

OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST

A Study in Living by Grace Through Faith

Expanded Edition

David Kuykendall

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FOREWORD

As born-again Christians, we have not yet plumbed the depth of the potential of our oneness with Christ—which is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27b), with the concomitant expression of “*our* being *in* Christ.” “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation] (2 Corinthians 5:17a). This is the “more abundant life” that our Savior-Lord has promised us (John 10:10).

David Kuykendall, with helpful repeated emphases on our being crucified, buried and resurrected with Christ, delineates in his book *Our Oneness With Christ* how this is practical Christianity, nay rather practical Christian living on a sound biblical basis, the blood-bought heritage of every true believer who seeks to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18). His treatise is profoundly simple and, at the same time, simply profound.

The more intimate our oneness with Christ, our Savior and Lord, the easier it is to know His will for our lives and then, by His grace, to apply the answer practically. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). This should be our daily, momentary experience as children of God in Christ.

Our oneness with Christ, when personally realized by faith, by individual choice, on the basis of grace, will bring our vertical relationship with God into proper focus with the resultant proper horizontal relationship with fellow believers becoming a joyous reality and our witness to those still outside Christ a fruitful experience.

David Kuykendall appropriately emphasizes the danger of our “know-it-all attitude” inherent in our unredeemed sinful human nature. As we enter progressively into our oneness with Christ, this know-it-all attitude will give place to “living in total dependence on our Lord.” This is life on a higher plane,

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yes, on the highest plane. Thank you, David Kuykendall, for reminding us to claim, to choose our oneness with Christ, in death, burial and resurrection too.

Finlay M. Graham
Southern Baptist Missionary

PREFACE

Because I have received several requests for a workbook edition of *Our Oneness With Christ*, I am delighted to make this work available. I have made very few changes in the text.

In 1 Corinthians 6:17, the apostle Paul reveals, “If you give yourself to the Lord, you and Christ are joined together as one person” (TLB).

New Testament writers use several terms to describe what happened to us when we became Christians: justification, sanctification, reconciliation, adoption, forgiveness, redemption, regeneration. These are beautiful concepts with which many have some acquaintance.

Many believers are, however, without insight that at the time of our conversion to Christ we became one with our crucified, buried and risen Lord. Yet fullness of life and maximum success in Christian service come only to those who understand and experience life in terms of their union with their Lord.

About the middle of this century, many evangelicals found a partial solution to their lack of spiritual vitality by embracing the blessed truth that Christ is “in” the believer. That giant step forward in Christian understanding and experience by itself, though, will not give us the life and fruitfulness we seek. There is a second feature of our union with Christ.

The New Testament also teaches that the believer is “in Christ.” Many times, we are described as being “in Him,” “in Christ Jesus,” “in Whom,” “in the Beloved.” Highly respected biblical scholars teach that often these terms mean “in union with Christ.”

The Christ who is within will neither continuously fill us with Himself nor burst forth from us apart from our mentally and experientially embracing this companion truth that we are “in Him.”

PREFACE

My intention, then, is to analyze and amplify this balanced view of our “oneness with Christ.” He is “in us,” and we are “in Him.” The study will include the resultant quality of life and ministry available to all who understand and live out their oneness with Him.

David Kuykendall

INTRODUCTION

The theme of “our oneness with Christ” is developed in five parts followed by a conclusion consisting of four personal testimonies.

Part One— “Personal Experiences”—begins with the expression of some of our common needs. It then relates the stories of several who have found the solution to these needs—and the abundant life—by understanding and living out their union with Christ.

Part Two— “Scriptural Teachings”—contains the basic biblical teachings of our union with Christ.

Part Three— “Basic Approaches”—shows how we may live out our oneness with Christ.

Part Four— “Life Transformations”—sets forth several changes we can expect by living out our union with our Lord.

Part Five— “Practical Considerations”—deals with several practical issues faced by those who begin the journey of living out their union with Christ.

It would be helpful to read the chapters in the order in which they are arranged. They build on each other.

The reader will soon discover much repetition. This is by design. Years of teaching the concept of union with Christ have revealed two reasons why repetition is essential if the message is to take root in most lives.

First, living out our union with Christ requires for most a process of “relearning.” Because repetition is essential for *learning*, it is doubly necessary for *relearning*.

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Second, Satan, who viciously opposes the message of living by grace, often “catcheth away that which was sown in the heart.” He knows that those who understand and live out their union with Christ do great damage to him and his kingdom.

I trust you will be patient and understanding if the repetition seems unnecessary for you.

Throughout, the terms “our oneness with Christ” and “our union with Christ” are used interchangeably. Also, the terms “the life of grace” and “the life of faith” are used to describe the experience of those who live out their union with Christ.

Whenever I teach the message of our oneness with Christ, I begin with: “If you love the Lord dearly, have never before been aware of what I will share, and the Spirit of God chooses to reveal these truths to you, you will never be the same again after this time of study.” I predict the same possibility for you as you make your journey through these pages. Many exciting testimonies from those exposed to these truths confirm the accuracy of this prediction.

If life is going well for you now, it is possible that you will think of this as just another book or, at best, an “interesting” book. If, however, you have come to the “end of self,” you may be only hours away from entrance into that elusive life you have desired and sought for years—the life that is “abundant.”

PART ONE — PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Part One consists of only one chapter— “Something for Monday Morning.” The chapter clearly divides into two sections. The first section presents some of the failures and frustrations most of us struggle with. The second section is a series of personal testimonies of several who have found both victory over those failures and frustrations and the abundant life promised by our Lord by living out their union with Christ.

These thrilling testimonies are given early as evidence that the life God-loving believers are seeking is possible for all who live out their union with Jesus Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

CHAPTER 1

SOMETHING FOR MONDAY MORNING

“My people are looking for something for Monday morning.”

The speaker was the director of single adults for a large metropolitan church. Her tone of voice betrayed an irritation that clearly revealed a history behind her comment.

“We do not need doctrine for the sake of doctrine but as a resource for life,” she continued, indicating the history behind her comment. Obviously, she was being taught doctrine only “for the sake of doctrine.”

This aggressive leader’s plea for “something for Monday morning” perhaps expresses your own need. If so, you are numbered with many of God’s children who have the same need.

Something Needed

Do you, like many other believers, often brand yourself a failure? Do you do things and think things for which you hate yourself? Do you think of yourself as being spiritually incapable of doing many things you long to do—and know you, as a Christian, should do?

If your answer to these questions is yes, you are among those for whom this work was prepared.

“But my problems seem to be different from those of others,” you may protest. They are not! All believers are just like you. We all can identify with many of the following testimonies of failure. We all need something—some enabling truth—for Monday morning and all the mornings throughout the week.

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Something Needed for Anger

“I love my children, but every day I become sinfully angry with them. I’ve gone to seminars on parenting; I’ve prayed; I’ve asked others to pray. I just can’t have victory over anger. Where can I find help?”

Something Needed for Fear

“I am paralyzed with fear. I am constantly afraid something bad is about to happen to some member of my family. I know I should witness, but I fear rejection. My friends know me as a worrier. I worry about everything! For years I have prayed about my fears, but I seem to be as fearful now as I was when I became a Christian. Why can’t God help me?”

Something Needed for Lust

“I hate to admit it, but I have a constant problem with lust. I honestly don’t understand myself. I feel like I am a terrible Christian. The guilt I have at times seems to overwhelm me. I have tried everything I know to have victory, but I just don’t know how to change. Can God change me?”

“Bitterness is my problem. Some Christian friends took advantage of me, and I can’t get over it. Every day I think of them and what they did to me. When I’m around them, I can’t treat them as I should. Prayer hasn’t helped at all. I’ve finally decided there is no way I will ever be different.”

“Jealousy seems to consume me. I am jealous when my friends get a better car or home than ours. I am jealous about the clothes they wear. I am even jealous when they are more successful than I am in Christian service. I feel I am the world’s greatest hypocrite. But I’ve given up trying to change. I don’t think I can be helped.”

Something Needed for Selfishness

“I’m just so selfish. All I can think about is myself. At the end of the day, I realize how many people I could have helped if only I had been thinking about them. Not only did I live out the day without helping others, but I was rude to several people just to get my own way. Can God help me?”

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“I don’t have faith. I see others who can step out on faith, and they see miracles take place. For example, one of my friends who is worse off than we are financially began to tithe. God did financial miracles for her. But it would scare me to death to tithe. I know that is wrong. Why can’t I have faith?”

“When I first became a Christian, I was full of joy and faith. I haven’t felt that way in a long, long time. Now depression seems to characterize my life far more than joy and faith. Could God fill my heart with those feelings again? I will do anything to have victory over my depression.”

Something Needed for Doubts

“I love the Lord dearly. I love to serve Him in His church. I love to tell the unsaved of Jesus. Yet it is all a waste. I seem never to be successful in leading others to Christ. I try my very best, yet all my efforts seem to be in vain.

“Can anything cause me to be fruitful in my work for the Lord? Can God give me power to win others to Christ? Is there a way that my life could be a blessing to anyone in any way?”

Most likely you identify with several of the problems expressed in these statements. You may identify with all of them. You may be saying, “I not only have most of those problems but others that I believe are worse than those mentioned. Is there still help for me?”

Something Provided

Yes, there is help for you!

The Monday-morning strength we are seeking is ours by understanding and living out our oneness with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.

The following are real-life stories (using fictitious names) of some who have gone from defeat to victory by living out their oneness with Christ.

From Anger to Patience

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Robert and Gladys had been Christians for several months and were longing to be all God wanted them to be. The Lord had changed them in many ways, but they were still having a problem with anger.

One evening they were visiting with another couple. Because both couples had children, the discussion centered on the inability to be patient with their children. All four agreed they had a problem but did not know what to do about it—even though all four were believers.

Fewer than 24 hours after that conversation, the pastor of a church Robert and Gladys had recently attended came by for a visit. The pastor, who was very favorably impressed with the couple's love for the Lord and desire to grow as Christians, asked if they had ever heard of the New Testament message of their oneness with Christ. They said they had not.

The pastor then gave his testimony of how God began to give him victory over such things as anger and jealousy by revealing to him that when he became a Christian, he was crucified, buried and resurrected.

The pastor's reference to anger amazed Robert and Gladys. Just hours before, they were seeking an answer for their anger. Now they had it. They immediately believed in their oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection and chose to live in the light of it. Within a matter of hours, they began to experience the change they desired.

From Fear to Faith

Bill had been a Christian for seven years but had a real struggle with fear. He attended a service at which Terry, who was experiencing his oneness with Christ, told how the Lord was changing him.

Among other things, Terry said fear had paralyzed him until he began to live out his union with Christ—but now God was setting him free. Bill knew he had to talk with Terry.

Following the service Bill approached Terry and demanded, "I've got to have what you've got." They talked for about 15 minutes as Terry explained to Bill

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that since the day he had been saved, he had been a crucified, buried and resurrected person. When Terry saw Bill three days later and asked how things were, Bill responded with, "Fear's gone!"

From Lust to Purity

A divorce was the occasion for Al's conversion. His conversion, though, did not bring victory over all his problems. Before becoming a Christian, Al had a severe problem with lust. And even as a maturing Christian, Al had a continuing problem with lust, which disturbed him because of his desire to please the Lord.

Al had been a Christian for about three years when a friend explained to him that when he became a Christian he was crucified, buried and resurrected. The friend also gave Al a book that teaches the same truths.

