at Corinth] archives Temple (his sanctuary), and that God's Spirit has is permanent dwelling in you [to be at home in you, collectively as a Church and also individually]? (1Corinthians 3:16 amplified version)

## **ENEMIES OF FAITH**

### **1. Lack of knowledge and revelation of the Word**

As we have studied faith-building principles we have seen biblical truths of which possessing their revelation and putting them into practice become powerful weapons of God for our daily Christian life and the spiritual battle that we engage in against the enemy each day. However, the lack of knowledge and revelation of these things becomes a principal enemy of our faith because the Christian loses his chance to take possession of his inheritance in Christ.

### **2. Believe only parts of the Word**

Many Christians do not doubt their own salvation, however when they must believe for healing, deliverance or even the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they don't have the same disposition to believe in these other areas of their relationship with Christ. The word "salvation" in the original Hebrew and Greek transmits the idea of deliverance, healing, preservation, perfection and safety. We must perceive that Jesus is all of these things to us. When we believe in Jesus we receive everything that He is and that He has and not only part of him. May we believe for everything that is available to us in the Word of God.

### **3. Walk by sight**

To walk by sight is to walk in accordance with our own reasoning and natural feelings. Whoever wishes to walk by faith must once, and for all, cease from considering circumstances around him and fix his eyes upon Jesus.



As we look to Him, we can walk on the water. We must not be like Peter who perceived the strength of the wind around him taking his eyes off of Him who could lead him to victory; for this reason he began to sink (Matthew 14:30). To begin to sink means a life of deceit; this is not what God does or desires for His children. His desire is that we walk by faith and confidently hope in Him so that we can have a life of victory, and be a people worthy of being called the children of the most High (Psalm 82:6).

#### **4. Anxiety**

Anxiety is sin, because worry is disobedience to God's command (Philippians 4:6). Anxiety permits our mind to entertain doubts, unbelief and fear in any situation that we may be going through, whether it is the discipline of God or tests to increase our perseverance in the Lord. The anxious person cannot walk by faith, because he is not able to quiet his soul (Psalm 131:2) to wait upon God.

#### **5. Doubts and fears**

Doubt is unbelief and fear is lack of confidence. To distrust God is to disbelieve in Him. To doubt God is to call Him a liar. Since His Word says that He is able to fulfill all of His promises and we doubt this, then we are calling Him a liar. This offends God and His righteousness and His character, besides being a sin and a powerful enemy against your faith.

## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Why is it important to know the truth about faith?

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2. What is the difference between faith and hope?

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3. Explain why we need to grow in faith.

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4. Comment on what you understand concerning the confession of the Word.

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5. What things build faith?

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6. Site and comment on the enemies of faith.

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**9**

**FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT**



## INTRODUCTION

The great spiritual revival that is sweeping the world today has often been called the "Charismatic Renewal". This epithet has been employed to describe an extremely important aspect of this revival: through it, the supernatural manifestations that were so powerfully obvious in the primitive church have been restored to the churches of today. These manifestations or more precisely gifts of the spirit have been notably absent from the church for centuries. In the last 50 years, God has restored these characteristics and His "program of restoration" has greatly accelerated in the last 20 years. The charismatic renewal has invaded every corner of the Christian church bringing new life and power to the body of Christ. The restoration of these blessings has created a great need for teaching about these important subjects.

Paul told the church in Corinth, "with respect to spiritual gifts brothers I would not have you been ignorant" (1 Corinthians 12:1). Certainly, God doesn't want us to be ignorant with respect to these gifts either.

There are many charismatic gifts mentioned in the Bible (Romans 12:3-8; 1Corinthians 12:8-10; 28-30; Ephesians 4:11). Within the purposes of this study, we will limit our consideration to the nine manifestations of the Spirit mentioned in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians (1Corinthians 12:8-10). In order to simplify our study of these manifestations we will classify them in three categories:

- Verbal gifts: tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy
- Gifts of revelation: word of wisdom, discerning of spirits and the word of knowledge
- Gifts of power: faith, healing and miracles

The Holy Spirit can use any member of the body of Christ in the operation of such gifts (1Corinthians 12:7; 11; 14:26; 31). Not only this, the Word of God says that no member should be lacking in any gift (1 Corinthians 1:7). Because of this we reaffirm that any member of the body of Christ can be used in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

We must be full of the spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and not only that we must zealously seek the best gifts. In order for us to seek the best gifts, we must know what they are and we must desire them (1 Corinthians 14:1; 6); motivated by a genuine love for the body (1 Corinthians 13) and a pure desire to edify the body (1 Corinthians 14:12). Once we possess these gifts, we must seek excellence in operating them (1 Corinthians 14:12).

## THE GIFT OF TONGUES - 1 COR. 12:10

This gift covers two functions: in the first place as "devotional tongues", the purpose of which is to edify the person that uses them; secondly as the gift of tongues, for the edification of the whole church and not only the individual. In the second case in order for there to be the fulfillment of this purpose, the gift of tongues must be used in conjunction with the gift of interpretation of tongues.

### Instructions for the use of tongues

The apostle Paul gives us three directions in his first letter to the Corinthians concerning the use of this gift in the public assembly:

- The use of tongues must be motivated by love (1 Corinthians 13:1).

- It must always be accompanied with the gift of interpretation (1 Cor. 14:5; 13; 28).
- The use of this gift should be limited to three people in any one meeting (1 Cor. 14:27).

Any believer that has at one time spoken in tongues is capable of edifying the body through the use of this gift. However, you must be prepared to do this at any time. Learn to be totally submissive to the leading of the Spirit. Put your mind at rest and be open to the Holy Spirit. Develop a sensibility with respect to what the Holy Spirit is trying to do or say in any particular church meeting. When the Holy Spirit wants to speak through you through the gift of tongues, generally there will be an interior consciousness of this for some time before you in fact speak. This generally happens by way of a gentle sensation in your spirit that begins to grow until it transforms itself into a strong conviction and anticipation.

The consequence of this movement is a profound acknowledgment that the spirit will bring verbal expression and that this expression is within you. You do not have to speak immediately. The spirit within the prophet is subject to the prophet and to his control (1 Corinthians 14:32). You can silently wait for the correct moment to speak. The Holy Spirit will clearly move you at the right time. He will not interrupt what is already happening in the meeting. He will never cause confusion since he is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). When the Holy Spirit moves you, speak in a normal clear and audible voice, always seeking to silently flow with the spirit as he gives you verbal expression.

When the verbal expression is completed, everyone should wait for God for the interpretation. Generally another believer will receive the interpretation but when this does not happen the person that speaks in tongues should pray silently so that he may receive the interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:13).

## **INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES - 1 COR. 12:10**

This gift accompanies the gift of tongues and the two are always used together. It is a supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to interpret verbal expression in tongues that are not spoken in the mother tongue of the congregation. It is not a gift of translation. The interpreter does not understand the tongue used in the verbal expression of the message given. The interpretation is just as supernatural as the verbal expression. However, by the gift of the Spirit the interpreter is able to make the unintelligible verbal expression make sense to the congregation in order to receive it and edified by it.

### **Who can use this gift?**

The interpretation of tongues is given "as the spirit wills" (1Corinthians 12:11). Any Christian full of the Holy Spirit can be chosen and anointed by Him to manifest this gift. Again, we must seek the development of a sensibility to the Holy Spirit. While you are worshipping God in a meeting of believers, keep your mind and your spirit open to the Holy Spirit. Frequently you will feel beforehand that there will be a verbal expression in tongues and that God is giving you its interpretation. When the verbal expression comes, silently wait until it has been concluded. To begin with, perhaps you will only have the first phrase of the interpretation and a vague idea of what will follow when you begin to speak.

As with all the other gifts of the spirit, this gift is also operated by faith. In the measure

that you begin to express what the Holy Spirit is giving you; speak in an audible normal and clear voice. Be careful not to speak "beyond the measure of your faith" (Romans 12:6). Avoid at all costs, mixing your own thoughts and feelings or ideas into the interpretation. Allow your own thoughts to rest and your mind to become a clean channel for the Holy Spirit to flow through.

When the interpretation is finished and you feel that the Holy Spirit concluded what He wanted to say then stop! Do not try to give the interpretation. In other words, don't begin to tell the congregation what you think that the interpretation means. Leave this to the congregation itself.

After the interpretation, remain silent while the church judges the verbal expression. If there are many believers present that are regularly used to operate spiritual gifts they should judge whether the words are really from God or not. The pattern by which we can judge is similar to that which we judge a prophecy, the next manifestation that we will consider.

### **THE GIFT OF PROPHECY - 1COR. 12:10**

The translation of the term "to prophesy," means, "to express inspired words". According to the text of the first epistle to the Corinthians, all of the believers could exercise this gift according to the will of the Spirit (1Corinthians 14:31). All Christians can prophesy, one by one, but no more than three in any given meeting (1Corinthians 14:29-33).

There are at least three purposes for prophetic expression:

- To edify the church and to establish and strengthen the believers
- To exhort the believers to revive them confront them and challenge them
- To comfort them with the word of comfort and encouragement

Frequently words of prophecy include all three of these elements.

### **Three misunderstandings concerning prophecy**

With respect to the gift of prophecy, frequently we can identify confusion. This confusion must be avoided therefore we should understand each form it takes.

*The gift of prophecy is not a sermon* – many Christians today insist that the gift of prophecy is the ability to preach well. However, preaching and teaching are generally the result of meditation, in prayer, in the word of God, a product of meticulous preparation of our mind and spirit in order to minister understanding to the people. The gift of prophecy is not the result of this meticulous study. It is a spontaneous verbal expression operated by the Spirit.

*The gift of prophecy is not for foretelling the future* – this gift is "to clarify encourage in the present", its purpose is not to "foretell the future". Its purpose is edification, exhortation and comfort. Whenever there is an element of teaching in a prophecy is generally in combination with another gift of the Spirit (word of knowledge or wisdom).

*The gift of prophecy is not for personal direction* – if we need personal direction, we must ask Jesus himself for it (James 1:5). In addition, we can seek this guidance from the pages of the Word of God, the Bible. If a prophetic expression comes to us as an

instruction for the future, this should merely confirm what God has already spoken to us personally.

### **Biblical teaching concerning the gift of prophecy**

Once the confusion with respect to the gift of prophecy has been identified, it can be corrected by studying the Word of God and what it teaches concerning this gift.

*The gift of prophecy is a supernatural speaking to men (1 Corinthians 14:3- )* that transmits the mind of the Lord to the church. The prophet speaks to believers in the name of God for edification, exhortation and comfort.

*It does not require any interpretation* – it is not like the gift of tongues that because of being expressed in intelligible language must be interpreted. The word of prophecy is communicated through an intelligible language in such a manner that the hearers understand.

*Prophecy convinces the unlearned (1 Corinthians 14:24, 25)* – the Scriptures teach us that people devoid of knowledge through the operation of the gift of prophecy will be convinced; will be judged; having the secrets of their heart revealed they will prostrate themselves before God in humility and will recognize that truly God is among them; they will worship God

*The gift of prophecy functions so that the believers can learn (1Corinthians 14:31)* – this does not speak with respect to teaching that is normally ministered through the exposition of the Word of God through the ministry of a teacher. On the contrary, the text is speaking of learning spiritual truths through the anointing of the Spirit. Such teachings must be tested by the written word of God before being digested.

*All Christians should desire and seek to operate in this gift (1 Corinthians 14:1, 39)* – through the manifestation of this gift we can be used by God to encourage His people.

*The person that is operating in this gift is responsible for its use or abuse (1Corinthians 14:32)* – prophecy is not an uncontrollable verbal expression. Neither is the prophet under any type of trance or mental control. The prophet never speaks or says anything against his own will. The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. It is the prophet that is speaking in the name of God. He possesses the control in every instance of everything that he is saying.

*Because the human element is fallible, the prophecies must be judged (1Corinthians 14:29)* – not only due to the fallibility of man but also because false prophets must be judged (1 John 4:1).

### **How to judge a prophecy**

A genuine prophecy or a prophecy operated by the Holy Spirit has unique characteristics:

- It never contradicts the written Word of God. This is one more reason why the



prophetic expressions must be "tested" by the word of God: it never tells us by a word of prophecy, to do anything against what the Word prohibits.