As Al read the book, the Holy Spirit revealed to him that he, along with all believers, was already crucified, buried and resurrected. As he began to believe himself to be dead to sin and alive to God, Al began to experience a progressive freedom from lust.

"I am confident that any Christian who lives out his or her oneness with Christ can have victory over a problem with lust," Al testifies.

From Bitterness to Love

Jim loved the Lord and desired above all things to glorify God with his life. However, when some close friends began to treat him with disrespect, he responded by developing a problem with bitterness.

The bitterness left Jim with deep feelings of guilt and spiritual defeat, but nothing he did would give him victory over it.

When Jim came to a knowledge of his union with Christ, he immediately began to reckon himself to be dead to bitterness and alive to God and His love. In a way that amazed and thrilled Jim, his bitterness began to be replaced with love. His victory has been progressive, and it has been genuine.

From Jealousy to Concern

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Phil, a pastor, desired that the Lord would glorify Himself through his life. He was disturbed when he found himself being sad rather than glad when the Lord used his friends in the ministry in ways He did not use him.

Then Phil learned of his union with Christ. He began to thank God that he was dead to jealousy and alive to God and His love. Little by little, the Lord replaced the jealousy with love. Now he has sincere interest in and concern for the ministries of his friends and rejoices when he hears of the Lord using his peers in the ministry.

From Selfishness to Generosity

Tom was taught from earliest childhood to make money and save it. He responded well to the teaching and was a great success in doing the things he heard.

The Lord saved Tom. A few years after Tom became a Christian, he heard of his union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. He began to live out that union. As a result, he experienced changes in his life.

One of those changes has been a powerful deliverance from a lifetime of greed to a great spirit of generosity.

Now Tom invests enormous amounts of money in the work of the Lord. He also involves himself in helping individuals who are in financial need.

From Doubt to Dependence

Dorothy trusted Christ as Savior at age 13 and never strayed from a walk with the Lord. She loved the Lord and desired to honor Him. Yet she knew there were some seeming risks in the Kingdom she did not have the faith to take.

The Lord sent a friend to teach her the message of her oneness with Christ. She began to live her life on those terms. She now daily considers herself to be dead to sin and alive to God because of her union with Jesus Christ.

As a result, Dorothy now finds herself taking the risks that formerly she had feared to take. She has found that God never fails. The more the Lord sends the

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victories, the more she has the faith to take risks. Her life has taken on the glorious dimension of victory.

From Depression to Joy

Depression so possessed Vivian that she hated the thought of another day. Her crippling depression was the result of self-pity, a very poor self-image and an inability to get along with others.

One night Vivian attended a church where the pastor shared that as a Christian, she already was a crucified person. This new concept attracted her.

Following the service, she told the pastor of her interest in knowing more about being a crucified person. The pastor and a young couple spent about 30 minutes with Vivian assuring her that she was already crucified, buried and resurrected. They showed her how she could experience crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

The Spirit of God enabled Vivian to understand what she heard, and that very night she began to experience her oneness with Christ.

“The change was instantaneous,” she now says. Vivian does not mean she became perfect; she means that the process of change began that very night. Now Vivian is a joyful, vibrant young lady.

Vivian goes on to say, “I had tried every self-improvement approach I knew of and they all failed to free me from my problems. I was ready to hear of my union with Christ and to know that I was already crucified, buried and resurrected.”

From Failure to Success in Evangelism

Immediately following his conversion to Christ, Joe began to witness to almost everyone he saw—and being a businessman, he was with scores of people daily. It disturbed him when he realized that not one person had responded to his appeals to receive Jesus.

Upon learning of his union with Christ, he discovered that Christ would witness through him. Immediately, he began to believe in his death, burial and

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resurrection. The Lord began to witness through him. Now Joe sees many come to Christ.

These testimonies are typical of those who love the Lord, come to an understanding of their union with Christ, and begin to live out that oneness. Many testimonies could be shared here telling of victories in other areas of life.

It is possible that your greatest spiritual problems were not addressed in these testimonies. The answer for you, though, is the same as it was for these whose testimonies have been given. It is in understanding and living out the death, burial and resurrection that have been yours since you received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

A prayerful study of the following pages with a willingness to respond to new revelations will result in your *having* something for Monday morning.

PART TWO — SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS

“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

We believe that Jesus loves us because the Bible tells us He does—whether we *feel* lovable or not. The Bible alone is our authority in spiritual matters, and as a result, we accept its teachings over our own ideas or feelings about a matter.

With that quality of faith in the Scriptures, Part Two sets forth the foundational biblical truths of our oneness with Christ. It is possible that these truths are new to you. Yet they are truths that must be understood if we are to have the quality of life the Lord has made possible.

Some have said that we must be mature Christians before we can understand the New Testament message of our oneness with Christ. It is not true. It is true that we must have the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to understand certain truths. But with that enlightenment, even a child can come into a knowledge of these truths.

By faith, simply open your heart to the Lord and indicate to Him that you are trusting Him to explain to you the biblical teachings of your oneness with Jesus Christ.

You will notice that only a few passages are quoted in the entire chapter. The testimony of many who have understood and experienced their union with Christ, however, is, “I now see it everywhere I read in the Bible.”

CHAPTER 2

JESUS IS “THE LAST ADAM”

One indication of our Lord’s greatness in ministry to mankind is the many titles by which the Scriptures reveal Him. He is such things as “The Way,” “The Truth,” “The Life,” “The Bread of Life,” “The Light of the World” and “The Lamb of God.”

Few of His titles are laden with more meaning than Paul’s designation of Him as “The Last Adam” in 1 Corinthians 15:45. Tragically, evangelical Christianity has left this rich vein of truth largely untouched and unexplored.

The misfortune of this neglect is fully appreciated only when we realize that we will never experience life in abundance until we experience our Lord as “The Last Adam.” It is so because we will not fully experience our oneness with Him if we do not experience Him as “The Last Adam.”

This is one of the book’s shortest chapters, but it is the most important chapter in the entire book. It would be profitable to read it closely and prayerfully.

When we understand the truths of this chapter, we have the necessary foundation for understanding and experiencing our union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.

Pictured in the First Adam

Romans 5:14 describes Adam as “the figure of Christ.” A figure is a likeness. Adam, then, is like Jesus. Adam is so much like Jesus that Jesus is “The Last Adam.”

Many of us have for years understood the vast differences between Adam and Jesus. Adam brought sin and death into the world; Jesus brought into the world righteousness and life. In what way then are Adam and Jesus alike? The answer: Each is the head of a race.

Adam is the head of the natural race. Jesus is the head of the spiritual race.

JESUS IS “THE LAST ADAM”

The following discussion reveals how Adam, as the head of the natural race, affected all who are born into his race. This fact of the one man Adam affecting all born into his race is a picture of Jesus and His effect on all those who enter His race. What we learn here of Adam is important, but what the headship of Adam reveals about Jesus is even more important.

From Adam We Received Our Type of Body

First Corinthians 15, which names Jesus “The Last Adam,” also says, “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (v. 49).

This verse concerns the resurrection and teaches that we will receive bodies like that of the resurrected Lord Jesus upon His return. The feature of the passage concerning our attention now, however, is that we now have the type of body the Lord gave Adam in creation. All who have had a normal birth, for example, have two eyes, two ears, ten fingers and ten toes. It is so because when God created Adam, He made him with two eyes, two ears, ten fingers and ten toes.

From Adam We Received Our Type of Sin Problem

A second feature of Adam’s impact on his race because of his headship is set forth in Romans 5:12. Paul writes, “As by one man sin entered into the world. . . .” In the same chapter, Paul declares, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners . . .” (v. 19).

It is necessary that we understand the nature of this sin problem, but our purpose here is only to show that when Adam ate from the wrong tree, he infected himself with a sin problem that he passed down to each person born into his race—with the exception of Jesus, of course.

From Adam We Received Our Type of Death Problem

Romans 5:12–14 shows that Adam infected us all with a death problem. We are all destined to death because of the one man Adam.

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When Adam ate from the wrong tree, God removed him and Eve from the Garden of Eden that they might not eat from the tree of life and live forever on this earth. With that judgment on Adam and Eve, there came a judgment of physical death on the entire human race. If Jesus does not return in the next 150 years, everyone we know will die.

It is so because we are the descendants of Adam. When we were born into Adam's race, we were born with the seeds of death in our bodies.

From this study of Adam and his race, we have established the following truth: When we were born into the race of Adam, things true of Adam became true of us.

Because Jesus is "The Last Adam" and, therefore, is pictured in the first Adam, we have also established a truth of far greater significance: *When we entered the race of Jesus, things true of Him became true of us.*

Armed with this picture of Jesus as "The Last Adam," we are now ready to understand what those things are that became true of us when we entered His race.

Provider of Superabounding Heritage

Several New Testament passages set forth those things that became true of us at our entrance into the race of Jesus, but they are most clearly set forth in Romans 6:3–5. The passage reads:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

When we entered the race of Jesus, we were crucified, buried and resurrected.

JESUS IS “THE LAST ADAM”

The following chapters will guide us through precise explanations both of the meaning of our crucifixion, burial and resurrection and how, through experiencing them, Jesus has provided for all believers a *superabounding heritage*.

This chapter of essential truth can be summed up in the following statements. It would be helpful to memorize them.

Adam is the head of the natural race. Therefore, when we entered the race of Adam, things true of him became true of us.

Jesus is the head of the spiritual race. Therefore, when we entered the race of Jesus, things true of Him became true of us.

To have these brief statements tucked away in the memory will be extremely helpful both in understanding and in teaching others the truth of our union with Christ.

Chapter 3 continues the discussion of the first Adam and the type of sinner he made each of us when he ate the forbidden fruit.

Chapter 4 begins an explanation of all that is ours because we believers are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

CHAPTER 3

SIN WITH A FACE

“I had always known I had a sin problem and had heard it defined with such general terms as ‘pride’ and ‘self.’ Now it has a face.”

The speaker had recently heard and embraced the definition of his sin nature—which this chapter discusses. The knowledge he had gained from the new definition was a factor in the victory over sin he was experiencing at the time of the testimony.

If we are to have the abundant life, we must experience our oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection, with a correct identification and understanding of our sin problem. This chapter is written to provide that identification and understanding.

The Identification of Our Sin Problem

Our spiritual failures have been painful and often depressing. They have caused us to know that we came into this world with a sin nature—and that we still have it.

Until we admit, identify and understand our sin problem, we will spend the rest of our lives dealing with symptom sins yet never addressing their source.

The New Testament uses three terms to describe our sin problem: “sin,” “old man” and “flesh.” The Old Testament, in the second and third chapters of Genesis, uses yet a fourth term, “the knowledge of good and evil.”

We begin our search for a definition with a study of the passages in Genesis that reveal our sin nature as being the knowledge of good and evil.

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight . . . and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9).

SIN WITH A FACE

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Genesis 2:16–17).

And he [the serpent] said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die (Genesis 3:1–3).

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:4–5).

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Genesis 3:6).

And he [the LORD God] said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Genesis 3:11).

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat (Genesis 3:12).

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22–23).

These verses show conclusively that it was “the knowledge of good and evil” with which Adam infected himself—and us.

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Notice especially the reason Adam and Eve were sent from the garden. They were now as God, “to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22).

Just what does it mean for Adam to be infected with the knowledge of good and evil? What does it mean for us to be infected with the knowledge of good and evil?

Part of the answer is found in a study of the words “good” and “evil.” The Hebrew word translated “good” is the same as the one translated “good” in the first chapter of Genesis where it describes such things as light and grass. The word “good,” then, does not refer only to that which is morally good. It refers to that which is to advantage—whether it is morally good or not.

The Hebrew word translated “evil” is the same as that used in Psalm 23:4— “I will fear no evil.” It refers to that which is to disadvantage—whether it is something looked upon as immoral or not.

So then, the sin problem with which Adam infected us when he ate the forbidden fruit is “the knowledge of that which is to advantage or disadvantage.”

Before jumping to some sudden, and perhaps unhealthy, conclusion about what that means, think about this: Have you ever called something “a blessing in disguise”? By that statement we mean we now call something “good” that we formerly called “bad.” That is, at first we called the experience a disadvantage but now we call it an advantage.

God was calling the experience “good,” however, even at the time we were calling it “bad.” So our own experiences prove that we are not equal with God in knowing that which is to advantage or disadvantage. What, then, is the knowledge of good and evil?

The answer is found in the first chapter of Romans. Verses 18–32 record the tragic story of mankind’s rejection of God and the progressive moral and spiritual deterioration that followed. One reason is given for this universal

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rejection and the resulting deterioration: “professing themselves to be wise . . .” (Romans 1:22).

This underlying, deadly attitude that we are wise, then, is Paul’s interpretive term for “the knowledge of good and evil.”

Throughout, this work will refer often to this ruinous disease that, when not properly dealt with, reigns in us like a stubborn and loathed dictator. Whether the term “the knowledge of good and evil,” “know-it-all attitude” or “an attitude of omniscience” is used, the reference is to this deadly sin nature.

Often we have detected this know-it-all attitude. It is as obvious in some as if it were a flaming red garment they wear. In others it is not so immediately obvious. But it is there in us all. Adam infected himself—and us all—with it.

Just as surely as we have two eyes and ten fingers because we are in the race of Adam, we have an attitude of omniscience for the same reason.

The Arrogance of Our Sin Problem

Take heed! Our know-it-all attitude is not content to function quietly and only for the individual in whom it abides. It roams far and wide. It knows no limitations. It moves in all directions, whether horizontal or vertical. It passes judgment on and makes decisions for anybody and everybody—even the Lord God.

For example, more than one serious problem of fellowship has developed in one of the Lord’s churches because one or more members insisted that their point of view was the correct one. Most everyone who has been involved in the Lord’s work for only a few years has experienced the grief and strife among the people of the Lord that the know-it-all attitude has created.

The Confirmation of Our Sin Problem

The explanation of our sin problem as a *thought* problem is confirmed by other Scriptures. In Ephesians 4:17, Paul describes the unsaved as walking “in the

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vanity of their mind.” The well-known Romans 12:2 conveys that we will be transformed by the “renewing of [our mind].” A prominent Old Testament verse, Proverbs 23:7, says, “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” And the word for “repent” comes from two Greek words that mean “to change the mind.”

New Testament Expressions of Our Sin Problem

As we have already seen, there are three New Testament terms that give expression to our sin problem. We must understand and define them also. They are sin, old man and flesh.

“Sin,” when used in the New Testament to refer to our sin nature, should be understood as “the knowledge of good and evil.”

The term “old man” is a reference to the type of person we became by being born into the race of Adam. Our old man is the underlying know-it-all attitude and all it has produced in us.

The most subtle of the terms used to refer to our sin problem is “flesh.” Some have wanted to make flesh and old man synonymous. That is not the correct approach because Romans 6:6 says our old man has been crucified while Galatians 5:24 says the flesh with its affections and lusts has been crucified. We must understand, then, that *our old man is our flesh with its affections and lusts*. Although flesh and old man are not synonymous, flesh is the main feature of our old man.

What, then, is our flesh? Our flesh is our know-it-all attitude, which is the deepest form of self-confidence. When we live “in the flesh,” we trust ourselves. Admittedly, some usages of the term “flesh” in the New Testament suggest features of self-confidence that are not strictly faith in our own wisdom. Yet our most basic form of self-confidence is our knowledge of good and evil—our know-it-all attitude. In that sense, flesh and the knowledge of good and evil are synonymous.

Much light is thrown on our definition of flesh as self-confidence by Paul in Romans 8:3: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the

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flesh . . .” The law, according to this declaration, is an arrangement between God’s rules and the flesh of man. On three occasions—Exodus 19:8, 24:3 and 24:7—when the law arrangement was being made, the people of Israel said they would do all that the Lord said. No greater form of self-confidence could one find. It was their flesh speaking out.

But why the term “flesh”?

Genesis 3:7 records that the immediate effect on Adam and Eve of eating the forbidden fruit was that “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” What an amazing statement! It cannot mean they were blind before, because verse 6 makes it quite plain that they could see.

Furthermore, having realized their nakedness, “they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (v. 7).

The nakedness of Adam and Eve was not a problem for them before eating the forbidden fruit. Also, if their nakedness had been a problem for God, He would have provided clothing for them at the time of their need.

Adam and Eve are suddenly preoccupied with their bodies, and all the evidence indicates that the cause is the entrance into their lives of the knowledge of good and evil.

Evidence abounds that this preoccupation with the body has characterized all people in all places. Why are we plagued by what the medical world calls psychosomatic illnesses? What was the primary subject of the prayer requests when you last attended a prayer meeting? Answers to these questions are evident. We are preoccupied with our bodies. But why are we and all those around us preoccupied with our bodies?

An attitude of omniscience must have the raw materials of facts with which to reach conclusions and make choices that make one appear wise. Those raw materials are provided by our five senses and brain power.

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Once the know-it-all attitude has reached its conclusions and made its choices, it must inform others of such brilliance. Again, the body is the essential and available vehicle.

We may conclude, then, that the New Testament refers to our sin nature as flesh because flesh is self-confidence and its most basic feature is our attitude that we are wise, which must function through the body.

The thread of truth that works its way through each of the terms— “old man,” “sin,” “flesh” and “knowledge of good and evil”—is a know-it-all attitude. It is largely subconscious, but it is there in us all.

Whether we understand our spiritual disease as being the knowledge of good and evil, sin, our old man or flesh, it is a problem created for us when our natural father, Adam—with the assistance of his influential wife, Eve—insisted on breaking bread under the wrong tree.

We were not there when Adam infected us. He infected us when he infected himself because he is the head of the natural race. The sin nature was passed on to us by the conception-birth process.

Before closing this chapter, it needs to be said that it would be impossible to overestimate the need for God's children to understand the true nature of their sin problem as being the know-it-all attitude.

Those of us who teach others how to walk with God must be faithful to inform them that they are dealing with a sin problem that is nothing less than an attitude of omniscience.

CHAPTER 4

IN CHRIST CRUCIFIED—NOW

Some of us have been guilty of telling fellow believers that they need to “crucify self.” Any attempt at self-crucifixion by a Christian is an attempt to do the impossible—and the unnecessary. It is an attempt to do that which has already been done.

Chapter 2 discusses the fact that when we entered the race of Jesus, we were crucified, buried and resurrected. It is so because our Lord was crucified as “The Last Adam”—the head of the spiritual race.

While it is true that we entered the race of Jesus by a spiritual birth, the apostle Paul, in Romans 6:3, explains our entry into His race as being by “baptism,” saying, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

Paul is not referring to water baptism, but to the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:12–13).

The entire event of water baptism—immersion into and arising from the water—is a beautiful picture of being placed into oneness with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.

In this chapter and the next, we will search out the meaning and significance of our crucifixion, burial and resurrection. The attention here is on our crucifixion.

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Our Old Man Is Crucified

The New Testament sets forth four different features to our crucifixion. One of them is that our old man is crucified. In Romans 6:6, Paul writes, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him. . .”

In Chapter 3, I defined our “old man” as our “know-it-all attitude” plus all that attitude has produced in us. Or, in the words of Galatians 5:24, our old man is the flesh with its affections and lusts. Stated yet another way, our old man is the type of person we became as the result of our birth into the race of the first Adam.

In a matter of minutes, we should be able to broaden vastly our understanding of the old man.

Imagine this scene. You and a friend are having a discussion in the presence of several mutual friends. You both believe—at least subconsciously—that you are wiser than God. In time, the discussion turns into an argument.

What would be your inner thoughts and emotions if all of your observing friends suddenly said you were wrong and your opponent was right? Anger? Pride? Resentment? Spirit of competition? Depression? Jealousy? Fear? Covetousness? Hate? Paranoia? Desire for revenge? Criticism? Disgust? Self-pity? Many have said that some of those would be their thoughts and emotions under such conditions.

Also, what would be the inner thoughts and emotions of your opponent? Arrogance? Disrespect?

This exercise of the imagination provides us with a broadened explanation of our old man. He is the know-it-all attitude plus all the things mentioned—and more.

Because our old man is “the flesh with its affections and lusts,” let us not labor under the impression that our old man is crucified but our flesh is not.

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Also know that the *crucifixion* of our old man—the flesh with its affections and lusts—does not mean the annihilation of our old man. If that were true, we Christians would no longer have a sin problem with which to deal. Also, Christian parents would not pass on to their children a sin problem.

However, even though crucifixion does not mean our old man is annihilated, it does mean he can be kept out of power. As a result, we can have an increasing freedom from him by living out our union with Christ.

Dead to Sin

Romans 6:2 and 6:11 both indicate a second feature of our crucifixion. We are dead to sin. Paul writes:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
(Romans 6:1–2).

The word “dead” is a verb, and a literal translation is “how shall we who died to sin.”

Romans 6:10 says that Jesus “died unto sin.” That is, He died with reference to sin. Immediately following Paul’s statement that Jesus is dead to sin, he *commands* us to “reckon” ourselves to be dead unto sin. That is, we are to believe we are “dead to sin.” A literal translation of “dead to sin” is “dead ones with reference to sin.” “Sin” again is a reference to our know-it-all attitude. When we are dead to a thing, we are separated from it. When we reckon ourselves dead to sin, we reckon ourselves separated from it. We believe ourselves to be separated from it.

Crucified to the World

A third feature of our crucifixion is crucifixion to the world. Paul testifies:

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But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

The world consists of all those who are not walking in the Spirit. This means that carnal Christians as well as the unsaved are people of the world. The people of the world in your life may be those closest to you—including perhaps even the “best” member of your church.

Some of the “best” people we know may be leading us away from the will of the Lord in some areas of our lives, and consequently, it is possible that we may have embraced more of the world’s philosophy and practices than we know.

Through the cross, the world has been crucified to us. We should not be disturbed when people of the world no longer want to associate with us. We should be concerned if there is nothing about us that makes those of the world uncomfortable in our presence. In Luke 6:26 Jesus says, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.”

There is great victory in believing that we are crucified to the world and the world unto us.

Dead to the Law

According to the apostle Paul, the spiritual failures of many servants of the Lord are the result of attempts to live by law.

There is much cause for rejoicing, then, when we realize that in our crucifixion, we died to living by law. The key passage teaching our death to law is Romans 7:1–4. Romans 7:1–3 records a simple illustration: If a woman’s husband dies, she is free to remarry. Paul’s application of the illustration is not quite so simple. Here is his statement:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:4).

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In Paul's application of the illustration, the Christian is the wife. The two husbands are the law and Christ. The death that frees the wife is her own. We believers died to the law by the body of Christ. That is, our crucifixion with Christ makes possible for us freedom from law-living. When we experience that freedom, we may live in a marriage relationship with Christ. The result of this union is fruit unto God.