- It will always exalt Jesus Christ and will never speak ill of Him.
- It will edify, exhort and comfort believers. It will never leave them confused, troubled or insecure.
- It should "testify" to the majority of Christians that are present, especially the more mature believers who themselves are frequently used in the operation of the vocal gifts.
- It will not break the spirit of unity even though it may change the direction of the meeting.
- If there is a foretelling aspect, this must come to pass.
- It is approved by "the fruit test". Referring to false prophets Jesus declared, "you shall know them by their fruit" (Matthew 7:16). We should reject any one of the so-called "prophecies" that come from someone whose life and actions hurt the cause of Christ.

### **How to prophesy**

- Relax, don't be tense.
- Wait silently for the Lord in your spirit.
- Keep your mind open to hear his voice. Whenever you feel the touch of the Holy Spirit inside of your spirit deliver yourself to God to be used as a channel by which he can flow.
- Remember that this gift is operated by faith.
- Begin to speak everything that God gives to you. Proceed in simplicity.
- While you are speaking, wait silently on the Lord to receive the rest of the message.
- Do not prophesy beyond the measure of your faith (Romans 12:6).
- Discern when the Spirit has finished speaking and stop talking!

### **THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE - 1 COR. 12:8**

The word of knowledge is a small part or piece of God's knowledge, given to a person by the Holy Spirit. This gift involves facts or information provided by supernatural revelation.

This information was previously unknown by the person. The knowledge could not have been obtained in a natural way therefore the need of divine intervention of a supernatural revelation. The Word of God presents us with a series of examples of the manifestation of this gift.

#### **1. In the ministry of Jesus**

Jesus knew certain facts about Nathaniel before even personally meeting him (John 1:47-50). He knew many facts about the Samaritan woman even though he had never met her previously. She was amazed by the exactness of his knowledge about her past and present.

## **2. In the primitive church**

Ananias received specific information, full of details, about Saul whom he had never met. He came to know exactly on which street and at which house Saul was staying. He knew that Saul had been praying at that exact moment in that when he put his hands upon him his vision would be restored (Acts 9:10-20).

## **3. In the Old Testament**

Among the various passages in the Old Testament that can be cited as examples, the prophet Nathan would probably be the best: God revealed the fact and details of David's transgression, when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and ordered the murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 12:1-14).

## **4. Observation**

The word of knowledge is different from human knowledge obtained through natural means. This revelation is not obtainable through intellectual learning, the study of books or by an academic career of study in a college or university. It is always operated by the spirit.

## **5. The use of this gift in the Scriptures**

- To reveal sin (2 Samuel 12:1-10; Acts 5:1-11)
- To lead people to God (John 1:47-50; 4:18-20)
- To guide and lead (Acts 9:11)
- To minister encouragement in times of depression (1 Kings 19:9)
- To transmit knowledge concerning future events (John 11:11-14)
- To reveal hidden things (1 Samuel 10:22)

## **6. The operation of this gift**

- It is supernatural in character - it is not obtained by logic, deduction, reasoning etc. nor can it be obtained through the natural senses, but by supernatural revelation by the Holy Spirit.
- It is dependent on faith - the person that receives revelation receives it by faith.
- It is received in our spirit - it is not something that passes through the filter of reason or emotion.
- It is not necessarily a vocal gift (Acts 9:10, 11) - sometimes it can be manifested through a vision.
- It can become vocal when it is being shared with others (John 1:47; 4:18) - the knowledge received by the operation of the gift is shared with the people that are around us.
- Any Christian full of the spirit that is open to hearing God can experience the functioning of this gift - there is no distinction of people for the operation of this gift. The Holy Spirit does not make a previous selection of people before deciding through whom He can trust the revelation.
- It is a valuable tool in the ministry of counseling - having the revelation we are able to counsel people who seek guidance in a better way.
- An action and response in obedience are essential so that the manifestation of this gift continues to flow in our ministry - it does no good to receive revelation of some fact if this does not contribute to the fulfillment of any purpose.

- The gift of a word of wisdom frequently manifests itself together with the gift of knowledge - a divinely transmitted wisdom for the purpose of knowing what to do with respect to a word of knowledge and how to apply it correctly and wisely.

## **THE WORD OF WISDOM - 1 COR. 12:8**

This gift is at the beginning of the list because it is very important. It enables us to speak and act in divine wisdom, and in this way assures the correct use and application of the other gifts. When the word of wisdom is absent, the other gifts can be used in a wrong manner, causing confusion.

The word of wisdom is the divine, supernaturally transmitted wisdom of the Holy Spirit. It provides us with the necessary wisdom to know what to say or do in a given situation.

God frequently grants us this gift together with the word of knowledge so that believers can know how to apply the word of knowledge correctly. God revealed the whereabouts of Saul to Ananias through a word of knowledge. He also showed him, by the word of wisdom, what should be done in that difficult situation.

### **Some Considerations**

So that we can clearly understand this gift, we will use an illustration to explain thoroughly what the gift of wisdom means. A certain man falls into legal trouble and hires a lawyer. The lawyer does not communicate to his client all of the wisdom and knowledge that he possesses. He only uses the portion of knowledge necessary to resolve the needs of his client. God, who knows all things, in the same way takes from his infinite stock of wisdom a portion of his wisdom that is needed for his children, He does this through the Spirit.

Concerning the word of knowledge, we can yet say:

- It is not a natural wisdom, but supernatural with supernatural characteristics.
- It is not wisdom obtained through academic accomplishments or life experiences. It is given by the Holy Spirit when and how He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11).
- It is not a gift of wisdom to understand the Bible; the Spirit grants this gift to meet a specific need or situation.

### **Some biblical examples**

- The temptation of Jesus in the desert (Luke 4:1-13) The answer that Jesus gave to Satan were words of wisdom transmitted by the Holy Spirit.
- The scribes set a trap for Jesus, but the word of wisdom given by the spirit confused all of them (Luke 20:22-26).
- Again the scribes and Pharisees set a trap for Jesus, but his wise words and the manner that he took care of the situation confused his enemies (John 8:3-11).
- In the face of a specific situation, wisdom was granted to administer a need to the church (Acts 6:1-5).
- Requested in the face of a crisis the apostles received the correct guidance so that it was resolved (Acts 15:28).
- Paul received control over a specific situation that resulted in the salvation of many lives (Acts 7:23, 24).

The word of wisdom was promised to all of Christ's disciples: "therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist" (Luke 21:14, 15).

The word of wisdom is not necessarily a vocal gift, but a gift of revelation. We receive it silently within our spirit. God releases it when it is expressed verbally in the form of counsel, sermons, prophecies or when we act upon it.

## **DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS - 1 COR. 12:10**

The discernment of spirits is a more important gift than we generally imagine. If this spiritual gift were more frequently used with its complement, the casting out of demons, many of the problems that we face today would be greatly minimized.

The discernment of spirits is the third of the gifts of revelation. The word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are the other two. It is a divine gift transmitted by the Holy Spirit so that we can penetrate the spiritual realm and distinguish the spirit of Satan (evil spirits), and the spirit of God in the human spirit. Through this gift, we can discern the origin of certain actions, teachings and circumstances that were inspired by spiritual beings.

This gift is more limited than the other two gifts of revelation. The revelation given in this case is limited to the original behavior in question. However, the discernment of spirits is just as supernatural in its operation as any other of the eight gifts of the spirit. It provides the church with information that is not available in any other way.

### **1. The function of the gift**

The gift of discernment of spirits gives us a supernatural understanding of the nature and activities of spirits. It enables us to distinguish whether a specific activity has a divine, human or satanic origin and reveals the nature of the spirits in question.

It is easy to confuse the works of the spirit of Satan with those of the spirit of God. Satan always tries to falsify the works of the Holy Spirit. Satan is known as the deceiver, the father of lies, the serpent. All of these titles imply a subtle and artificial imitation that he uses to produce evil whenever possible. Many times, his falsifications are so plausible that people can be completely deceived unless someone exercises the supernatural gift of discernment of spirits. If demonic activities were always obviously perverse and repulsive as we imagine, there would be no need for the use of this gift.

In the narration of the young girl with the spirit of divinity in Acts 16, Paul challenge the spirit that perhaps could have easily deceived other servants of God. The girl made a perfectly true statement when she said: "these men that are announcing a way of salvation, are servants of the most high.", But the spirit that was speaking through her was an evil spirit.

Why would an evil spirit advertise the apostles in this manner? Because it was of no help to the gospel and the hearers may have thought that she was part of their group and thus could have discredited them.

### **2. The operation and need for this gift today**

The gift of discernment of spirits is experiencing its own revival in many parts of the world today. It can be seen in action in ministries of many men of God of renewal going

on in the world today. It is absolutely essential that this gift be operated so that the church can completely fulfill its mission and destroy the works of the devil. There are as many demons in the world today as there was at the time when Jesus walked on the Earth in the days of the early church. Their purpose is clearly evil. This supernatural gift is especially necessary for missionaries and workers in pagan lands where spiritualism, Satanism and occultism are abundant.

### **3. How the gift of discernment of spirits works**

The first and most obvious function of this gift is to reveal the presence of evil spirits in the midst of people and churches. However, it also functions to evaluate the source of a prophetic message, of a particular teaching or of some supernatural manifestation. The person that exercises this gift will be able to say if the origin of message for action is demonic, divine or merely human. If we discern that the origin is demonic, the person that exercises this gift generally will be able to reveal:

- The nature of the demon - This refers to its type of work: lies, sicknesses and diseases (like cancer, blindness, deafness etc.), impure behavior and similar things.
- The name of the demon - This is generally revealed together with the nature of the demon, even though it is not really uncommon for the nature to be included in the name itself.
- The number of demons - An example of this is the case of "Legion" (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30) and of Mary, from which Jesus cast out seven demons (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). It is really not that uncommon for a person to be possessed by more than one spirit at a time.
- The strength of specific demons - Generally, during a confrontation with an evil spirit, the person that is exercising the discernment of spirits probably knows which among various demons is the strongest and has the greatest authority.
- Further information - Many times, the demons themselves give a lot of verbal information to the person that they know has supernaturally discerned their presence and have the power to expel them. However, since we can expect that the demons will lie, it is a good idea to doubt the information that they give and rely on the supernaturally given information of the Holy Spirit.

### **4. The discernment of spirits doesn't always involve faith to cast out demons**

Even though the gift of discerning of spirits is essential for an effective deliverance, it is not sufficient in and of itself. It needs to operate together with the gifts of faith and the operation of miracles. Those who exercise these gifts have more success in the casting out demons.

### **THE GIFT OF FAITH - 1 COR. 12:9**

Since faith deals with the future and with impossible things that are not physically experienced, the gift of faith is to build the special ability given to someone with the call of exercising an extraordinary ability to believe. God sovereignly empties this person of any doubt and fills them with special faith that enables them to accomplish the purpose of God, in spite of all contrary circumstances and contradictory facts of life. It is a special dispensation of faith that God endows to a believer full of the Holy Spirit when the task

that he is given to a believer requires more than ordinary or general faith.

The gift of faith has a function vastly superior to general faith, which grows from the original seed of the saving faith that God planted within our hearts (Romans 1:17). The seed of faith generally grows by stages of development of the believer ("little faith", "great faith" etc.) general faith grows because of our feeding on the word, of being exercised by the circumstances of life, so on and so forth. This general faith can be developed to a very elevated level. However, the gift of faith is a superior function even higher than the highest level of general faith.

Some translators refer to the gift of faith as a special faith. This indicates a faith granted by the Holy Spirit to meet our needs in special circumstances. This further suggests that the gift of faith is not permanently resident in any believer, but that each manifestation is a separate gift of faith. An episode in the life of Elisha illustrates this: he declared to King Ahab that at his word there would be no more rain; after this he said that it would rain again but only at his word (1 Kings 17:1). His gift of faith produced the miraculous fulfillment of this prophecy.

In contrast, this extraordinary faith was lacking when Elijah sat underneath the broom tree, fearful, depressed and desiring his own death because he was no longer necessary at that moment (1 Kings 19:4). He had not lost his faith in God or His word. His own faith was strengthened, teaching him to believe in God, to be encouraged when God had told him that he had separated seven thousand faithful followers in Israel.

God wants you to know that you can confidently move ahead, knowing that when special demands are placed upon you, he will supernaturally give you a special faith to enable you to fulfill his purposes.

### **How does the gift of faith function?**

It appears that the gift of faith functions in a passive way, but that is not always so. Daniel's protection against the Lions (a manifestation of the gift of faith) appears to contrast with the occasion when Samson killed the lion (an example of the active involvement of man in the manifestation of the power of God). This would be an example of the gift of the operation of miracles. The impression that the gift of faith functions passively occurs because it generally operates in cooperation with more dramatic gifts, like for example, the operation of miracles, and the gift of healing etc.

The gift of faith also functions when we speak a word of faith – "I believed thus I spoke" (2 Corinthians 4:13). However the words that a man of God speaks when inspired by the Holy Spirit are confirmed by God as if they were his own words.

The results are not always immediate but they are sure. This gift can function in several ways for example, to bless, to curse, to create or to destroy etc.

There are some notable examples of the gift of faith functioning through the spoken word:

- Joshua commanded the Sun and Moon to stop in their paths (Joshua 10:12-14).
- Elisha controlled time through his word (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17).
- Paul silenced Elymas (Acts 13:11).
- Peter judged Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)

The Scriptures teach the principle of the word of faith: "whatever you say will be

done" (Mark 11:23), "have faith in God" (Mark 11:22), "you will also declare a thing, and it will be established for you" (Job 22:28).

## **GIFTS OF HEALING – 1 COR. 12:9**

The three references to this gift in 1 Corinthians 12 are in verses 9, 28 and 30. In each one of them, the original words are, *charismata* and *iamaton*. Both are in the plural which makes the translation correct to be expressed as gifts of healing.

The gifts of healing function supernaturally to heal sicknesses and diseases without any type of natural means. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that comes over a body of a person, dissolving their diseases and taking away the pains to heal them.

The use of nouns in the plural emphasizes the abundance of this gift of God available to men who suffer infirmities. This also emphasizes that the healing that Jesus brings frees us of all sickness, weakness, plagues, deformities and afflictions. This also suggests that there is a great variety of manifestations of this gift (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

The exercise of the gifts of healing does not give to the person who is exercising this ability to heal all the sick all the time. Some people do not understand this point very well and ask why we don't go into hospitals or similar places to heal all of the sick that are there. Not even Jesus did this. He did go to one place we could claim corresponds to a modern hospital only one time, when he went to the tank of bedside where there was a multitude of sick people. Even then, He chose to cure only one person among all the others that were sick. Many times, we read about great multitudes of sick people that would come to Jesus and we read that he "heal them all." An important principle of divine healing is that the person needs to go to Jesus and cooperate with his own faith.

### **The purpose of the gifts of healing**

- To free the sick and afflicted; destroy the works of the devil in human bodies (1 John 3:8; Acts 10:38; Luke 13:16).
- To prove the claim of Christ that He is the Son of God (John 10:36-38)
- To confirm the word (Mark 16:17-20).
- To attract people to the sound of the gospel (Matthew 4:23; 25)
- To bring glory to God (Mark 2:12; Luke 13:13; 18:43; John 9:2, 3)

The Holy Spirit gives the gifts of healing to God's servants in order for them to transmit to whoever the Lord wants to heal for His purposes. As with all of the gifts, the gifts of healing not only must be given, they also must be received. Just as there is a principle of faith related to how to minister these gifts, there is a principle that deals with the manner to receive them. Hezekiah had a hard time receiving the gift of healing that God sent to him. His faith had to be strengthened in a special way, through the miracle recorded in 2 Kings 20:8-11 (see also 2 Kings 5:10-14). Naaman had a hard time in receiving the gift of healing that God sent to him through Elisha. Healing in general requires a double act of faith: faith to receive and faith to administer the gift of healing.

Although there are exceptions to this rule, God always desires to heal. However, sometimes the normal channels through which his power of healing flows are not functioning very well. This may require God to send a special gift of healing. Sometimes God grants gifts of healing through normal healing channels; in other occasions through

extraordinary means according to His will (for example Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15)).

## **THE GIFT OF MIRACLES – 1 COR. 12:10**

A miracle occurs when God intervenes in the normal course of nature. The gift of miracles occurs when God enables us with power by the Holy Spirit to do something completely outside of the sphere of human abilities. He gives it to us in a specific occasion for a specific purpose.

All of the gifts of the spirit are miraculous, but the use of the word "miracle", in this case refers to acts of power.

Miracles provide an undeniable proof of the resurrection, if Jesus was not alive, His name would have no power to heal the sick and perform miracles (Acts 4:30-33). Peter convince the unbelieving Jews of the resurrection of Jesus and of their need of repentance because of the strength of fact that the name of Jesus still had power to heal the sick and perform miracles. Beginning with this fact, a series of events were set into motion:

- The believers were filled with boldness to preach Christ (Acts 4:29, 30), leading people to recognize that they had been with Jesus, the performer of miracles (Acts 4:13).
- The hunger for God was dramatically intensified in the believers (Acts 4:23-31).
- Men were convicted and condemned by their sins (Acts 5:28, 33).
- 5000 people were converted in one day through a miracle (Acts 4:4; 5:14).
- Everyone glorified God by what had happened (Acts 4:21).
- The gospel spread rapidly (Acts 5:14-16).

Before Jesus began performing miracles, no one followed Him anywhere. He must have preached frequently in the synagogues since this was his custom (Luke 4:16). But, when the miracles began to happen (Luke 4:33-35), "and the report about him went out into every place in the surrounding region." (Luke 4:37). From then on the multitudes pressed in on Him to hear His words and see His miracles: then great multitudes followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased." (John 6:2).

Wherever the disciples preached, the sick were healed, demons were cast out, miracles were performed and the multitudes came to Christ:

- Samaria paid attention to Philip because they saw and heard the signs that he performed (Acts 8:6).
- All the inhabitants of Sharon and Lydda came to the Lord when Peter told Aeneas: Jesus the Christ heals you. "Arise and make your bed." And he got up immediately (Acts 9:34).
- Many people in Joppa believed when Peter resurrected Dorcas (Acts 9:42).
- The people of Lystra thought that the gods had descended among them when they saw the lame man walk and jump because of the words spoken by Paul (acts 14: 9-18). "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And the believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes both men and women, so



that they brought the sick out into the streets and lay them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow left Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed." (Acts 5:12-16).

- The book of Acts ends with miracles in full force (Acts 28:8, 9). When the people saw Publius healed, they believed that God could heal people; therefore, he was willing and able to heal all who have the need of healing. When people think and believe correctly with relationship to God, they receive what He so desires to give to them.

The performing of miracles is an enabling of the Holy Spirit released upon a believer in order to perform a miracle. It is different from a miracle performed by God in the life of a believer. Many people, who have never received the gift of miracles many times, have experienced stupefying miracles performed by God operating through them.

### **Some examples**

- Peter's release from prison (Acts 5:17-20; 12:1-10) and also of Paul and Silas (At. 16:15-30).
- The supernatural transportation of Philip (Acts 8:39).

These many other examples are miracles performed by God in the life of the believers, sometimes even without their cooperation. In this case, the given examples do not deal with the manifestation of the gift of miracles. Concerning the manifestation of this gift, let us examine some examples taken from the book of Acts:

- God perform signs and wonders at the hands of Paul (Acts 19:11).
- Peter resurrected Dorcas (Acts 9:40).
- Paul resurrected Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12).

### **Practical operation of this gift**

In practical terms, the use of this gift depends on at least three elements for its manifestation:

- The anointing of the Holy Spirit -Through this anointing a special confidence and authority are granted.
- A word of faith and authority - Elisha said that the God that answered by fire was the God of Israel. The fire that came down from heaven was an example of the gift of miracles.
- A bold act of faith - Without faith no miracle can be performed by anyone.

## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. What is the importance of the gift of tongues?

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2. How does the gift of interpretation of tongues work?

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3. What is the gift of prophecy?

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4. Explain the gift of the word of knowledge.

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5. Explain the gift of the word of wisdom.

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6. How does the gift of discernment of spirits work?

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7. Explain the gift of faith.

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8. How are the gifts of healing manifested?

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9. What is the gift of the operation of miracles?

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**10**

**THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND RETURN OF JESUS**



We must be clear about understanding that the inheritance of eternal life is something different from entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lord Jesus speaking of John the Baptist said that until now the Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force (Matthew 11:12). Only those who strive for it are able take possession of it. The Law and prophets ended with John (verses 12, 13). Based on the words of this passage some Christians have affirmed that we must be violent and strive to receive our salvation. They teach that if we do not do this then we will be lost. This shows a grave misunderstanding of the difference between the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life.

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ETERNAL LIFE AND THE KINGDOM**

### **God distributes rewards during the millennium and not for eternity in Heaven**

The first difference is in relation to time. Eternal life is for eternity, but the kingdom is not. When the new heaven and new earth arrive, the kingdom of heaven will pass away. The kingdom of heaven refers to the government of God. The Bible defines the time of the earthly rule of the government of God as the kingdom of heaven. Which heaven, you may ask. The book of Daniel speaks about the government of heaven. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is the realm in which heaven rules. The time that the Lord Jesus comes to reign over the earth will be the time that Heaven governs the world. Today the devil governs over the system of the world through the press, politics and world authority. The Lord Jesus will not reign on the earth until the time of the kingdom of heaven. However, the space of time in which the authority of heaven is affected is very brief.

In 1Corinthians 15:24 we read:

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

The Lord will deliver the kingdom to God the Father. However, there is a temporal limit to the kingdom. Eternal life however will last forever. All who read the text above know that in the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth that is, at the conclusion of the millennium, the Lord will deliver the kingdom to His Father. Therefore, there is a difference of time between eternal life and the kingdom of heaven.

### **Eternal life comes by faith; rewards come by good works**

The second difference lies in the method by which man enters the kingdom of heaven and the manner in which he obtains eternal life, the last being what the whole Gospel of John is about. The way of having eternal life is by believing, as soon as we believe we receive it. However, entering into the kingdom of heaven is not a simple matter. The Gospel of Matthew mentions the phrase "kingdom of heaven" 32 times. Not one time does it say that we receive the kingdom by faith. How then, may one receive the kingdom?

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

The entrance into the kingdom of heaven is a matter of works. Matthew 5:3 also tells us: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Here it does not say eternal life, but the kingdom of heaven. To obtain the kingdom, a person must be poor in spirit. The Lord also says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake:

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Verse 10). The requirement of suffering persecution for the sake of righteousness is not to receive eternal life, but to receive the kingdom. Even if a believer has eternal life, if he does not suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness and is not poor in spirit, he may not yet take part in the kingdom.

**Once we receive eternal life we don't need to keep seeking it; however we must constantly seek the reward**

God never tells us to seek to obtain eternal life. On the contrary, whenever the Lord speaks of eternal life, He always shows that we already possess it. However, with respect to the kingdom, the word says that we should seek to obtain it and seek it diligently. Today we seek the kingdom because we have not yet obtained it. We still need to strive to seek it.

**Eternal life is by grace; the reward is by merit**

The fourth difference lies in the manner of which God deals with the kingdom and with eternal life. Eternal life is given to us as a gift of God (Romans 6:23). It is grace given equally by the Lord Jesus to all those who believe in Him. However, the same does not occur with the kingdom. Remember the mother of the two sons of Zebedee who came to the Lord wanting Jesus to place her two sons on either side of the Lord in His kingdom (Matthew 20:21). However, the Lord told her, "to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared by my Father." (Verse 23) We obtain grace by calling out to God. However, to receive the kingdom depends upon someone participating in the Lord's baptism and drinking the cup that he drank. Both the disciples said that they were able. However, the Lord said that just because they promised that they would, it was not a matter for him to decide. Only the Father could grant such a request.