Much light is thrown on our freedom from law by Romans 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." By "law" here, Paul means "law arrangement." The law arrangement was weak because of the flesh. *Our conclusion!* The law arrangement was an arrangement with flesh.

Any law arrangement, whether with the commands of the Bible or with *our own self-made rules*, is an arrangement with our flesh. When our approach to Christian living is that of keeping rules, we place the burden on ourselves. Our attitude is, "*I will do this*" or "*I will not do this.*"

In other words, the moment we say we will keep some rule, we have brought flesh into prominence, and we are destined for much failure.

In Romans 7:21 Paul expresses that even our choosing to do good is law-living.

Our death to the law, then, is freedom from attempting to keep the commands of the Bible in our own strength, freedom from keeping man-made rules, freedom from the one law of doing our best for Jesus, and even freedom from choosing to do good.

Our death to the law is freedom from the flesh and all its tragic capabilities.

Chapter 5

IN CHRIST BURIED AND RESURRECTED—NOW

Water baptism is a beautiful picture of our immersion into Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit when by faith we received Jesus. It also pictures our immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

This chapter presents a study of the Scriptures dealing with our burial and resurrection.

Buried—Now

Romans 6:4a says, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.” Just as our crucifixion with Christ has multiple meanings for us, so does our burial with Christ.

Significance for Our Crucifixion

Our burial into Christ is as real as our crucifixion with Christ. It also is of much significance. Just as our old man was crucified, he also is buried.

Our burial gives added significance to our victory over our old man. He is both crucified and buried. Our burial means a second lock on the door.

Significance for Our Resurrection

The only specific reason the Scriptures give for our burial is that it is preparation for our resurrection. Romans 6:4 reads:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We are buried that we might be raised up. Consequently, any discussion of our burial introduces a study of our resurrection.

Resurrected—Now

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In Romans 6:5 the apostle Paul writes, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

The word “planted” is better translated “united.” The message of Romans 6:4–5 is that believers have the privilege and power to walk in newness of life because they are resurrected as is their Lord.

Our resurrection and death are “in the likeness” of the death and resurrection of Jesus because His was physical and ours is spiritual.

In Ephesians 2:4–6, Paul provides our broadest base for understanding our spiritual resurrection. He does so by taking the one concept of resurrection and expanding it into three separate and distinct thoughts. He writes:

God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The spiritual resurrection of all believers is one of three dimensions. We have been *quickened, raised up and seated in heavenly places*.

We will be better able to understand the significance of our resurrection by imagining ourselves with our Lord at the time of His resurrection. Why not use your imagination right now to see yourself in the tomb with our Lord’s lifeless body at the time of His resurrection? See those first movements of the body. What has happened?

Quickened With Christ

What had to happen before the body moved? Life, the life of God, had to return to that body. In that moment, Jesus was quickened—made alive. This is what happened to us spiritually the moment we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. In Romans 8:9b, Paul writes: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The Spirit of God came to live in us at our conversion as He came to live in the body of Jesus at His resurrection.

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Raised With Christ

The second feature of our resurrection mentioned in Ephesians 2:4–6 is that we have been raised with Him. In our imagination, let us return to our Lord's tomb. We first saw the initial movements of the lifeless body indicating the return of the life of God into the body. We now watch as our Lord leaves the tomb. He leaves the place of the dead. For more light on this, we must return to Romans 6:4:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

A literal translation of “raised up from the dead” is “raised out from the dead ones.” Paul does not say He was raised from death.

When we were baptized into the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we were raised out from among the dead ones. Our experience confirms this bit of theology. If you came to the Lord after your teen years, you can remember very well how you either suddenly or gradually changed your close companions. You moved away from the unsaved—the spiritually dead ones—to those who are alive in Christ. From that time forward, you have been unable to have close associations with those who do not know our Lord.

There may be one exception to this change of friends. There are those who have come to know their unsaved condition after many years in church life. Therefore, their close associates all along had possibly been Christians. Otherwise the statement holds true.

You may argue, “I was saved as a small child and certainly was not raised from the dead ones.” But you were! Do you not remember that when you became a teenager and the “dead” ones began to act like dead ones, you had to break close association with them? It happened! Even though it was not worked out in experience for several years, when you became a Christian, you were raised from among the dead ones.

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Seated in the Heavens With Christ

Let your imagination of our Lord's resurrection continue. See our Lord only weeks after His quickening and raising up ascending to the right hand of the Father. It is not difficult to imagine because the record of the ascension is in the first chapter of the book of Acts.

We now must grasp the fact that we believers are seated there with Him. We were placed there with Him the moment we were placed into union with Him in death, burial and resurrection at our conversion experience.

This feature of the message of our union with Christ seems to be the most difficult to comprehend. A great passage dealing with our enthronement with Christ is in the first chapter of Ephesians. It is couched in a prayer.

Paul prays that the readers will be given spiritual insight that they may know some things. One of the things he prays for his readers to grasp is the greatness of the power that is available to those who believe. Ephesians 1:19–20 states that the power available to those who continue in faith is “according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ.”

Paul is not praying that we will know how much power is available to Christ. His prayer is that we will know how much power is available to those who continue to live a life of dependence on God.

Mention is made of Jesus in the passage because all the features of power manifested in Him are the measure of the power available to those who live a life of continuing dependence on the Lord.

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The passage then informs us of what those manifestations of power in Christ are:

When he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet . . . (Ephesians 1:20–22a).

Because believers are one with Christ, we may experience a life of resurrection, enthronement and authority.

CHAPTER 6

CHRIST IN YOU—NOW

“Christ lives in me,” is the dynamic testimony of many. Others testify, “I just permit Jesus to live through me.”

No discussion of the biblical theme of our union with Christ would be complete that did not set forth the truth that Christ is “in” all believers.

For more than half a century, evangelicals have given healthy attention to the truth that Jesus is “in” all believers. Many, however, are limited in their experiences of Christ living through them, because they do not understand that they are “in” Christ. Yet their experiences have been genuine and fruitful. They have rejoiced in the truth that Christ lives in them.

Taught in Scripture

The most casual reader of the New Testament cannot miss its teachings that Jesus lives in believers. Romans 8:9b declares, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The famous Galatians 2:20 says, “Christ liveth in me.” And there are other passages setting forth the same truth.

According to the Scriptures, God the Father and God the Spirit also abide in believers.

In John 14:23 Jesus says, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

In John 14:16–17 Jesus promised His followers that the Holy Spirit who was “with” them—because He was in Jesus—would be “in” them. It is commonly accepted among all evangelicals that since Pentecost the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ, has been “in” all believers.

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Confirmed in Experience

Not only do we have a wealth of Scripture passages to underline the truth that Christ lives in us, but multitudes have confirmed that truth over and over by personal experience.

Ephesians 4:30, which says “grieve not the holy Spirit of God,” reveals that the Spirit lives in believers.

Sin grieves the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit grieves because of our sins, His grief spills over into our hearts. As a result, the grief we experience when we sin confirms the blessed truth that *Christ is in us—now*. Those who do not experience grief when they sin have reason to doubt they have entered the Kingdom of God.

According to the eighth chapter of Hebrews, God puts His laws in our minds and writes them in our hearts. This is a reference to the resident Christ who is moment by moment saying “Yes” and “No” as we live out our lives.

Only we believers have this unceasing direction for those things we should and should not do. It is continual and effective evidence that Christ lives in us.

Not the Same As Being Filled With His Spirit

In Paul’s second great prayer recorded in his letter to the Ephesians, he writes:

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:14–17a).

Jesus may be “in” us without “dwelling in” us. Paul uses this terminology to express what he means in his command in Ephesians 5:18 that we be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.

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As encouraging as it is to be absolutely certain that the Lord Jesus is “in” us, we must never think that His presence “in” us is all we need. He must “dwell” in us. We must be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.

Because Christ is “in” us, it is possible for us to be filled with His Spirit.

We must be *filled* with the Spirit of Christ. *We cannot fill ourselves.*

Yet it is only as we experience what it means for us to be “in” Christ that we will be filled with His Spirit.

PART THREE — BASIC APPROACHES

Imagine yourself as an Israelite priest gazing across the Jordan just at sunset the day before you are to cross the river and begin the conquest of Canaan.

Excitement fills you! In only hours, God will begin the fulfillment of the age-old promise to you and your people of inheriting this land of rest and abundance. It is going to be your privilege to be among those who first experience the fulfillment of the promise. You are nervous, however, because war is inevitable.

You are curious about the tactics the Lord will dictate for the conquest. Yet you will undertake them whatever they are. Little do you know that His tactics in your first encounter with the enemy call for you to parade around Jericho while bursting your lungs blowing into a ram's horn.

Your present position as a Christian is possibly very much like what you just visualized. You are God's child. You have not entered the land of abundance and rest. You do not know the God-given tactics for your personal victory in life. Yet you know you will undertake them when the Lord reveals them—whatever they are.

The two tactics for possessing the life of abundance and rest are suggested in the chapter titles "The Approach of Faith" and "The Approach of Choice."

CHAPTER 7

THE APPROACH OF FAITH

Believers who have never heard of their union with Christ experience, to a degree, some benefits of their crucifixion, burial and resurrection. An example is our change of close associates at the time of our conversion to Christ, which is one feature of our resurrection.

We will never, however, fully experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection until we use the tactics commanded in Scripture for doing so.

Just as we received salvation by learning, believing and choosing, we fully experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection in the same manner.

This threefold process for experiencing our crucifixion, burial and resurrection is set forth in orderly fashion in Romans 6:3–13. In verses 3–9 the apostle Paul informs us of our crucifixion, burial and resurrection; in verses 11 and 13 he commands us to believe; in verses 12–13 he commands us to choose.

In this chapter we will focus on our responsibility to believe that we are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

The Commands of Faith

There are two commands of faith. The first is in verse 11. Following his declaration in Romans 6:10 that our Lord is dead to sin and alive to God, Paul writes: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11).

Our attention here is on the word “reckon.” Two other New Testament usages of the word will help our understanding of its meaning. Luke 22:37 records that our Lord was “reckoned among the transgressors.” In Romans 8:18 the apostle Paul declares, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

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In both passages, “reckon” implies the idea of “believe.” That is the thought in Romans 6:11. We are to believe we are dead to sin and alive to God.

Our believing that we are dead to sin and alive to God is not a promise to God we will not sin nor is it repentance of sin. We are simply believing that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

“Reckon” in Romans 6:11 is a command. *We are as responsible to believe that we are dead to sin and alive to God as we are for taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to the uttermost part of the earth.*

Amazingly, some who are the most passionate about evangelism and missions seem to scoff at this command that we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive unto God. Such inconsistency is remarkable. Yet if we are not believing ourselves to be dead to sin and alive unto God, we are in disobedience.

In fact, if we are not believing ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God, we are as disobedient to God as if we were not spreading the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth. Furthermore, it is those who obey this command who are, in time, the most effective in evangelism and missions. The chief example of this is the apostle Paul.

The second command of faith is in verse 13. In the middle of the verse, Paul writes, “Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.” In light of the overall passage, Paul is saying that we are to yield ourselves to God as those who are crucified, buried and resurrected. Because he mentions in verse 6 that our old man has been crucified, Paul must mean here that by faith we are to give ourselves to God as those whose old man has been crucified and buried and as those who have been raised from the dead.