We can see the same principle when one of the two thieves that were crucified on either side of the Lord said to Him, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." (Luke 23:42)

Did the Lord hear his prayer? Yes, without a doubt! However, he did not give him his request. The thief asked the Lord to remember him when he received the kingdom. The Lord Jesus did not answer him saying that he would be with Him in the kingdom, but on that same day, he would be with Him in paradise (verse 43). He gave him an answer concerning paradise. If we call out to God just one time, we will be saved. However, it is not as easy to reign, great effort is necessary to earn the kingdom. Therefore, there is a great difference here. God's attitude concerning eternal life and the privileges of the kingdom of heaven is different: one is a gift of God and the other is a reward from God.

In Revelation 20, the Word shows us that the martyrs will receive the kingdom, although it does not say that they will be the only ones to receive it (verse four). The Bible, however, never shows us that man must be martyred in order to receive eternal life. However, obtaining the kingdom requires effort, even to the point of martyrdom to obtain it. For example, material sacrifice is a condition to obtain the kingdom of heaven; a person must lose his love for riches. The Bible clearly shows us that no person on earth that is rich in his own means can enter the kingdom of heaven. We cannot say that rich people cannot be saved or enter into eternal life just because it is impossible for a camel to pass through



the eye of a needle. However we can say that it is difficult for rich people to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23, 24).

Thank God, the poor can be saved and inherit eternal life just as the rich can. However, to enter into the kingdom of heaven is a problem for the rich. If we accumulate riches on the earth, we will not be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is obvious that this does not mean that someone must give up all riches today. However, it is necessary that a person deliver all of his riches to the Lord. We are only administrators. We are not the owners of the house. The Bible never recognizes a Christian as the owner of his money. Each one is merely a steward of the money that belongs to the Lord. This is a condition for entering into the kingdom.

Something else is peculiar to inheriting the kingdom of heaven; you never see matters of marriage and family involved in the matters related to eternal life. However, the gospel of Matthew says that some will never get married because of the kingdom of heaven. Some have even made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:12). In order to obtain a place in the kingdom, they chose to remain virgins. Nobody sees eternal life as something that God will deny a married person since it has no relationship to family or marriage, the matter of inheriting the kingdom however will be denied because of these things. This is the reason that the Bible teaches that those who have a wife should be as those who had not. Those who use the world should be as those who do not use it, and those who buy as if they possessed nothing (1Corinthians 7:29 – 31). This relates to our position in the kingdom of heaven.

### **Eternal life is the same for everyone; but the reward will be different for each person**

In the kingdom, there are several levels of authority. Some will receive 10 cities, others will receive five (Luke 19:17 – 19). Some will merely receive recompense, but others will receive a reward. Some will receive a rich entrance into the kingdom (2Peter 1:11) others will not. However, there is a difference in levels of authority in the kingdom, but this will not happen with respect to eternal life. Eternal life is the same for everyone. No one will receive 10 more years or anything than another, because there is no difference, however in the kingdom there is a difference.

If you stop and think about it, you will perceive that the Bible treats the kingdom and eternal life as two distinct things. The condition for salvation is faith in the Lord. Besides faith, there is no other condition, since the Son of God has already fulfilled all of the requirements. The death of his son satisfies all of God's demands. However, to enter into the kingdom of heaven is another matter: it requires works. Today, a man receives salvation through the righteousness of God. However, we cannot enter into the kingdom unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). The matter of eternal life is completely based on the work of the Lord Jesus. However, the kingdom is based on man's works done in faith and dependence on God's strength.

### **THE REWARD AND THE GIFT OF GOD**

Let us continue to observe the difference between recompense and the gift of God, in other words, the difference between the kingdom and eternal life. Many people think that the kingdom of heaven is the same as eternal life and vice versa. They consider that the loss

of the kingdom is the loss of eternal life. However, the distinction between the two is very clear in the Bible. A person may lose the kingdom of heaven, but not eternal life someone may lose the recompense, however he will not lose the gift (or gift of God).

So then, what is the recompense and what is the gift? We were saved because of the gift of God. He gave us eternal life freely by His grace; therefore, we were saved. The recompense speaks with respect to our relationship to God after we received eternal life. If someone believes in Him, accepting Him as their life, then they will receive eternal life. After this, the Lord immediately places this person on a path in such a way that he runs the race to obtain the recompense placed before him. The Christian receives salvation because of the work of the Lord Jesus. After receiving salvation, he must manifest the victory of Christ by the Holy Spirit in his day-to-day life. If he does this, then at the end of his race, he will obtain glorious and heavenly rewards.

Therefore, salvation is the first step of this path and recompense is the last. When people believe in Christ, they receive the gift. However, when they follow Christ, they receive the recompense. We obtain the gift by faith, and God offers it to all people indiscriminately. We obtain the recompense by being faithful and practicing good works, and it is a reward for only faithful Christians.

There is a great misunderstanding in churches today. Many church members think that salvation is the only thing that there is to the Christian life and there is nothing beyond this. They consider the kingdom of heaven to be the same thing as eternal life that once saved when they believe; there is no need to be concerned with works. The Bible makes a distinction between God's part and man's part. One part is the salvation given by God, and the other is the glory of the millennial kingdom. Salvation has absolutely nothing to do with a person's works. As soon as a person believes in Jesus, he is saved. However, after his salvation he needs to enter the race in order to receive future glory, a crown and a throne. God places a throne, a crown, a glory and a recompense before believers. If a person is faithful, he will receive them, if not we will lose them.

Good works are useless as far as salvation goes, but they are necessary with respect to recompense, a crown, glory and a throne. God will not permit men to be saved by works, in the same manner; He will not permit man to be rewarded without works. The Lord only decides about the salvation or perdition of men depending on whether they believe in His son or not. Your salvation has to do with whether or not you have made this decision. Whether you receive the recompense and glory or not depends on your good works before God. In other words, God never saves a person because of his merits, and He never rewards a person that does not have merit. Man must come to God completely dependent and without merit in order to receive salvation. However, after receiving salvation, we must be faithful, and strive to produce good works through his Son Jesus Christ in order to receive the recompense.

The problem today is that people make no distinction between salvation and the kingdom. In the Bible, there is a clear distinction between one and the other, between the gift and the recompense. Salvation is not the last step of the Christian experience. On the contrary, salvation is the first step. After receiving salvation, we must run the race and pursue the recompense before us. Salvation is not our recompense. Many Christians think

that the glory is simply the grace of salvation, and thus become foolish in their Christian walk. We must apply works only to reward and grace to salvation.

Through salvation, God separates the saved from the lost; he separates those who have eternal life from those who are condemned. In the same manner, God also separates his children into groups in relation to His rewards. He separates the obedient from the disobedient. For those of the world, it is a matter of having or not having faith, of receiving or not receiving salvation. For Christians, it is a matter of being faithful or not, of being or not being rewarded.

Many children of God today overly exalt salvation and this ends up being a problem; all they see is salvation. May God be merciful to us so that we can understand that He has already resolved the matter of our salvation. Our salvation can no longer be shaken, since Jesus Christ already accomplished it. Our salvation is completely accomplished. We should strive for the reward before us. There will be a great differentiation in the kingdom: some will receive glory, others will not.

## **THE BASIS FOR RECOMPENSE**

We will now examine the basis upon which the recompense is given. The Word of God tells us that God gives the recompense as a reward for work. Just as the Bible clearly says that salvation comes through faith, the recompense comes through the works of Christians. Faith is related to salvation and works are related to the recompense; the Scriptures make this clear. No one should confuse these two things.

Romans 4:4 says: "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." To reward someone who works is not grace, but payment of a debt. In other words, how can someone receive recompense? The answer is through works, not by faith.

I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:23)

This verse says that the Lord will recompense each one according to his works. How will He do this? The answer is He will reward each of us according to our works. It is clear that this is not our own work, but it is only when Christ lives in us that we have the works of a Christian. Therefore, this verse clearly shows us that the matter of recompense depends upon the Christian being worthy or not.

"If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward." (1Corinthians 3:14)

The verse above says that if your work endures, God will reward you for it. It does not say that if your faith endures, that God will reward you. The question of reward depends on the person's work. The Bible clearly distinguishes salvation from reward. It never confuses salvation with reward; neither does it confuse faith with works. Without faith, man cannot be saved. However, without works, man cannot receive the reward. The person's works must overcome the scrutiny of the judgment before the throne and survive the meticulous examination of God's eyes of fire, before there is the possibility of receiving a reward.

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be

great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. (Luke 6:35)

The reward is entirely due to the person's works. Loaning money without expecting to be paid, loving your enemies, are examples of works to obtain reward. In no place in the Bible does it mention that someone needs to love their enemy or do good to be saved. However, the Bible does say that if you loan money and do good to others, your reward in heaven will be great. The reward comes from works and not from faith. Faith can save you, but faith cannot help you receive the reward.

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. (2Timothy 4:14)

We have as an example Alexander, a first century Christian who had sinned against Paul and tried to harm him even more. Both were Christians. They were not people from the world. In the future, God will reward Christians according to their works.

## **THE REWARD AND THE KINGDOM**

Many people understand that the difference between salvation and reward. However, many Christians do not see the reality of reward. When the Lord Jesus says in the Gospel of John that he gives eternal life to his sheep, He is making a true statement and not just speaking empty words (John 10:28). In Romans 6 Paul teaches that the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (verse 23). So what is reward then? The Bible clearly shows us that reward is a crown, a throne, and the kingdom of heaven. In the Bible, there are three aspects to the kingdom of heaven.

- In the first aspect, the kingdom of heaven is a manifestation of the authority and the Lordship of God today
- The second aspect is the authority of heaven controlling and limiting man
- However, there is a third aspect of the kingdom of heaven that refers to reward

The Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7, gives us the Lord's teachings about how man can enter into the kingdom of heaven. In this Bible text, the writer repeatedly mentions the matter of reward. We can clearly perceive that the words "the kingdom of heaven" and "reward" frequently occur close to each other. In the Beatitudes we read:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-8; 10)

The Lord mentioned the kingdom of heaven two times in these few verses. At the end of the Beatitudes He says:

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)

Here we must admit that the reward is the kingdom of heaven. The Lord begins saying

that these types of people are blessed because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, because their reward in heaven is great. This passage shows us that the kingdom of heaven is a reward that God grants to His people under certain conditions. There is no difference between the two.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord mentioned the matter of reward many times, since this portion speaks about the kingdom. In Matthew 5, Jesus said, "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?" (Matthew 5:46).

Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. (Matthew 6:1, 2)

Later on in the sermon Jesus tells us: "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. [...] they have their reward. (Matthew 6:5) and "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward". Verse 4 says: "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly".

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. In (Matthew 6:6)

The last part of verse 18 says, "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly". Every Bible reader agrees that the principal subject of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 is the kingdom of heaven. However, Jesus mentions the matter of reward repeatedly here, because the kingdom of heaven is a reward.

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Matthew 16:27)

God will reward or discipline a saved person according to his works.

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (Verse 28)

There are three facts here. First, Christ will reward men according to their works. The matter of reward is entirely based on works. Second, at what moment will He distribute these rewards? The answer is when Christ returns in the glory of the Father with his angels. This will be the time that he establishes His kingdom over the earth. Therefore, the reward will begin only when the kingdom begins.

The verses of Matthew 6, that we have read concerning the reward for giving, for praying, and fasting, involve reward. Some people think that the reward for praying is receiving the answer of our prayers. However, this is not the complete meaning. The Lord Jesus said that we should pray to the Father in secret and our Father who hears us in secret will reward us. It is possible to interpret this as the Father answering prayers. However, just as in the first part, when the Lord mentioned giving alms to the poor, as in the second part, when he mentioned fasting, he said "and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you

openly". This reward refers to something in the future. Aside from this, the Lord said that we should pray to the Father who sees in secret. It does not say that the Father hears in secret, but that he sees in secret. When God distributes the reward in the future, He will give according to what he saw. Therefore, the reward is in the future.

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth." (Revelation 11:15; 18)

These passages clearly show that when the Lord makes the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, that will be the time that he will give the reward to his saints, to the small and the great. In other words, the time of the kingdom is the time of reward, when the first comes, the reward will also come.