The Continuation of Faith

Paul’s command to “reckon”—that is, “believe”—is a command of continuous action. We are to believe each moment of the day that we are dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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The command to yield ourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, is not in a tense of continual action. Yet it follows three commands of continual action. It is not difficult to understand, then, that we are to continue to yield ourselves to God as those alive from the dead as we obey these commands for living out our crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

Some have left the impression that reckoning is a one-time act. According to that thought, the moment a person understands, believes and chooses his union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection, he will live in victory all his remaining days on earth.

That approach is neither scriptural nor effectual. In Romans 8:2, Paul writes:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit operates in the lives of all believers by a law. That law is to give us the abundant life through our union with Christ. Consequently, the Holy Spirit will remind us throughout each day that we are dead to sin and alive to God. When He gives the gentle reminders, we are to respond with a positive faith that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

In Romans 6:16 Paul teaches that we become slaves to things we do over and over. So when we believe over and over that we are dead to sin and alive to God, in time, we will be slaves to that faith.

In His graciousness, the Lord often permits weeks of continuous victory when we first understand how to experience the abundant life. In time, however, that sovereign work gives way to the New Testament idea of growth. Then we take the way of growth—certain but slow.

Our days following the sovereign work of victory proceed as follows: At the beginning of the day, the Holy Spirit reminds us of our crucifixion, burial and resurrection. We respond by confessing those things to be true of us. Then He gives us those gentle reminders throughout the day. At first we may go hours

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at a time without being aware of God and of our union with Christ. In time, though, we will develop an enslaving habit of believing we are dead to sin and alive to God.

The Content of Faith

Because we experience our oneness with Christ by living out the five commands of Romans 6:11–13, we go to those verses to discover the content of our faith leading to the experience.

The expressions of that faith are in verses 11 and 13. In verse 11 we are commanded to “reckon” (believe) ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. In verse 13 we are told to present ourselves to God as being “alive from the dead.” Because of the larger context of the passage, we must understand that when we present ourselves unto God as being “alive from the dead,” we present ourselves to God believing we are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

We Are to Believe We Are Already Crucified

Believing we are already crucified means we believe we are dead to sin; our old man is crucified; we are crucified to the world and we are crucified to the law.

It has been shown that our being dead to sin can be translated “dead ones with reference to sin,” meaning separation from sin. Also, the concept of being dead ones in reference to sin can mean because we are dead ones in reference to sin, we no longer have to be in bondage to our sin nature.

Our freedom from bondage to our sin nature is also expressed in the truth that our old man is crucified. Our flesh and all it has produced in our lives has been crucified.

This thought gives a double victory over our sin nature. We are dead as far as our sin nature is concerned, and our sin nature has been crucified.

It is our right to believe we no longer have to commit the sins that are disturbing us. This *is not* to say we are to believe we are not going to sin. It is to say we are to *believe* we do not have to sin.

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You might desire to put this tactic of faith to work now. Just thank the Lord that you never again have to be under the domination of your know-it-all attitude, never be afraid or jealous or angry or whatever your sin problems may be.

We Are to Believe We Are Already Buried

That we are dead to sin and our old man has been crucified gives us a double victory over our sin nature and all it produces in us. Now consider the burial. Our old man is crucified and buried. This means a triple victory over our flesh and all it produces.

It has been mentioned that our burial is also preparation for resurrection.

We Are to Believe We Are Already Resurrected

In Romans 6:11 we are commanded to believe that just as Jesus is dead to sin and alive to God, we are to believe we are dead to sin and alive to God. What does it mean for Jesus to be alive to God? It must mean He is in the very presence of the Father. So to believe we are alive to God must mean that spiritually we have been placed in the presence of the Father.

Romans 6:13 says we are to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead. That is, we are to present ourselves to our heavenly Father as those who have been raised from the dead ones.

According to Ephesians 2:4–7, this means three things. It means the Holy Spirit has come to live in us, we have been raised out from the dead ones and we have been seated in the heavenlies.

It is rarely difficult for us to believe that God lives in us. We have been taught that for years and we believe it.

It is rarely difficult for a believer to realize God has raised him out from among the dead ones. He knows he is not comfortable in close ties with the unsaved but is comfortable with the people of God.

The most difficult expression of faith we are commanded to exercise is that we have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies. What is the reason for this?

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Is it difficult because we have been in church for years but have never been taught this truth?

Is it difficult because it seems to be such a glorious life that we cannot imagine anyone being able to live in the presence of God?

Is it because we believe we do not deserve such blessings? We must keep in mind that everything about our salvation is a gift of God. We did not deserve being convicted of sin, or hearing the gospel, or being drawn to Jesus or having faith to give our lives to Jesus.

Let us take that step of faith and thank God we are in the heavenly places.

The Consequences of Our Faith

All the previous discussions about our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection have possibly caused you to wonder, “If we are already crucified, buried and resurrected, why must we believe these things true of us in order to experience them?”

This is a question that has disturbed many, and also one that demands an intelligent and a biblical answer. The answer is in the following statement and is of such importance that it would profit all believers to memorize it.

There are things true of us in the Christian life that we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

Forgiveness of our sins is a classic example of this spiritual law.

Have you ever confessed an act of sin more than one time? You have! In the earlier days of your walk with the Lord, you possibly confessed one act of sin a hundred times. All Christians have been guilty of such unnecessary confessing.

When were you forgiven? According to 1 John 1:9, you were forgiven the very first time you confessed. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

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You were forgiven, but you kept confessing. Why? *You had not experienced forgiveness.* You experienced forgiveness when you believed the promise of Scripture. One God-loving believer experienced forgiveness for a sin 12 years after God had forgiven him. He had continued to confess the sin for 12 years after he was forgiven.

The same is true about prayer. We do not experience the Lord as we could until we believe we are in His presence.

The same is true of justification. As Judge of the universe, God declared us to be righteous the moment of our conversion to Christ. As Judge, He desires to relate to us as though we are as righteous as Jesus. Yet we fellowship with Him in terms of our justification only as we believe He has received us as though we are as righteous as Jesus.

In the same manner we will experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection only as we believe that we are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

It is possible, though, that we have believed for years that we have been crucified, buried and resurrected but our lives have not changed. We must add to our tactic of faith the tactic of choice, which we will now discuss in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8

THE APPROACH OF CHOICE

Your lifelong search for a fulfilled life may end before you finish reading this chapter. If you have made the journey through the preceding chapters and if you are hungering and thirsting for all God has for you, you are almost home.

When we understand, believe and choose our oneness with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, we begin to experience the abundant life God has for us. This chapter sets forth what the Bible teaches about how we may choose the crucified, buried and resurrected life.

The biblical guidance for *choosing* the life of crucifixion, burial and resurrection follows the command to *believe* we are dead to sin and alive unto God. The four commands for choosing to live out our crucifixion, burial and resurrection are found in Romans 6:12–13. They are:

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body . . .”

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin . . .”

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead . . .”

“[Yield] your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

Let Not Sin Reign in Your Mortal Body

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Romans 6:12).

“Sin” here is a reference to our know-it-all attitude. That Paul would give such a command indicates that our know-it-all attitude will continuously seek to control our bodies. This unceasing attempt to control is also revealed in the fact

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that the command is in the progressive tense. Continually, we are to be on the defensive.

Our defense is in exercising our power of choice to “let not sin reign” in our mortal bodies. We are to choose continuously not to live out of our own reasoning. We are to intelligently and consciously give up our own thoughts about life: thoughts of what we, others and the Lord are to do.

Paul says that when sin reigns in our mortal bodies, we obey our bodies. When sin reigns in our bodies, we become preoccupied with our bodies. We pamper our bodies. They control us.

Do Not Give the Parts of Your Body to Sin

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin”
(Romans 6:13a).

This command is similar to the previous one but more pointed. The command of verse 12 deals with all the body. This deals with the parts of our bodies. Do not give any part of your body to the control of your own reasoning. As an example of what Paul has in mind, think of your ability to speak. Hundreds of times each day we speak. Yet, according to this command, we are never to determine ourselves what we are to speak. The tense of the verb is that of continuous action. We are to obey over and over.

Why does Paul deal with all the body in verse 12 and then with parts of the body in verse 13? The change implies that many of God’s children want the Lord to control them—but not totally. They desire to reserve some parts of their lives for their own control. So Paul commands that not one part of our bodies be under control of our own reasoning power.

The passage warns that *when we use the parts of our bodies*, unrighteousness will be the result: “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.”

Give Yourselves to God As Those Alive From the Dead

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“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (Romans 6:13b).

This third command to choose the life of union with Christ includes the exercise of our faith as well. The faith feature of the imperative is in the last eight words— “as those that are alive from the dead.”

That is, we are to give our lives to God as those who have been crucified, buried and resurrected. The exercise of the will is expressed in the first four words— “yield yourselves unto God.”

The verb form suggests a one-time exercise of the will. Evidently, Paul changes from the progressive tense to suggest that every time we give ourselves to God we are to do so with the thought that it is a lifetime decision.

Of course, we will time and again find ourselves controlling our own lives. Yet when we do, we respond with another lifetime decision to give ourselves to God as those who are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

The command to give ourselves to God as those alive from the dead is a radical departure from the commonly accepted advice we have given those hungering for all that God has for them. We have taught and encouraged them in terms of commitment only. On a regular basis we have suggested to those who desired to walk with the Lord:

Read your Bible more.

Pray more.

Rededicate your life to the Lord.

Totally commit your life to God.

In some way serve others.

We have thought we were giving good advice. We knew all along that total availability to God was necessary. But according to the command under discussion, it must be a total availability produced by a faith that knows and believes we have been crucified, buried and resurrected.

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When we give our lives to God as those alive from the dead, we give ourselves to Him as those whose point of view has been crucified and buried. Thus, we give ourselves to God to live only out of His point of view.

In a real sense, this imperative sums up the three previous imperatives: reckoning, choosing against sin controlling the body and refusing to give any part of the body to the control of the know-it-all attitude.

Give the Parts of Your Body to God

“[Yield] your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:13c).

Just as we, for example, are not to give our ability to speak to the control of our own point of view, we are to give the use of that ability to God. We no longer have the right to speak to anyone about anything. *Furthermore, we do not have the right to remain silent.*

All the parts of our bodies are to be placed under the control of the Lord. Paul’s last comment is that when God uses the parts of our bodies, He makes of them instruments of righteousness. Through our bodies, God will do deeds of righteousness.

Keep in mind that this is the last of a series of commands and is dependent on our obeying the four previous ones. Our ability to give the parts of our bodies to God is possible only when we refuse to give our bodies to the control of sin and when we give ourselves to God as those who are crucified, buried and resurrected.

It was suggested in the last chapter that we not wait to express our faith that we are crucified, buried and resurrected.

Also, we should not wait to obey these four imperatives of choice to live out our union with Christ.

Let us choose now not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies.

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Let us choose now not to give the parts of our bodies to sin.

Let us choose now to give ourselves to God as those alive from the dead.

Let us choose now to give the parts of our bodies to God.

Yet a one-time act of the will does not give the changes we long for. We must obey all five commands of Romans 6:11–13 until they become habit. We must obey them until we become slaves to them.

Romans 8:2 says, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Among other things, this passage means that the Holy Spirit will never cease seeking to bring us to the abundant life through the experience of our union with Christ. He will be the faithful One to remind and enable us to obey these five commands.

Our place is to respond to the gentlest reminder of the Holy Spirit to obey them. As we do, little by little the Lord will bring the changes we have longed for these many years. Little by little we will possess the land of abundance and rest.

Let us take the first step into life now. Let us continue those steps at each prompting of the Holy Spirit. Change will come.

Let us now examine some of the changes we will experience.

PART FOUR — LIFE TRANSFORMATIONS

“I need to be different. I need change!” Surely, this is the cry of us all. And when we continually live out our union with Christ, we will experience those longed-for changes.

Probably we all have experienced the excitement of planning a vacation to a place we have never been before. A part of the excitement was in acquainting ourselves with those things we would see and do in this new place.

It is now our thrill to become acquainted with the land we will enter by living out our oneness with our Lord. And in this case, we are not going on vacation. We will enter this land to stay—and the longer we stay, the more inviting it will become.

The general theme for our preview of this spiritual haven to which we travel is “Life Transformations.” These changes are set forth in seven chapters: “At Last—Spirit-Filled Living,” “What a Difference the Spirit Makes,” “Freedom From Sin,” “Freedom From the World,” “Freedom From Law,” “Life in the Heavens” and “God’s Miracle Workers.”

CHAPTER 9

AT LAST—SPIRIT-FILLED LIVING

I used a computer to write this book. If you have never used computers before, there is something strange about them you need to know. They always do what you command them to do. They do not always do what you *mean* for them to do.

At times (more than I am willing to admit), when I first began to use the computer, I spent what seemed to be hours trying to make it do what I needed. Often I called my computer-expert friend for help, and in a matter of seconds, the computer was doing what I needed.

Many of us have known similar frustration in seeking a continual filling with the Holy Spirit. We knew we were to be filled. We had experienced that filling right after we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. We have had brief tastes of the filling since then. But nothing we have tried has resulted in the continual filling.

Our failure was partly due to our lack of understanding. Consequently, as in the use of the computer, receiving and responding to a few words will enable the serious-minded servant of our Lord to enter the life of continual filling with the Spirit. These words are, of course, from the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit Continuously Seeks to Fill Us With Himself

For many years I begged for the filling of the Holy Spirit as if I believed the Lord was reluctant to answer my prayer. That bit of ignorance will keep anyone from continuous filling with the Spirit.

Paul's command to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18 is in a tense of continual action. That truth alone should convince us that the Lord desires for us continuous filling of the Spirit.

Another verse, though, even more forcefully reveals the same truth. John 4:14 records Jesus' statement to the woman at the well, when He informed her that

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the water He would give her would be in her a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

Because the Holy Spirit is in us as a “spring”—a better translation than “well”—springing up, we know that from the moment we became Christians, the Holy Spirit has been seeking to fill us with Himself.

What a thought! And how it changes our understanding about the possibility of being Spirit-filled Christians. By being aware of His desire to fill us, we realize that the burden for the filling is not on us.

Another fact that makes us know we can be filled with the Holy Spirit is that *we are not commanded to fill ourselves. On the contrary, we are to be filled. We are to receive the filling.* We are to continue to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit who has been seeking to fill us with Himself since the moment we received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Here is an appropriate question: “If He wants to fill us so badly and we want to be filled so badly, then why are we not experiencing the filling of the Holy Spirit?”

The answer is very simple!

The Flesh Prevents Our Filling With the Spirit

In Galatians 5:17 Paul writes, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.” If we are seeking to be filled with the Spirit and are not being filled, the hindrance is the flesh.

Imagine the impossibility of filling a bucket with water when the bucket has rocks in it. It is just as impossible for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit when there is the continuous barrier of the flesh.

Can anything be done about the barrier of the flesh that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit? Yes! Thank God this barrier to the filling of the Holy Spirit can

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be put out of power. The flesh has been crucified and can, therefore, be put out of power and removed as a barrier to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

The Flesh Has Been Crucified

In Galatians 5:24 we read the beautiful truth that when we gave our hearts to the Lord, our flesh was crucified. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

What victory! The very moment we gave our hearts to the Lord, our flesh with its affections and lusts was crucified.

When we understand, believe and choose crucifixion, burial and resurrection, we experience crucifixion, burial and resurrection. When we experience crucifixion of the flesh, the flesh is out of power. The flesh is our know-it-all attitude. So when our flesh is out of power, the Holy Spirit is free to be in control of our lives.

It can be assumed that many conscientious believers have agonized on their knees before the Lord for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Stop your agony! Start your faith! Exercise your will! Experience victory!

Relax right now before the Lord. Make a conscious choice to give up your faith in yourself and, in particular, your faith that you are wise. Give up all plans your know-it-all attitude has for you, for others and for the Kingdom of God. Now add to that act of the will your faith that your flesh has been crucified.

Now just say to the Lord, "Dear Lord, right now I receive the filling of the Spirit who has been seeking to fill me from the moment I became yours."

You are now filled with the Holy Spirit.

Remember that Paul's command of Ephesians 5:18 is that we continuously be filled with the Spirit. Some have been described as "Spirit-filled" as though they had reached a place in their spiritual lives that could be so described. It is not true.

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When Paul wrote his command that we are to be continuously filled, he knew that one filling was not enough—and that there is no such thing as believers reaching a place in their Christian lives at which they could be described as “Spirit-filled.” We must be filled over and over again.

Flesh dies hard. It will continue to come back into power.

Flesh must be continuously kept out of power by your continuing to reject it and continuing to believe it has been crucified.

Keep on being filled with the Spirit! Do so in the same manner you were filled just moments ago.

In a sense, being filled with the Holy Spirit can be compared to buying a car. When we buy a car, we get four wheels, four tires, two or more seats, and so on. When we receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, we receive the benefit of all the things the Holy Spirit does in and through us.

We now turn our attention to those additional blessings that are ours when we are filled with the Spirit.

CHAPTER 10

WHAT A DIFFERENCE THE SPIRIT MAKES

In Chapter 9, I mentioned my difficulties in learning to use a computer. By now, though, I have gone for months without calling my computer-expert friend for advice, because I now have the basic knowledge of how to use it.

With the smallest amount of knowledge about computers, I have now graduated from the typewriter. If you have done the same, you know what a vast difference it makes in your typing productivity.

I think of college and seminary days when I prepared term papers on the old, manual typewriter. Then it was a constant cycle of erasing, retyping entire papers to add one sentence or paragraph, throwing away hundreds of sheets of paper and replacing ribbons. Now words, sentences or paragraphs are easily and quickly added, moved or deleted. I print only when I have my final copy ready. What a difference!

Similarly, what a difference there is between that old life of “doing our best for Jesus” and the new life of receiving the filling of the Spirit of Christ.

The Scriptures reveal the many ministries of the Holy Spirit. This chapter features a number of those ministries of the Spirit. Before we begin our exciting survey of this promised land of blessing, we need a brief orientation of the following thoughts.

First, the previous chapter relates *how we may receive the filling of the Spirit*. Perhaps a review of that chapter would be advisable either before or after a journey through this one.

Second, the Christian life is one of growth, and we must not think that from this moment forward we will continuously be filled with the Holy Spirit. Each day we can grow in the direction of a more continuous filling.

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Third, the changes we can expect are organized into four categories. They are: personal changes, changes in our relationship with God, changes in our relationships with others and changes in our Christian service. You will quickly perceive that this grouping is only for convenience and *arbitrary*.

Fourth, all that is mentioned here comes as a by-product of being filled with the Spirit. Just as we receive four tires when we buy a new automobile, we receive these blessings when we are filled with the Spirit.

Any effort on our part to make these things happen will be ineffective. If we find ourselves without any of the qualities mentioned here, our need is to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Personal Changes

At no point in the entire discussion is the arrangement of changes more arbitrary than here. Any changes within us will work their way into our relationship with God; they will work their way into our relationships with others; and they will work their way into our acts of service. The changes mentioned here, though, do seem to be of such quality that they are more private than the others.

Joy—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy.” Joy is one of the rarest of commodities. For the majority of us, it waits on the right set of circumstances. When we are filled with the Spirit, joy is ours regardless of the circumstances. When we think of what a heart full of joy does for us and for those around us, we are motivated to receive the filling of the Spirit.

Peace—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . peace.” This means we have a peace within. Also it means we are at peace with God and with others, when others will permit it. In a day characterized by turmoil, grief, despair, guilt, hate, strife and war, it is a thrill to know that we may be the children of peace by being filled with the Spirit.

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Goodness—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . goodness.” Almost all parents teach their children to be good. Yet Jesus says that only God is good. If we, then, are to be good, we will be so only when God is good in us. God is good in us when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Self-Control—Galatians 5:23 (TLB)

Paul writes, “But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce . . . temperance” (TLB). Some have translated this “self-control.” It may come as a surprise that the Holy Spirit produces self-control because we are saying that flesh is self-confidence. The word translated “temperance” comes from two words that mean “in power.” The Holy Spirit produces power within. Perhaps the idea is that of a person not “out of control,” but free to respond willfully to the leadership of the Lord.

Growth in Spiritual Knowledge—John 14:26, 16:13

On several occasions the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. In John 16:13 Jesus says the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. In John 14:26 He says the Spirit will teach us all things. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:9–10 that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. When the Holy Spirit is filling our lives, we have an infinite source of spiritual light. And the flow of that light to illuminate us is continual.

Knowledge of Future Events—John 16:13

“. . . And he will shew you things to come.” A classic example of this ministry of the Holy Spirit occurs when the Lord reveals that we no longer need to pray for someone’s salvation. He gives an inner assurance that the person is going to be saved. There are times we need to know the future as a warning. At times we are given assurances about some future event as a matter of guidance of what we are to do.

A red flag of caution needs to be raised here. These revelations of future happenings are infrequent. Satan may attempt to lead us into a fantasy world of thinking we may know all about the future. The truth is we need to know

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very little about the future. Yet when we do need to know, the Holy Spirit grants the revelation.

Ability to Remember Spiritual Truth—John 14:26

“But the Comforter . . . shall . . . bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” Many of us have been astonished in a witnessing experience when suddenly we remembered a verse of Scripture we had not thought of for years. The Holy Spirit works in such a manner in all areas of the believer’s life who continues to live out the Spirit-filled life.

An Increase of Physical Energy—Romans 8:11

This verse teaches that the Holy Spirit will “quicken” our mortal bodies. Perhaps the primary reference of this passage is to the resurrection of our bodies. It seems, however, there is much profit in believing the Holy Spirit “quickens” our mortal bodies in the present time.

The Lord does this partly by freeing us from energy-draining emotions such as fear, worry, depression, anger, bitterness and hate. He does this by freeing us from decision making. We must remember that when we walk in the Spirit, the Lord makes the decisions for us and we respond to them. Also, there are times when the Lord guides us to do things for which we do not have the necessary physical energy. At such times, the Holy Spirit will infuse us with a resource of physical energy and strength for doing those things we have been led to do. Many could give testimony of such an infusion of physical vitality.

Effective Praying—Ephesians 6:18

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit . . .” Our prayers change when we pray as we are led by the Holy Spirit! There will be less wasted time, fewer unnecessary requests, expansion of our vision of prayer needs, likely less emotion and a peace in our hearts that God is going to answer our prayers. And far more of our prayer requests will be answered by the Lord who leads us as we pray.

Continual Thanksgiving—Ephesians 5:20

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“Be filled with the Spirit . . . giving thanks always for all things unto God”
(Ephesians 5:18b–20a).

An increasing number of God’s children are experiencing changes in their lives through giving thanks in all things. A friend testified that when she began to thank the Lord for a broken hip, a physical healing began to take place. Some people have been lifted above deep depression when they began to thank God for all their circumstances. Such thanksgiving expresses our belief that God controls all our circumstances. Thanking the Lord for all things is not the natural thing to do. Yet when filled with the Spirit, we will continuously thank Him for all things.