There is an additional point. The reward is the obtaining of the crown and the throne. A missionary once said: "if I can't have a crown, at least I can have the kingdom". What is a crown? It is not just a sculptured hat of gold decorated with diamonds. This type of crown can be purchased with money. So then, what is a crown? It is the representation of a position in the kingdom. A crown also represents glory in the kingdom. If the crown was merely an object, it does not mean much. If a person has enough money, he could make his own crown of gold. If they do not have enough money, they could make one of bronze or iron. Even a poor person could make a crown out of paper or cloth. In the future, there will be no crowns bigger than others or with more diamonds than the others. A crown represents something. When someone loses their crown, they lose that which the crown represents. The crown is a symbol of the kingdom.

What is the throne? The Bible shows us that the 12 apostles will sit in 12 thrones. The crown and the throne are rewards for the overcomers. Therefore, the throne is also a symbol of the kingdom. It represents position, authority and glory in the kingdom. There is no possibility of someone losing the crown but retaining the kingdom. Similarly, no one can lose the throne and still have the kingdom. If someone loses the throne, he also loses the kingdom. In the same way, if someone loses the crown, he will also lose the kingdom. The throne and the crown in themselves, are insignificant; they only exist to represent the kingdom. In other words, the reward is the kingdom. The Bible shows us clearly that the reward is simply the kingdom.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING THE KINGDOM**

We have made it clear that the kingdom is the time when God will reward Christians according to their works. In the kingdom, the faithful believers will receive rewards, and the unfaithful will receive punishment. Some people think that if a Christian is unfaithful, he will occupy an inferior position in heaven, however, he will do so in the kingdom. Many people who do not understand the Word and the work of God think that they are guaranteed an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. They think that, when the Lord Jesus comes to reign, that there will simply be a distinction between the highest and the lowest

positions in the kingdom; that no one will completely lose the kingdom of heaven. However, there will not only be distinctions between higher and lower positions, there will also be a distinction between who God permits to enter and who He will exclude from the kingdom. The Bible shows that there is a clear difference between 10 and 5 cities, between one crown and another crown and between greater glory and a lesser glory. Just as a star differs in glory from another, in the same way there will be different positions in the kingdom. There is not only a difference between lower and higher positions; there is also distinction of entering or not entering.

### **1. Do the will of God**

The Bible reveals a very serious truth. In spite of a person having eternal life, God can still disqualify him and prohibit him from entering into the kingdom of heaven. Let us examine a Bible passage that speaks about this:

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

First of all, everyone refers to the Lord as "Lord". However, He will make a distinction between the disciples that can enter into the kingdom and those that cannot. The Lord clearly shows us here that a condition for entering into the kingdom of heaven is to do the will of God. Although Christians have received eternal life, call Jesus Lord, and practice good works, some do not do the will of God, so they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. If Christians are not faithful while living on the earth, they will not lose eternal life, but they will lose the kingdom of heaven. When the time comes that heaven reigns on the earth, that is when the Lord Jesus comes for the second time; some Christians will not be prepared to enter into the kingdom and will lose it.

The Lord explains this matter in the form of prophecy. There will be many, not only one or two, that will not do the will of God.

Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:22, 23)

Here the Lord Jesus tells us what will happen at the throne of judgment. He says, "In that day". Therefore, this does not refer to today, but to the future. There are many who labor, but you do not see the light of God in their lives. When the time of the judgment seat arrives, and Christ begins to judge beginning with the house of God, these Christians will see the light for the first time. They will see that they were wrong in position and in their living.

Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' (Verse 22)

In one verse alone, the people who Jesus is reprimanding use the expression "in your name" three times. This proves that these people belonged to the Lord. The fact that they said, "Lord, Lord" also proves their identity as Christians. They not only said that they had prophesied, cast out demons and had done many miracles; they had done these things in the name of the Lord. The repetition of the phrase "in your name" three times, shows us

the relationship they had with the Lord.

Surprisingly, the Lord tells them, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you'". Many Christians believe that these people were certainly not saved. However, if they were not saved, the words of the Lord here would have no meaning. Matthew 7 is a conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, following the sequence of the word of the Lord concerning the Beatitudes. The Lord Jesus spoke these words to his disciples on the mountain. After the Lord had climbed the mountain, His disciples followed Him and from chapter 5 to 7, He opened his mouth and began to teach them.

The Lord Jesus taught them that they should not call Him Lord merely with their mouth. If they called him Lord, they should also do the will of the Father. Even if they had to prophesy, cast out demons and operate miracles, these works should not substitute the will of the Father. This means that we can prophesy, cast out demons and do miracles without doing the will of the Father. We must remember to not only call him Lord with our mouth, but also do the will of the Father in our daily walk. If the Lord had been speaking concerning the unsaved, these words would completely lose their meaning, because if these people were not saved, it would not matter much to the disciples if they heard His words or not.

In this instance, the Lord Jesus is warning and speaking about those who are saved. He would not warn saved people, and then speak about unsaved people. Suppose that a person had a housecleaner and two daughters, and said to the youngest daughter "Do you see this housecleaner? She was not born to me; I am firing her. You should be obedient today. If you're not obedient, I will do the same thing to you as I did to her". Would this be consistent? The housecleaner is not a member of the family. If she is disobedient, I can fire her. However, a daughter is not a housecleaner. We cannot apply a situation to a daughter in the way that we would treat an employee. The mother should say, "last night I punished your sister, because she was disobedient. Now be careful, if you are not obedient, I will punish you in the same way". The mother would use one sister as an example for the other.

It is not correct to compare the relationship between an employer and employee with the relationship between a mother and daughter. The Lord had no motive to use non-Christians as examples to show His disciples that they must do the will of God. If He did this, the disciples could rise up and answer: they are not saved, but we are saved". If they said this, nobody could say anything else.

What the Lord is saying here is that many people are God's children. They are saved just as you are. They call Him "Lord" and have done many works. However, despite this, the Lord may exclude them from the kingdom. For this reason, you should be careful and do the will of the Father". Only in this way will the disciples know that although they do many good works, if they do not do the will of God, they will receive the same punishment. The Lord was warning us that only those who do the will of God can enter into the kingdom. If someone trusts in their own works to draw near to God, the Lord will say to him, "I do not know you".

Suppose that a judge's son had a traffic accident and hit another car. The police take him to the courthouse for a court appearance. The judge (who happens to be the accused's father) asks him, "Young man, what is your name? How old are you? Where do you live?"



The judge's son could think, "You know the answer to all these questions better than I do". He could answer a few initial questions. However, afterward he might cry out to his father and say, "father, don't you know me?"

What then should the judge do? He should strike his gavel and say: I do not know you in this court of law. In my house, I know you. But in this court, I never knew you". If you observe the scriptures carefully you will recognize that the kingdom is not a question of whether a person is saved or not or whether he is a child of God or not; what really matters is his works after becoming a believer.

Why did the Lord say: "I never knew you"? The next sentence explains, "depart from me, you workers of iniquity". Please remember that the Lord did not tell them to depart from eternal life. In the original Greek, the meaning of "those who practice iniquity" refers to people who do not follow rules, do not keep the law, or who do not accept regulations. In the eyes of God, doing evil does not mean merely doing evil things. It does not matter how much a person has done, once they have not paid attention to God's demands, at the judgment, in the eyes of His Archangel, it is evil in his eyes. The problem is not doing evil, but not having principles. What are the principles? The principles are the Word of God. However, what is the Word of God? It is His will. If you are not doing His will, it does not matter what you do, the Lord will tell you that you are a worker of iniquity. Whoever does things according to their own ego will not take part in the kingdom of heaven.

The purpose of saying these things is to show the importance that works have in the life of a Christian. The Bible clearly explains that a person, after believing in the Lord, although he will never lose eternal life, can lose his place in the glory of the kingdom. If we do not do the will of God, and do things according to our own will instead, God will exclude us from the kingdom. Nothing can substitute the will of God. Those who cannot bring themselves to cease from their own work, certainly know nothing about the will of God. Only those who know the will of God are able to cease from their own work. God wants us to obey His will first, and then do the work. There is a great difference between working and doing the will of God.

## **2. Beat the body to please the Lord**

Many people wrongly interpret the following passage, as if it referred to perdition, when reality it refers to the loss of the kingdom and recompense.

Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1Corinthians 9:23-27)

The apostle Paul feared that, after having preached to others, that he himself would be disqualified. Here Paul was saying that he also ran the risk of disqualifying himself. What does it mean here to be disqualified, and in what can one be disqualified?

In verse 24, Paul compares himself with someone who is participating in a race, in

which only one person can take the prize. Therefore, the matter here is not one of salvation, but of receiving a prize. Paul is speaking about how a saved person can receive the prize; and he is not speaking of how someone can assure his own salvation. Only the children of God can participate in the race and strive for the prize that God wants us to win. If someone is not a child of God, he is not even qualified to enter the race. In no place in the Bible does it say that we can earn salvation by running a race, and if someone is able to run fast enough then they will be saved. If this was true, few people would make it to heaven and salvation would depend on works. The Bible says that the prize comes by running; God has placed us on the racetrack for us to run the race.

What is the prize? Verse 25 says, "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown". The prize is a crown. As we have mentioned before, the crown represents the glory of the kingdom. Therefore, the word "disqualified" does not refer to the loss of salvation, but failure to receive the crown or the prize. If Paul could be disqualified, then all of us run the risk of being disqualified also. If Paul could lose his prize and his crown, then each one of us also runs the risk of losing the prize and the crown.

Verse 26 indicates the reason for disqualification, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air". Paul had a purpose and direction. He did not throw empty punches in the air. His goal and direction were to be pleasing to the Lord (2Corinthians 5:9). Whether he lived or died on the earth, his desire was to be pleasing to the Lord. How did he run the race? He did not run it carelessly. He had a definite direction and goal. He did not throw empty punches and just do what other people told him to do. Neither did he do anything just because of a present need. We do not exist merely to do the work, but to please the Lord.

If we wish to receive the prize, what should we do? "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection" (1Corinthians 9:27). Many people have a higher regard for their own bodies than for the prize. However, Paul said that he brought his body into subjection; he was able to control it. Paul was able to control his lust, the exaggerated demands of his body, and its desires. He never allowed his body to prevail. He said that he disciplined his body and brought it into subjection. Whether a Christian can or cannot please the Lord depends on whether he can control his body or not. We must see that those who cannot control their own body will lose the prize and the crown. Even though they can preach the gospel to others, they themselves will be disqualified.

Us Christians are saved once and for all and we will never lose our salvation. However, when the Lord Jesus returns in His glory to rule over the earth, He will not distribute crowns to all believers. Some will not be apt to enter the kingdom nor to receive a crown.

The word of God is very clear about salvation and eternal life: both are completely based on grace. Moreover, whether someone can or cannot enter the kingdom of heaven depends on his works. We have just seen that we must do the will of God. We have seen here that it is necessary to discipline own body. We can do many external good works, but as long as we do not discipline our bodies, God will not allow us to enter into the kingdom. According to the Bible there seems to be a limited number of crowns:

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

(Revelation 3:11)

Some people do not understand the Bible; they do not know the difference between a reward and a gift. Neither do they know the difference between a crown and the salvation of God. They think that someone can take salvation from them. The word "take", in this verse does not refer to salvation but to the crown. Someone can be saved and still lose the crown. If you are lax, and are not steadfast, you will lose your crown. Someone else can take it from you. Revelation 2:10 has a similar message: "be faithful to death, and I will give you the crown of life".

Here it does not say that he will give us life, but the crown of life. We receive the life by faith and not by faithfulness. If a person does not have faith, they cannot have life. If a person is unfaithful after having received life, he will lose the crown of life. Therefore, if the Christian has no good works after receiving salvation, although he will not lose the life, he will however lose the crown.