An Increase of the Glory of God—2 Corinthians 3:18

Second Corinthians 3:18 states, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” This passage is in a context describing the believer’s glory. The words “from glory to glory” convey the idea of a progressive glory that comes upon the believer. As the passage clearly discloses, this increasing glory is the work of the Holy Spirit.

It should be added here that much of our gazing into the face of the Lord Jesus results from the suffering the Lord sends. The apostle Paul teaches this fact in 2 Corinthians 4:16–17.

Continuous Meditation on Jesus—John 15:26, 16:14–15

When our Lord speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit, He declares, “He shall testify of me” and “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” When we are filled with the Spirit, our minds are on Jesus.

The Abundant Life—Romans 8:6

“To be spiritually minded is life and peace.” A literal translation of the Greek is “the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.” Here the word “life” is in the sense of “life abundant.” In Galatians 6:8 Paul discloses that one who sows to the Spirit

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(rather, out of the Spirit) reaps everlasting life. Again, as in the Romans passage, the idea is the abundant life spoken of by our Lord in John 10:10.

Changes in Relationship With God

Our relationship with God can be a growing one. Here are some areas in which that relationship can grow as we are continuously being filled with the Spirit.

Love—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is love.” Our Lord says the greatest of all commandments is that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength. He then adds that we also are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Therefore, the first love direction of the heart filled with the Holy Spirit is vertical. As we continue to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, there is a resultant increasing outflow of love toward God.

Meekness—Galatians 5:22-23

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . meekness.” Our Lord says the meek shall inherit the earth. He also tells us to take His yoke upon ourselves, because He is meek. It has been correctly said that “meekness is not weakness.”

Meekness is availability. The word translated “meek” in the New Testament is used to describe a tamed horse that is under the control of its master. That is why “availability” is an excellent explanation of what it means to be meek. Those who maintain that the Lord is not looking for our ability but our availability are correct. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He has our availability, because then we are “meek.”

Faith—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith.” Often the Scriptures encourage us to desire a growing faith in God. Romans 1:17 declares, “The just shall live by faith.” “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” is recorded in Romans 14:23. Hebrews 11:6 shouts, “But without faith it is impossible to please him.” In John 14:12 Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my

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Father.” We may have a growing faith by continuously receiving the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Faithfulness—Galatians 5:22

In some of the modern translations of Galatians 5:22, the word “faithfulness” is used rather than the word “faith.” Because of the possibility of both translations, both features of the result of being filled with the Spirit are included here. There is great need for faithfulness among our fellow men. Faithfulness toward God, though, is a greater need. For the person who has a difficult time “hanging in there,” this is a welcome blessing. Being faithful frees us from feelings of guilt and self-hatred because of our being a disappointment to God and to others.

Continuous Guidance by the Spirit—Romans 8:14

Romans 8:14 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Plainly, as we are filled with the Spirit, we are also led by the Spirit. As we are continuously led by the Spirit, we walk in the center of God’s will.

Evidence of Salvation—Romans 8:13-16

The verse just quoted, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” means that as we walk in the Spirit there is evidence that we belong to the Lord. That evidence reaches into our own hearts with assurance of salvation and reaches beyond us to prove to those around us that we belong to the Lord. It does not mean that only those who continuously walk in the Spirit are saved.

Fulfilling the Law of God—Romans 8:1-4

Romans 8:1-4 makes it clear that *we do not keep the law of God by attempting to keep the law but by the power of the Holy Spirit*. We should not read the Ten Commandments to attempt to keep them. Yet by reading them we can discover if we are being filled with the Holy Spirit, for the spirit of the law is fulfilled in those who walk in the Spirit.

In Romans 13:8, Paul teaches that those who love fulfill the requirements of the law. He writes, “For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” We have

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already seen that the fruit of the Spirit is love. Because of our oneness with Christ, we are able to walk in the Spirit and are, therefore, able to live in love. When we live in love, we keep the law.

Changes in Relationships With Others

Right relationships with others is a theme more prevalent in the Bible than that of our relationship with God—not more important but more prevalent. What person has not suffered from a poor relationship on the human level? We welcome any help available in these horizontal relationships. Nothing but being filled with the Spirit will give the desired victory.

Longsuffering—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . longsuffering.” Longsuffering is the translation of a word that is a combination of two Greek words: “anger” and “afar off.” Put them together and you have “afar off from anger.” Marriages, families, churches and other settings of broken relationships could have been saved had there been a good supply of “afar-offness from anger.” Let us walk in our union with Christ and receive the filling of the Holy Spirit along with the resulting longsuffering.

Kindness—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . gentleness.” The word translated “gentleness” has in it the idea of kindness. What a difference kindness can make! In a world that is characterized by self-centered rudeness and anger and hate, kindness will often mend broken relationships.

Kindness in us has the added benefit of making others feel appreciated—which is no small service.

Submissiveness—Ephesians 5:18-21

“Be filled with the Spirit . . . submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” When we submit to another, we yield to them. Submissiveness to another is the opposite of the dominance of another. A study of the context of our verse reveals that submissiveness is the result of being filled with the Spirit. Clearly, a spirit of submissiveness is a basis of strong human relationships.

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Unity Among Believers—Ephesians 4:3

Our verse speaks of the “unity of the Spirit.” When the Holy Spirit has His way in the hearts of Christians, He welds them together in a strong bond of unity. Surely the heart of God breaks as He sees shattered relationships among His children. Surely His heart is thrilled when the Holy Spirit is permitted to bind us together in a spirit of unity. More than anything else, this spirit of oneness between believers is what our Lord prayed for in His great prayer recorded in John chapter 17. Think of the impact we make on the unsaved when they see us bound together by the indwelling Spirit. For His sake and for their sakes, let us walk in our oneness with Christ.

Changes in Christian Service

All conscientious servants of the Lord are driven with a sense of holy dissatisfaction. They are looking for an increase of fruitfulness for God. We will experience those increases as we are continuously filled with the Spirit.

We Become a Source of Life to Others—John 7:38

Our Lord promises, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Verse 39 reveals that the water is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The promise is not that a “stream” of life-giving water will flow from those who live a life of continual dependence on Him—not even a “river” will flow.

The promise of Jesus is that “rivers” of life-giving water will flow from those who continue to trust Him—and we have seen that one result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is faith. Those rivers will flow to saved and unsaved alike. We will bring the lost to Christ, and we will lead the saved to the life that is abundant. Such fruitfulness represents a radical change for most of us who have struggled so hard to touch the lives of others for good and for God.

A Change in Witnessing

Discovering and experiencing the life of continual filling with the Holy Spirit results in a believer’s witness to the unsaved of the saving grace of the Lord

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Jesus. In many there comes a radical change in our witnessing—a change that results in more fruitfulness.

Some Will Witness More— Acts 1:8; John 15:26–27a

In a well-known statement of Scripture, our Lord promised His first disciples that they would witness when the Holy Spirit had come upon them.

A not so well-known passage—but one just as forceful—is another statement of our Lord:

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness” (John 15:26–27a).

When there is a continuous filling of the Spirit, there is a continuous stream of words flowing from our lips that tell of a loving Savior.

Some Will Witness Less— Galatians 5:22–23

While most believers have difficulty in witnessing at all, there are those who are so committed to personal evangelism that they embarrass and offend the unsaved. Without any hesitation they storm forward to bring all those in their pathway to Christ whether they are prepared by the Holy Spirit or not. They seem not to be sensitive to any negative responses coming from those they are sharing the gospel with.

However, those filled with love and self-control, by being filled with the Spirit, will cease this uncontrolled and offensive approach to their work of personal evangelism. While knowing the Lord will lead them to witness to the unsaved, they will only move forward under divine orders.

All Will Witness in a New Manner— Galatians 3:1

Being filled with the Holy Spirit by living out our union with Christ results in a new manner of witnessing. In Galatians 3:1 the apostle Paul informs his readers that “Christ crucified” had been set forth before their eyes. In what manner

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could the crucifixion, which had happened years before Paul came to Galatia and miles away, be seen by the eyes of the Galatians?

The answer is found in the several references to crucifixion in Galatians. Because the flesh is crucified and Paul was experiencing that crucifixion, the works of the flesh were not produced in Paul.

Also, Christ lived in Paul because he was crucified and was experiencing that crucifixion. So the absence of the works of the flesh in Paul and the presence of the person of Jesus in Paul were visible evidences that Jesus had been crucified.

The several changes mentioned here that are produced in our lives when we are continuously filled with the Holy Spirit are significant but not exhaustive. However, enough are mentioned to give us an appetite to be filled with the Spirit moment by moment. We may have continual filling of the Holy Spirit by a moment by moment living out our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

Without delay, let us begin now to live out our union with Christ and experience the blessed life of continual filling with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 11

FREEDOM FROM SIN

“Tell him what you told me as we were eating dinner,” said one young believer to another.

The one speaking had known of his union with Christ for several years and for a brief period had experienced it. The one he spoke to had no knowledge of his union with Christ. The third person was an older believer who had understood and experienced his oneness with Christ for years. The speaker made the statement to open the door for the older believer to explain our crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

“I was telling him as we had dinner that I resent someone and cannot help it,” the young man responded. There followed a discussion in which the older believer showed the younger one how, because of his union with Christ, he could be free from the resentment. Both young men went away rejoicing.

This chapter teaches the good news that we do not have to continue in the grip of some sin that leaves us with feelings of guilt and failure.

Freedom From “Sin” and “Sins”

“My ulcer is acting up,” the gentleman responded when I inquired about his welfare.

“How does that make you feel?” I asked.

“It hurts!” he answered.

In all likelihood, the man’s ulcer was caused by stress. The ulcer was a symptom of the stress, and the pain was a symptom of the ulcer.

Spiritually, we are like the man with the ulcer. We have an underlying sin nature—called “sin” in the New Testament—that is the cause of our “sins.” And just as the man’s ulcer resulted in pain, our sins cause us pain.

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We can be certain that when the doctor of the man with the ulcer treated him for the pain, he also treated him for the underlying stress that was the cause of the pain. In the same manner, the Lord has provided us a way of freedom from our “sin,” our “sins” and the resulting pain.

“Are you teaching sinless perfection?” people ask.

It should be stated emphatically that it is only after we depart this life that we believers will be completely free of sin. Yet in this life we can have a progressive freedom from sin and sins—and the resulting pain.

Because many of the Lord’s children, in their guilt, feel that their sins are worse than others, it may be an encouragement to review some of the biblical lists of sins of which we are all capable.

But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds (Colossians 3:8–9).

But when you follow your own wrong inclinations, your lives will produce these evil results: impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, spiritism, (that is, encouraging the activity of demons), hatred and fighting, jealousy and anger, constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticism, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your own little group—and there will be wrong doctrine, envy, murder, drunkenness, wild parties, and all that sort of thing (Galatians 5:19–21a, TLB).

Both lists of sins are found in passages that indicate that we may have freedom from them. It is essential for us to believe that freedom from the sins that grip us is possible—whatever those sins might be.

It needs to be mentioned that there are features of our old man from which we may have freedom that we may not desire to classify as sin.

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For example, we may experience freedom from worry. The only reason we worry is because we have a point of view of what the future should be. When circumstances indicate that what we think should happen will not happen, we worry. Yet when we are free from our know-it-all attitude, we are free from a point of view of what should happen. Consequently, we may have freedom from worry.