### **3. Build with gold, silver and precious stones**

The clearest biblical passage about rewards is:

If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1Corinthians 3:14, 15)

This clearly shows what a Christian cannot lose and what he can lose. Once a person has received salvation, he is saved eternally. However today it cannot be determined whether the same person will receive a reward or not. The eternal salvation of Christians is already determined. However, the future reward is still a pending matter. God decides the matter of reward by the manner that someone builds upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus. Our salvation is not dependent on how we build upon the foundation, our salvation only depends on how the Lord builds. Since His work is perfect, it is certain that we will be saved. However whether we receive the reward or not, or whether we suffer loss or not depends on our own work of building upon the foundation. If someone builds upon the foundation of Jesus Christ with gold, silver and precious stones, things of eternal value, they will certainly receive a reward. However, if someone builds with wood, hay and straw, they will not receive a reward before God. Such a person may have much recognition before man; however, they will not have much before God. This demonstrates that it is possible for a man to lose his reward and have his work destroyed in the fire.

Thank God that the matter of our eternal salvation has been decided for more than 2000 years. Our salvation was decided when the Son of God went to the cross. However, whether we will receive the reward or not, depends on how we live. The truth of the gospel is very balanced. The gift of salvation totally depends on the Lord Jesus. However, whether someone will receive their reward or not depends on their own work of edification. Man must believe and work. This work is not his own, but that which the Holy Spirit as worked through him. Here we see that it is possible to lose a reward. It is also equally possible for God to reprove us, exclude us from entering in the kingdom, and deprive us of our crown.

### **4. Participating in the glory of Christ**

I would like to know if you have ever thought about the type of glory with which God

will reward Christ in the millennium because of that which he suffered 2000 years ago. A reward should correspond to the amount of suffering. The further that someone descends for the cause of Christ, the greater his reward should be. Suppose that your house catches fire or that you find yourself in dire danger and one of your employees risks his life, almost losing it, in the effort to save you. How will you reward him? Would you say, "I am going to reward you with \$20"? No one would do that. The reward must correspond to the suffering. The suffering at the cross and the death of Christ greatly glorified God. How will the Lord reward Christ in the future? Moreover, how will we glorify Christ?

The kingdom will be the time when Christ and Christians will receive glory together, when Christ will receive His reward. At this time, we also will have a portion. Whether God judges us worthy of receiving the glory of the Lord or not, will totally depend on the results of our personal walk and work. There is no matter of merit in the new heaven and a new earth. However, in the kingdom, only those who have sufficient merit will receive the glory. The Lord suffered persecution, difficulties and humiliation. If today we suffer persecution, difficulties and humiliation, in the same manner, we will share in a portion of glory with Him in the coming kingdom.

## **THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW 24**

The parables of the Lord Jesus recorded in Matthew 24 clarify more truths concerning the reward for Christian overcomers. The promise of reward as well as the certainty of discipline should encourage us to live holy lives, awaiting and hastening the coming of the Lord (2Peter 3:11, 12a).

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:37)

The Bible teaches that the time when the Lord returns will be much like the days of Noah, when they "ate and drink, and gave each other in marriage" (verse 38). To eat, drink and get married are legitimate necessities and were originally established by God for human existence. Why then would they be mentioned as negative characteristics at the time of the Lord's return? Was there ever a time when people did not eat, drink or get married? Due to the lust of men, Satan will use these legitimate necessities of human life to keep people occupied and distract them from godly interests.

There is no problem at all with eating or drinking, but when we transform these things into lust, into gluttony or drunkenness, they become sinful activities. With respect to marriage, and to the relationship between men and women, the situation is much worse. The world today accepts divorce, adultery, fornication and homosexuality as normal activities. Marriage, which symbolizes the love relationship between Christ and the church, has been stained and shamed because of man's sin. Therefore this time of unrestrained pleasure, that has perverted everything that God has done, making sin of none effect and commonplace, is a sign that the coming of the Lord is near.

Genuine Christians that love the Lord and His Word are aware of the pattern that He has established in relation to these matters; therefore, they will certainly feel a deep discomfort and aversion to all of these things. In the meantime, the moral situation of humanity will get worse until it reaches its climax at the time just before the coming of the Lord. Human society is drunk with carnal and worldly pleasures and Satan, the enemy of

God, takes advantage of the necessities of life to poison man and divert him from the purpose for which God created him.

People that involve themselves with sin develop a seared conscience and a heart hardened against the Lord. It is common to come across people who do not accept the gospel because they know that they will have to abandon their fallen and worldly life, and many prefer to remain in the practice of evil rather than reconciling themselves with God. Eating, drinking and getting married, activities that God has determined for the maintenance of man's existence, have been usurped by Satan and have become a trap for man, keeping him distant from God.

Although the Lord was referring to the situation of the world, this also serves as an alert to Christians. Many good Christians have suffered harm in their service to God because of their anxiety with respect to material goods and because of problems of moral sin. We need to eat and drink, but we must not be anxious for these things. As Christians, children of the Heavenly Father, we must trust in His care for us and in His provision (Matthew 6:25-34). With respect to marriage, we must maintain it in honor and dignity, fleeing from any situation or person that may lead us into sin (Genesis 39:7-12; 2Timothy 2:22). In this way, we will be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

### **1. One will be taken and the other left**

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. (Matthew 24:40, 41)

While the people of the world are drunk with the things of the world and with sin, with no perception of the coming judgment, some sober individual Christians will be taken. The two men in these verses are Christians and the two women are Christians. Matthew 24:42 confirms this by saying, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." The Lord would not exhort unsaved people to be vigilant; since He is not even their Lord.

To be taken means to be raptured. This will happen a little before the great tribulation (Revelation 3:10). This is a sign of the coming of the Lord. It is interesting to observe that the two men will be in the field and the two women will be working in a mill. In other words, they will be involved with their daily and secular work. Many Christians imagine that they will be raptured during a glorious church meeting, full of praise and worship, or on top of a high mountain so that they can be received with uplifted hands. However, the Lord Jesus clearly said that this would happen when they are going about their common daily activities. The people of the world study or work only to be able to eat, drink and get married in a sinful way; they are swept up by the carnal and worldly pleasures of life. Christians also study and work for their own sustenance, but they these things are not the objective of our lives; our goal in working and going about the common tasks of daily human life is simply to express God wherever we are, because we live to fulfill His eternal purposes.

Some people have the idea that a Christian does not need to study or to work and that they can just read the Bible and pray all day long. However, the Lord Jesus shows us clearly that the rapture will take place when Christians are doing their normal work. We must be

faithful in our daily tasks; we must have a balanced life between our secular and family obligations and our spiritual life. We cannot permit that our daily activities take us away from seeking spiritual growth, nor can we be responsible in our secular obligations, alleging that we are too spiritual to do them. The more spiritual the Christian is the more balanced, sober and practical he is.

Why was only one taken and the other left? They are both saved and genuine Christians! Without a doubt, they are; however, they are different in their level of spiritual maturity. In order for us to be raptured, we must be spiritually mature. This does not happen from one moment to the next, but is a long and slow process, which lasts all throughout the entire Christian life. Every day we have opportunities to mature a little more. Each time we take up the cross, each time we deny ourselves, each time we abdicate our opinion or our will to do the will of the Lord, living in constant unity with Him, feeding upon His Word, we take progressive steps towards spiritual maturity. Unfortunately, many Christians will not be mature at the time of the rapture, which will serve as a sign and an alert to those who have been left behind.

## **2. Watch and pray**

Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (Matthew 24:42)

The Lord will come secretly, as a thief. The thief, upon entering a house, seeks to steal only things of value; he is not interested in trinkets or imitations. The Lord Jesus compared His coming to that of a thief to demonstrate that He will come to steal away those who are precious, the Christians who have value because of their testimonies and lives on the Earth. If throughout our Christian life we seek growth and maturity, permitting the Holy Spirit to transform us, we will be like precious stones that the Lord at his coming will steal away secretly. This is the secret coming of the Lord for his vigilant servants, the overcomers.

## **THE PARABLE OF THE FAITHFUL AND PRUDENT SERVANT**

In the parable of the faithful and prudent servant, the emphasis is on serving the Lord by serving His children. The more we grow, the more we experience spiritual maturity; we spontaneously desire to serve the brethren. The growth of our spiritual lives leads us to serve the brethren. Upon doing this, we will feel more need of being mature and seeking more growth. This life cycle will transform us into overcomers. In the parable, the Lord Jesus asks:

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? (Matthew 24:45)

The growth of our relationship with the Lord must be founded on our faithfulness to Him. Since we have been saved, the Lord expects that we be faithful to Him, not only receiving Him as our Lord and Savior, but also by doing all His will. On the other hand, being prudent refers to our relationship with people. As Christians, we cannot live in just any way, acting hurriedly or without considering the consequences of our actions. By living the life of God, we walk with prudence in this life, so that our whole life expresses the Lord. As we shall see, this is especially important with respect to the way that we treat our fellow servants.

The servants (verse 45) refers to Christians, servants of God like us, that are members of the family of God (Ephesians 2:19), the church (1Timothy 3:15). To "give them food in due season" means to feed the brethren in Christ, ministering the Word of God to them at the appropriate time. On one hand, we should take care of our own spiritual life, seeking growth and transformation, living in a vigilant manner and looking for the coming of the Lord. On the other hand, we must be faithful and prudent servants to whom the Lord entrusts members of His spiritual family whom we must nourish and protect. There are many children of God needy of our care, of the spiritual food that we can give, so that we may edify the church. Evidently this care will demand our consecration and disposition to abandon our selfishness and laziness to go on visits, to listen to them and to pray for them, in order to supply them with the life of God. We must feed our fellow servants at the right time, or in other words, we must attend to their needs and be available to minister to them whenever necessary.

Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. (Matthew 24:46, 47)

When the Lord Jesus returns, God will deliver all of the kingdoms of this world into His hands and He will rule over them (Revelation 11:15). These are "all of his goods" to which the verse refers. To the overcomers, the mature Christians, the Lord will entrust all of his goods, which means, he will give them authority to reign, making them his co-rulers in the millennium. We must therefore, constantly seek spiritual maturity as well as supply our brothers with the spiritual food of the Word. If we do this, we will receive the reward of governing together with the Lord for 1000 years.

However, there are Christians who do not seek maturity in this life and who are not concerned with the brethren. An evil servant, a Christian that lives in a slothful manner, supposes that his Lord will not return soon and thus he thinks, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, (Matthew 24:48, 49). Therefore, they live as if they did not have to give an account to Him, and begin to beat their fellow servants. This means to mistreat the brethren, despise them, committing injustices against them, criticizing them, instead of feeding them. Beyond that, because they are not concerned with the Lord's return, they begin to eat and drink with the drunkards, or in other words, they live in contact with people of the world, having the same dissolute lifestyle as they have.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. 24:50, 51)

This servant's problem is not that he did not know that his Lord would come, but that he did not look forward to His return. He does not live as someone who has prepared himself for the return of the Lord, especially with respect to his relationship with other Christians and with the people of the world. Therefore, when the Lord returns, He will put this Christian together with the hypocrites. This does not mean that he will be eternally lost, in the lake of fire, since once saved we are saved forever, but he will be cut off from the coming glory of the Lord. This is equivalent to God excluding him from the reward of

the kingdom. The Lord refers to this as being cast into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for 1000 years. There he will be sorry for not having been faithful and prudent while he was alive on the earth.

## **WAITING AND HASTENING**

These parables present the discipline that Christians that are not mature will suffer at the time of the Lord's return. Even without losing their salvation, those who are not vigilant in seeking spiritual maturity and those who do not care for their fellow servants will suffer a certain type of harm. The fact that salvation is eternal does not mean that we can live in any manner, as if there was no need to give an account to the Lord. If we seriously consider what God has revealed to us in these parables, we will see that there will be great harm done to those who do not live according to the will of the Lord. This parable presents very simple and common facts - our secular occupations and our relationships with other Christians with the people of the world will decide whether we become overcomers or not. It all depends on how we live, how we behave in these situations.

It is worth it to strive to live in a vigilant manner, to open our heart and make ourselves available to serve the brethren. If we are overcomers, we will receive the reward of participating in the millennium as co-rulers with Christ, if we do not overcome, we will lose the reward, the joy of the kingdom. For this reason, Paul gives the following warning:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2Corinthians 5:10)

To "do good", corresponds to building upon the foundation with gold, silver and precious stones, to be diligent and to feed the brethren. To "do evil" corresponds to building on the foundation with wood, hay and stubble, to fail to walk circumspectly, to walk with dissolute people and to beat fellow servants. The day of this judgment is very near. Therefore, it is time to evaluate our lives with God in the light of His Word. If we perceive that we have not prepared ourselves for the coming of the Lord, by living in excessive involvement with the world, by being anxious about our sustenance, or because our relationship with the brethren is cold and indifferent, we must repent. The Lord has postponed His coming by waiting for us to repent; therefore we must live in a holy manner, waiting and hastening the coming of the Lord (2Peter 19:12).

## **THE PARABLE OF THE 10 VIRGINS**

In the Gospel of Matthew, we find two prophecies, in the form of parables, concerning the return of the Lord. They emphasize two different aspects of the Christian life in relation to the second coming of Christ, we must be vigilant and full of the oil of the spirit, and we must be faithful and prudent.

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. (Matthew 25:1).

In the Bible, the number 10 means the greater part of 12 (Genesis 42:3, 4; 1 Kings 11; 30, 31; Matthew 20:24). The number 12 relates to the totality of the people of God, as we can see for example in the 12 tribes of Israel. Therefore, the 10 virgins represent the largest



part of Christians. In Matthew 24, the two men in the field or the two women at the mill represented Christians that will be alive at the return of the Lord. However, at the time of the return of the Lord, the majority of Christians since the beginning of the church will obviously have died. The 10 virgins represent these. In spite of referring to the Christians that have rested in the Lord, there are important spiritual principles in this parable. No one has a guarantee that he or she will be alive when the Lord returns; therefore, it is necessary to be prepared to meet Him, whether we are still alive or we have died in Him.

But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. (Matthew 25:5)

In the eyes of God, the Christian does not die but sleeps (1Thessalonians 4:13). All those who have received salvation in Jesus died with Him on the cross and because of this, cannot die again. Therefore, they sleep or rest in the Lord. For this reason, we can say that the 10 virgins that fell asleep represent Christians who have died in the Lord.

It is important to emphasize that the word "virgins" refers to genuine Christians. In 2Corinthians 11:2, Paul told the Christians of Corinth that they were like pure virgins prepared for Christ. In God's eyes, we become virgins when we believe in Christ. When we believe in Him, we received His life. During the time that He was on the earth, Christ was faithful to the Father, living in a holy manner without contaminating Himself with the sin of the world. When we receive His life, we received His Holiness and faithfulness also. Paul considered all of this when he compared us to a pure virgin. All Christian men and women in God's eyes are virgins that He is preparing for the wedding with Christ.

### **1. Take the lamps**

The virgins took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. The lamps represent the human spirit (Proverbs 20:27). When we receive salvation, we receive the life of God by His Spirit in our spirit. The Holy Spirit in the Bible is represented by oil used in the lamps to moisten the wick that when lit, produces the light. Therefore the lamps in this parable represent our spirit united with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16; 1Corinthians 6:17). The Lord Jesus said that Christians are the light of the world and that their light must shine before men (Matthew 5:14-16). This light is in reality the light of the Holy Spirit shining inside of our spirit. In this manner we can be the light of the world just as a lamp that shines in this age of darkness (Philippians 2:15), and we testify of God for His glory (Matthew 5:16).

Even when the Bible speaks of works, the emphasis is not in doing things for God, but in permitting Him to work through us, and to transform us so that our lives may spontaneously manifest Him before people. In the parable, this is represented by the fact that the virgins carried neither weapons nor tools for the work. This demonstrates that our testimony before people is not related to what we do, but especially to who we are. Since we have the Holy Spirit within our spirit, we can testify of God and shine for Him.

### **2. Went out to meet the bridegroom**

The parable says that the virgins "went out to meet the bridegroom". This also indicates that the virgins are the Christians that had died, thus having gone out from the world. In this parable, Christ is presented as the beloved bridegroom (John 3:29; Matthew 9:15). Here He is not a general that others obey out of obligation but a bridegroom, sought after

by love. It is because we love Him that we flee from sin, because we do not want to do anything that displeases or offends Him. It is because of our love for the Lord that we reject the world and do not allow ourselves to be involved in it. We want to love the bridegroom exclusively because we recognize that our will is contrary to His, and we delight to do His will. We must go out at all times; go out from ourselves, go out from the world, go out from our vain thoughts and go to meet the bridegroom, our beloved Jesus.

### **3. Five foolish virgins**

Among the 10 virgins, five were foolish, and five were wise (Matthew 25:2). This does not necessarily mean that this is the proportion among foolish and wise Christians. The number 5 in the Bible indicates responsibility. We can see this in the human hand. It is possible with a certain level of difficulty to pick up any object with only four fingers. However, if we want to pick something up firmly we need all five fingers. The division of the virgins into groups of five indicates that all Christians must assume the responsibility of maintaining themselves full of oil, which is the Holy Spirit. The number five is composed of 4+1. The number 4 in the Bible refers to God's creation especially man, and the number 1 to the creator, the only God. This means that we ourselves as the number four are not sufficient to meet the responsibilities of the testimony of God. This is only possible when we add the life of God to our own. For this reason, the Lord said in John 15:5 "without me you can do nothing".

The foolish virgins are not false Christians as some affirm. All 10 women are virgins and this implies that they are equal in nature to God. Beyond that, they all had lit lamps. The difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins was that the foolish virgins did not take extra oil with them (Matthew 25:3). The oil represents the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61:1; Hebrews 1:9). These five virgins were foolish because they only had oil in their lamps but not an extra portion in the vessels, or in other words they had the spirit, the regeneration of the Holy Spirit but they were not filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **4. The five wise virgins**

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (Matthew 25:4)

Man is a vessel prepared by God (Romans 9:21; 23, 24) and the personality of man is in his soul. Therefore, the vessels referred to here are the souls of Christians.

God created man with three parts: spirit, soul and body (1Thessalonians 5:23). At the moment that we received the Lord, the Holy Spirit entered our spirit, regenerating our spirit putting within us the life of God. For having received eternal life, we are qualified to participate in the New Jerusalem. This is the first stage of our salvation and was accomplished exclusively by God.

On the other hand, the process of salvation must develop into the stage of transformation of the soul, and this is absolutely our responsibility. What is the result of the transformation of our soul? Its three parts, mind, will and emotion, will be overtaken by the life of God. Our mind will be renewed (Romans 12:2), our will becomes obedient to the Lord (John 7:17; James 4:7), doing His will (Luke 22:42; Philippians 2:13), and our emotions will love the Lord above all things (Matthew 10 3739). The result of this transformation will be our spiritual maturity and the reward in the millennial kingdom.

For this reason, we cannot be content merely with the regeneration of our spirit, but we must daily be filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit, so that it permeates all the parts of our soul, transforming us from glory to glory, in the very image of the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). If we fill ourselves daily with the Holy Spirit, He will overflow in and from our spirit, the lamp, and penetrate each part of our soul, which is the vessel. Only in this way will we have an extra portion of oil. In this way, we will be prudent virgins.

### **5. While the bridegroom delayed**

But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. (Matthew 25:5)

Almost 2000 years have passed since His ascension, and the Lord has not yet returned. Many people think that He will never return, therefore thinking that they can live in any manner that they please, as if they had no need to give an account to anyone. Since they do not know the Lord, it is natural for them to think this way. Many Christians do not believe in the second coming of Christ or if they do believe it, they do not live in accordance with their beliefs. Our beloved bridegroom has not yet come because He is giving us an opportunity to repent and abandon the selfish way that we live, so that we may live completely for Him.

Since the ascension of the Lord, throughout the centuries, many Christians have died and others will die at His coming. These were the virgins that fell asleep.

### **6. The coming of the bridegroom**

At midnight, the darkest hour of the night, the bridegroom finally arrived. This means that the Lord will come during a time of the greatest darkness in this age of darkness, at the end of the great tribulation. The shout that announces the arrival of the bridegroom (Matthew 25:6) is the voice of the Archangel (1Thessalonians 4:16).

Upon hearing the shout, the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. When the text says that they "arose" this is a reference to the resurrection prophesied in 1Thessalonians 4:14-16 and in 1Corinthians 15:52. The fact that the virgins left to go to the bridegroom with their lamps indicates also that after the resurrection we will still need to answer for our acts during the time of our life on the earth. The foolish will try to obtain the oil from the wise however; an extra portion of the Spirit cannot be given by one Christian to another, but each one is responsible for obtaining it. Therefore, they left to go buy it. The application of this is that to obtain this extra portion of the Holy Spirit we must pay a price, such as abandoning the world, denying the ego, seeking the Lord and considering all things as loss for the sake of Christ. The age of grace is the appropriate time for this, but if we are not prepared to pay this price today, we will still need to pay it after the resurrection, for 1000 years.

Moreover, while they went out to buy the oil the bridegroom arrived and those who were prepared accompanied him to the feast; and the door was shut. Later, the foolish virgins arrived and cried out, Lord, Lord, open the door! However, he replied, truly, truly, I say unto you that I never knew you. (Matthew 25:10-12)

The expression (never knew you), in Greek, can be better translated as "I don't recognize you, for I do not approve of you" (we find the same expression with the same meaning in Luke 13:25 and in John 1:26; 31; 8:19). This demonstrates that the Lord does

not approve of a Christian who lives loosely, with no spiritual interest, no willingness to abandon the demands of the soul and the flesh to have more of Christ. While they lived, these virgins did not pay the price necessary to obtain an extra portion of oil, thus losing the right to participate in the wedding feast of the lamb. After the bridegroom comes, it will be too late. They will have lost the reward, since they had not been approved for the wedding feast. However, I repeat emphatically, they did not lose their salvation.

## **7. Watch and pray!**

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (Matthew 25:13). When we say that we know not the hour or the day that he comes, the Lord Jesus was emphasizing the need for us to be prepared. If we are ready, mature, and have abandoned all things in order to gain more of the life of the Lord, we will certainly be raptured. We must live a life of diligence and be prepared for the return of the Lord. We must be diligent against all activity of Satan that will try to distract us from God's goal, to not satisfy the lusts of the flesh, in order to not be found in sin when the Lord returns. This word of the Lord should encourage us to be diligent and not to live carelessly. Our goal is to be wise virgins!

## **THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS**

Before dealing with the parable of the talents, it is important to remember that in the Bible there is a great difference between eternal perdition and losing the reward during the millennium. We have already established that our salvation is eternal: once saved always saved (John 10:28). However, this does not mean that after salvation we can live in a careless manner, just because God has guaranteed that we will never perish. God is just and He will not treat a Christian who has lived his life entirely for the Lord and another, who after receiving salvation continues to live in the pleasures of sin and of the world in the same manner. For this reason, there will be reward or discipline in the coming age of the millennium. The Christians who have matured, those who have permitted the Holy Spirit to fill their soul, will be rewarded at the wedding feast of the lamb, while the others will be matured "by force", with weeping and gnashing of teeth. After the thousand years, all Christians of all ages, those who have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior, will participate in the New Jerusalem, the new heaven and a new earth forever.

Many verses in the Bible that refer to the discipline of the millennium are interpreted as possible indications of the loss of salvation. It is necessary to understand the difference between these two facts, so that we have a victorious and secure Christian life. However even though the distinction between these two facts is something new for many, because of their lack of knowledge, we must surely consider the subject in prayer before God and examine them through the Scriptures. The Jews from the city of Berea were considered more noble than those of Thessalonica, by the fact that they examined the Scriptures to verify the truth of what Paul and Silas were teaching (Acts 17:10, 11). The result was that many of them believed (verse 12). We must proceed in the same manner. The final authority in relation to divine truths is the Bible. Therefore we must examine it with attention in prayer, in order to verify that it clearly teaches an eternal salvation of Christians and the existence of discipline for those who have not matured by the end of the age of

grace.

To know that our salvation is eternal and that we can be rewarded or disciplined according to our spiritual maturity, will lead us to a stable and victorious Christian life, since we will be "running" for the correctly defined goal. Paul was referring to this when he said:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. (1Corinthians 9:24-26)

We must run just as he ran, with a view to attain the great prize, which is Christ Himself. With this in mind, we will now study the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

The parable of the 10 virgins is related to life, and the parable of the talents is related to service. In the aspect of life, Christians are virgins, and the command is that we be vigilant. In relation to service, we are servants, which implies that we must be faithful. Therefore, we must not neglect either the aspect of life (interior aspect, subjective, of the experience with God) or the aspect of service (exterior aspect, objective, resulting from fellowship with God). The parable of the talents is related to service, but specifically to the adequate use of the gifts that we receive from God.

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. (Matthew 25:14)

The "man" in the text above is Christ. He delivered his goods to his servants. Christians, at the same time that they are children of God, are also servants or slaves of Christ (1Corinthians 7:22, 23; 2Peter 1:1; James 1:1; Romans 1:1). In the aspect of life, we are virgins living only for Christ (2Corinthians 11:2), and in the aspect of service, we serve Him as slaves purchased by His precious blood.

And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. (Verse 15)

The talents in this parable represents spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:7, 8; Romans 12:6; 1Corinthians 12:4; 1Peter 4:10; 2Timothy 1:6). In order to serve the Lord we need gifts. Many people when they become Christians think of using their natural talents and their natural born abilities for the service of the Lord. This however is abominable to God, because such abilities belong to fallen man, the old creation, the old nature. The talents that God needs for His service are gifts that he gives us after our salvation. Only with these gifts can we serve the Lord as good servants in order to fulfill His work.

When we receive the life of God, by way of regeneration we become members of the body of Christ and members of one another. In one body, not all members have the same function (Romans 12:4, 5). In our physical bodies, each member does exactly what its function is and knows how to act in coordination with the other body members. In the body of Christ however, we need to discover the function of each member, and it is especially necessary that we learn how to serve together with other brothers in Christ.

## 1. Trading with the talents

Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. (Mat. 25:16, 17)

We should use the gifts that we receive from the Lord fully, without wasting them, preaching the gospel, ministering life and truth to others and caring for those who need spiritual oversight. The result of this will be the edification of the church and the multiplication of our talents. One of the most important tasks of a servant of God is to give sustenance, supply food to the other servants of God's house (24:45). We must minister the Word of God with the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8) so that we nourish our fellow servants. By way of this service, people will be richly fed and the goods of the Lord will be multiplied

But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. (Matthew 25:18)

Some Christians have only received one talent and for this reason, they do not value it, considering it unimportant and useless for God and for the church. Normally these Christians do not multiply the talent that they have received. In other words, they "buried" a gift that the Lord gave them. We need to be wise: if we received only one talent from the Lord, we must apply ourselves more than the others, to multiply it. If we consecrate ourselves to the Lord to serve Him according to His will, He will multiply our spiritual gifts and each day we will become more and more useful for the edification of the church.

## 2. Giving an account

"After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them." (Matthew 25:19). "After a long time" here refers to the church age and when the Lord comes back refers to the coming of the Lord in the air (1Thessalonians 4:16, 17). "To settle accounts" speaks of the judgment seat of Christ (2Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10), where God will judge our life, conduct and work for reward or punishment (1Corinthians 4:5; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15). This time is growing near; therefore we need to seriously consider how we have used our spiritual gifts from God. God has given spiritual gifts to us and we will give Him an account for their use. Nothing is really ours; God gave us the gifts as stewards in His name to accomplish His purposes.

So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' (Matthew 25:20, 21)

The word "few" written in the text above refers to our service to the Lord in this age and the expression "over many things", to the authority to govern in the coming kingdom. The "joy of the Lord" is the Lord's enjoyment in the coming age, the millennium. The reward of the faithful servants therefore has two aspects: they will receive authority to govern over the nations during the millennium and will enjoy the person of the Lord Jesus in a special way.

The one who had received two talents delivered to his Lord two more that he had

earned. The Lord will praise and reward him just as He will to the one who had five talents. It is interesting to observe that the Lord said that both servants, the one who had received five and the one who had received two were faithful "over a few things". This proves that His approval does not depend on how much we have done for God, but on our faithfulness in using the gifts that He has given us. Do not consider those who received five talents as if they were predestined to be overcomers and those who have only received one talent as being relegated to the outer darkness. This is a diabolical lie that only serves to discourage and paralyze many children of God. If the one who had received one talent had been faithful in multiplying it, he would have been placed over much and would have entered into the joy of his Lord.

Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' (Verse 24, 25)

The one that received one talent neither is an unbeliever nor unsaved as some interpret. An unsaved person cannot receive spiritual gifts from God; neither will He judge the unsaved at the judgment seat of Christ.

Apparently, the Lord is severe, as the last servant had accused him, because it seems like He demands work from those in whom he had made no investment. The truth is that He himself supplies us with all the grace of life that is necessary in order to serve him. Our responsibility is to work and multiply the gifts that we receive. Perhaps it is easier for those that receive five and two talents to use them; perhaps the one with one talent is more timid and unprepared. However, we must not use this as an excuse to neglect the gift that we have received. If we only have one talent, this should force us to use our faith more than the others to use our gift diligently. If it is more difficult for us to use the spirit or maintain ourselves separated unto the Lord, then we must strive more than the others. The important thing is reaching the goal. We must be certain that the Lord in giving us gifts knows that we are capable of multiplying them; He is sowing seed and hopes to reap a harvest.

To bury the talent in the earth means to allow ourselves to be involved with earthly and worldly things and not with spiritual things making us become inactive and unfruitful. The more we involve ourselves with the cares and pleasures of this life, the less interest we will have for spiritual things. For example, some Christians never have time to visit others in orders to minister to their needs because they are constantly involved with things of the world. Others think that they are too weak to pastor or to preach the gospel. Remember however, no matter how weak you are, no matter how useless you feel, be sure of one thing, there will always be people weaker and needier than you are. We should never despise the few gifts that we receive. We must be faithful in the little that the Lord has given us and the gifts will be multiplied. In addition, we must never argue that we do not have enough time to take care of others. If our heart is full of the love of God and His church as busy as it may be, we will always be able to reserve some time to use our spiritual gifts in favor of Christ and His church.

### **3. Weeping and gnashing of teeth**

"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant'" (Matthew 25:24). That Lord was harsh and severe with his servant, because he had not even tried to invest his talent so that it earned interest for the Lord (verse 27). The servant should have returned the money to his Lord (the money, although it was in the hands of the servant, still belonged to his Lord. This confirms spiritual gifts that the Lord gives to us are still His; our job is simply to administer them and earn interest). This represents the use of the talents in the church.

The Lord said to the other servants, "So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents." (Matthew 25:28). In His coming kingdom the Lord will take His gifts away from those who are negligent. The use of the gifts is an opportunity that the Lord has given us in order that in this age we may grow in His life and receive more of His grace. However after the age of grace these gifts will no longer be needed.

The Lord added, "And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Verse 30). To be "cast into the outer darkness" in this passage does not mean the eternal perdition of a false Christian. As we have seen, the fact that God called this man a servant and had given Him gifts, proves that he was a genuine Christian. In this manner, the darkness here mentioned refers to the punishment of genuine Christians that were not faithful. Various verses in Matthew speak of being cast into the outer darkness (8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). Once again we reaffirm, these passages refer to genuine Christians, genuinely regenerated by the Holy Spirit who however, were not overcomers. These saints that were not overcomers will not be cast into the lake of fire, but into the outer darkness, which means to remain outside of the realm of the glory of God during the coming age of the kingdom.

### **A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

God has chosen us since before the foundation of the world. Beforehand, he knew us and knew that even after we knew him, we would still be unfaithful many times. He knows our frame, He knows our weaknesses, and He knows our difficulty in continuing with Him. For this reason, God gives us the reward of the kingdom as an additional stimulus so that we seek Him.

To participate in this feast, in this intimate fellowship and the special portion for 1000 years is not something small, without importance, but it is an indescribable blessing promised to all Christians. There is a price to pay, a narrow way to be followed, but those who accept the challenge of becoming overcomers will obtain the reward that human eyes have never seen, whose description no ear has ever heard neither has entered into the heart of man (1 Corinthians 2:9). To enter into the joy of the Lord is a prize worth paying for with our lives and whatever other price necessary.



## LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Explain in your own words the difference between eternal life and the kingdom.

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2. How does the Bible distinguish reward from the gift of God?

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3. What is the biblical basis of reward?

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4. What do you understand by the kingdom being the reward?

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5. What are the qualifications for entering the kingdom?

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6. Explain the parable of the faithful and prudent servant.

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7. How can we wait for and hastened the return of Jesus?

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8. What does the parable of the virgins mean? To what were they compared?

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9. How do you understand the parable of the talents?

## OTHER RESOURCES

### **Why should I be Good? Salvation is Free!**

If you believe that salvation can be lost then you had better know what the dividing line is between being one sin short of hell or one sin long of heaven. Which side of the line are you on? If you believe that salvation is free and cannot be lost then why should you bother with being good, why stress yourself with trying to be holy?

Most Christians are not very clear about the basis of their salvation. Are you? Are you holy enough to be saved? The purpose of this book is not to promote laxity in the Christian life but to show the need for holiness, which is not salvation but a practical way to show our love for the Lord, for the disciples that we are making for Him in obedience to the great commission, for reward, and escape of discipline.

Check out this book at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B009I3TNZ8>

### **Kingdom Parables from Matthew 13**

This book which is the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Why should I be Good? Salvation is free! offers an analysis of the parables of the 13th Chapter of Matthew through which Jesus explained veiled principles of the kingdom of heaven to His disciples. The true meaning of these parables escape the understanding of the great majority of Christians just as they did the multitudes to which Jesus preached.

Check out this book at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Kingdom-Parables-from-Matthew-ebook/dp/B00A8AG4XE>

### **Strengthening the New Christian, Consolidating new Believers**

There are no ready-made formulas available for you to deal with each problem that may arise in your new life with Christ. However, when we are in the family, through discipleship and a close follow-up, we receive much more clarity about many things. In this manual, you will learn many things about the Word of God and about the New Birth, how to abandon the past and how to consecrate yourself. There are also lessons on how to forgive others, how to pray, among other indispensable disciplines that will strengthen you through your circumstances.

The lessons of this manual will help you better understand the importance of solid and long-lasting relationships since it is through this contact that you will be spiritually prepared to continue your new life in Christ. The purpose of this strengthening is to grow up into a mature disciple of Jesus able to reproduce in the lives of others that which has been wrought by God in you.

Check out this book at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Strengthening-Christian-Consolidating-Believers-ebook/dp/B00AWT7YRG>

See other titles by Richard Spinos at his Amazon Author's page:

<http://www.amazon.com/Richard-Lee-Spinos/e/B00A911TZK>



## ABOUT THE EDITOR AND TRANSLATOR

In December of 1983, Rick was sent as a missionary to Brazil to work with an organization called Project Amazon. He worked in a boat factory as manager and factory supervisor and oversaw the construction of over 40 houseboats, 1 yacht, and a Catamaran Hospital boat for church planting use along the Amazon River.

He married his wife Sandra who is a Brazilian national in July of 1985 and they assumed the pastorate of one of the Project Amazon churches in 1988. In 1990, Rick and his wife were sent as church planters to the state of Amapá, where they planted three churches for Project Amazon.

In 2008, they affiliated themselves with the Vine International and the last church that they planted became one of the Churches under the care of this organization.

In December of 2009, they were invited to join a church planting endeavor in Southern Florida. They accepted the invitation and turned the last church in Brazil over to the Brazilian Nationals in March of 2010.

In September of 2010 they made the move to Southern Florida where they currently reside. Rick's family is bilingual and they have been working with a group of Brazilians with Portuguese services. In February of 2012, they began services in English and have been overseeing the English ministry while Pastor Márcio Alves continues the Brazilian ministry. In Brazil, Rick has written extensively in the Portuguese language in the area of Christian worker training. He has written Bible study guides, evangelistic tracts, and hundreds of small group lesson guides. From June 2009-2010 he and Sandra hosted a highly successful Christian radio program called "Overcomers on the air".

Rick began freelance activities shortly after his arrival in the U.S. at the end of 2010.

Rick maintains a Facebook page with a little over 1,850 fans called "Why be Holy if Salvation is by Grace" where he has posted hundreds of short, pithy phrases and quotes. <http://www.facebook.com/why.be.holy>. He also hosts a blog called Vinebrancher <http://www.vinebrancher.com>