Other features of our lives that we would possibly place in this category are stubbornness, preoccupation with the body, a spirit of criticism and depression.

Freedom Through Experiencing Our Oneness With Christ

In Romans 6:2 Paul writes that believers do not have to continue in sin because they are “dead to sin.” In Romans 6:6 Paul informs us that our old man is crucified. As we have seen:

There are things true of us in the Christian life that we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

So our need is to experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection by believing and choosing, as set forth in earlier chapters.

Some have mistakenly thought they have all the victory over sin they need by receiving the forgiveness of their sins. Beautifully, the apostle John writes:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

We do experience freedom from much of the pain caused by our sins when we confess our sins and receive forgiveness—and we could never live in victory without forgiveness. Yet if that is all we know of freedom from sin, we will continue to be in bondage to the sin and the sins that now hold us in their grip for the remainder of our days on this earth.

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We believers must remember that *we must experience our union with Christ if we are to have freedom from our sin, our sins and the painfulness that results from them.*

Freedom by Degrees

Often when a person first experiences crucifixion, burial and resurrection, the Lord gives several weeks of almost constant victory. Yet this is only to show us the type of life we may have by living out our union with Christ. It is a sovereign work of God. When that sovereign period of time is completed, progressive freedom from our sin, our sins and the resulting painfulness begins. Real growth begins.

In Romans 6:12 Paul admonishes us to “let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.” His command indicates the unending attempt of our know-it-all attitude to control our lives. In Romans 7:17 Paul describes our sin nature as though it is another person living in us causing us to do things we hate and things we choose not to do.

Throughout Romans 6:11–23, the emphasis is on our need to experience repeatedly our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection. The promises of the passage assure us that when we continue to experience our union with Christ, little by little we will be set free from the control of our sin nature—and, as a result, we will be free from the sins that issue forth from our sin nature.

Experiencing freedom from sins is somewhat like peeling an onion. You remove one layer only to come to another. As we begin to experience freedom from those things that have caused us grief—in some cases for years—the Spirit of God will reveal other sins that we have never been aware of. The people around us have likely seen them in us for years. Now the Holy Spirit will reveal them to us.

When the Lord reveals these hidden sins, we need to begin to receive freedom over them immediately. The Lord will likely reveal to us only two or three

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previously undetected sins at a time. As we receive progressive freedom from those two or three, He will then reveal others.

Among the people listed by Moses and Joshua that the Israelites were to drive from Canaan were the Girgashites. While the other nations listed are mentioned following the conquest, the Girgashites are never mentioned again.

In the Girgashites we have a picture of one feature of our freedom from sins. From the very moment we begin to deal with some particular sin in terms of our union with Christ, we have almost a complete freedom from that particular sin.

With the great majority of our sins, though, we must deal over long periods of time. Some sins seem to be more deeply ingrained in us than are others. Those sins will raise their ugly heads time and again. Yet we must not despair. With complete faith in our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection and in the promises of God, let us set ourselves to continue to believe and choose freedom from those more stubborn sins.

Let us never “shake hands” with any sin. Just as the Israelites did not destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan when they were commanded to do so, some of God’s choicest servants have not willfully dealt with all their known sins.

The Lord said to the disobedient Israelites of the nations they refused to destroy, “They shall be as thorns in your sides” (Judges 2:3). The history of Israel proves the prophecy true. Any sin from which we will not choose to have freedom will do the same for us.

We must keep in mind that there is no such thing as sinless perfection in this life. Yet a growing freedom from our “sin,” our “sins” and the painfulness that results is a vast improvement over the life of defeat some of us have resigned ourselves to.

Let us go forth with a joy and faith in our hearts that little by little we may be free from the sin, the sins and the resulting painfulness that have reduced our

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quality of life to a level far below our desire to be all God called us to be. Progress in freedom is certain.

Our need is to continue to experience our oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

CHAPTER 12

FREEDOM FROM THE WORLD

Teenagers have a reputation for seeking permission from their parents to do a certain thing with the declaration, “Everybody’s doing it.”

The apostle Paul’s “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2) is proof, though, that it is not teenagers alone who have an inborn tendency to conform.

The tendency to conform is in us all—even if we are born-again children of God. And in light of Paul’s statement, all believers who neglect to make an honest effort not to do so will conform to the world.

Paul was aware of his own tendency to “fit in” and confessed it. He writes:

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

All believers must be aware of the tendency to conform to the world. All must give time and attention to understanding those areas in which we may have conformed to the world.

We May Be More Worldly Than We Realize

“You are as worldly as you can be.”

These jolting words were from the Lord to the heart of a young man who had been living out his union with Christ for several months.

Because he was aware of Paul’s testimony that the world was crucified to him and he to the world, as he reckoned himself dead to sin and alive to God, he also reckoned himself crucified to the world and the world crucified to him. He did so because he wanted complete victory in his life even though he was not aware

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of being a worldly person. So when the revelation came from the Lord that he was worldly, he was shocked.

The worldliness of which he was guilty was nothing immoral. It was something in which practically all Christians engage. But the Lord impressed on this young man that for him engaging in this particular thing was worldliness.

Many of the Lord's most devoted servants are like this young man. They are worldly in certain areas and do not know it.

By Misunderstanding the True Nature of the World

Many of us think of the "world" as being only that community of defiant individuals who reject our Lord and live in open sin against God. We should think of the world as those who are living under the control of Satan and the flesh. The people of the world are not walking in the Spirit.

It is possible that those who influence us the most have features of worldliness in them. Satan, the flesh and "the world" have influenced them to adopt approaches to life that are contrary to the lifestyle in the Scriptures. In some cases they do not realize they are embracing philosophies of the world.

We need to place our approaches to life beside the Scriptures. Where they do not harmonize with Scripture, we are living out philosophies of the world.

Like a deadly, undiscovered cancer, undetected worldly philosophies may be eating away at our spiritual vitality and effectiveness.

By Misunderstanding the True Nature of the Christian Walk

One reason worldliness has crept into modern-day evangelical Christianity is a misunderstanding of the Christian walk. We have adopted terms that only faintly correspond with New Testament terminology.

When we want to describe believers who are living an exemplary Christian life, we usually call them "dedicated" or "committed" to the Lord. However, these words are never used in the New Testament in that sense. Calling those living an exemplary life "saints" is better. The basic meaning of the word is "available."

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We are so accustomed to thinking that the big thing for a Christian is “dedication” that we are certain those who have a passionate zeal for the Lord please Him. *It is not necessarily so!*

The big words used in the New Testament for describing a lifestyle that pleases the Lord are *faith, trust, believe, saint* and *sanctification*. Over and over the New Testament teaches that we should live out our lives moment by moment in a state of total dependence on God in all things.

When we embrace the “dedication” standard for the highest in Christian living, there will be breakdowns in the “faith” areas. We will tend to trust ourselves. Yet “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). Hebrews 11:6 declares, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him.

You may ask, “Are you teaching that the New Testament advocates that one can live the Christian life without commitment?” If one means by the word commitment “doing my best for Jesus,” the answer to the question is “Yes.” If by the word commitment one means “availability to God,” the answer is, “No.”

A believer who lives by the New Testament concept of faith trusts God at every moment for all things. With that type of faith, *we are trusting Him to show us what to do next*. It is only the person who lives out of that quality of faith who is *available* to God.

It is only by living with this type of faith in God that we can “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) or, in obedience to Romans 6:13, yield our members to God as instruments of righteousness. When we trust the Lord to show us what to do next and then respond to His directives, we cannot be any more available to God than that.

When we reject the faith approach in favor of the commitment approach, we often embrace philosophies of the world. It is so because there will be areas of our lives in which we are not seeking guidance from the Lord. Perhaps there is not a more vivid example of this than the approach of many Christians to the securing and use of money.

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Freedom Through Experiencing Our Oneness With Christ

Our hope for freedom from the world is the same as our hope of freedom from sin—it is through experiencing our oneness with Christ.

Freedom Through Experiencing Our Crucifixion

Because of our crucifixion with Christ, we may have victory over the world. Remember Paul's testimony:

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

In this statement of Paul, we see again a deeper dimension to the cross than most of us have realized or taken advantage of. We need to examine how freedom from the world may be ours by experiencing our crucifixion through choosing and believing.

By Choosing and Reckoning We Become Aware of Worldliness

We could be like the young man who had embraced a worldly philosophy and did not realize it. We have loved the Lord and walked with Him for years. We may have no desire to be a worldly person. Yet we may have unconsciously embraced some of the philosophies of the world. Conceivably, our Christian models have led us to a lifestyle of worldliness.

Let us begin now to consider the world crucified to us and ourselves crucified to the world. The Lord will be faithful to reveal hidden features of worldliness in us if they exist.

By Choosing and Reckoning We Are Freed From Worldliness

Some of the revelations of worldliness may be very painful. We may be confronted with the need to give up habits developed over many years. Victory over them may seem impossible. It is not.

We are to reckon on the world's crucifixion to us and our crucifixion to the world just as we reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. When we

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do so out of a heart that chooses freedom from the world, God will progressively give freedom from the world.

Our place is to deal specifically and immediately with the features of worldliness in our lives when the Holy Spirit makes them known to us.

The Lord may reveal to us features of worldliness that have become deeply ingrained in the Christian movement. As a result, we may be embarrassed to tell our closest Christian friends the direction God is leading us concerning certain matters, for fear they will not understand.

Yet any areas of worldliness the Lord reveals we must deal with. And we should do so when the Holy Spirit reveals them. To delay may possibly make it more difficult for us to put off these features of worldliness that sap our spiritual vitality. Delay will both grieve and quench the Holy Spirit, which is, of course, something a God-loving person does not want to do.

Freedom Through Experiencing Our Resurrection

In a forceful way, the New Testament teaches our freedom from the world through our resurrection with Christ.

Remember, our resurrection means three things: (1) Christ has come to abide in us, (2) we have been raised out from among the dead ones and (3) we have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

A literal translation of Romans 6:4 shows that our Lord was “raised out from among the dead ones.” Our resurrection is from the “dead ones.” When, at our conversion, we were crucified, buried and resurrected, we were raised out from among the unsaved. We were seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

As we believe and choose our resurrection with Christ, we experience our resurrection. More and more, life is lived out in face-to-face intimate communion with God and less and less in intimate communion with the unsaved. In that experience we progressively have freedom from the world.

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Not only must we have victory over sin and the world, we also must live our Christian lives free from the law. To that possibility we now turn our attention.

CHAPTER 13

FREEDOM FROM LAW

The apostle Paul teaches that believers will, at least for a season, live under law. He then explains that this period of living under law is for the purpose of introducing us to the life of grace.

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20).

In Romans 7:7–25 Paul gives personal testimony of his own experience in law-living and how it resulted in a type of spiritual “death” that drove him to God for grace.

Paul begins his testimony by showing in Romans 7:1–6 how we may, by experiencing our union with Christ, have freedom from law.

These passages concerning law have not received appropriate attention from evangelicals. Yet we must understand both *our involvement with and freedom from law* if we are to experience the abundant life.

Freedom May Be More Important Than We Realize

Our freedom from law is more important than some evangelicals seem to realize.

Because Many of Us Are More Guilty of Law-Living Than We Realize

“By grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). Evangelicals will stand on that throughout eternity. We know that salvation has never been and will never be given to anyone for keeping the law. Yet many evangelicals, without realizing it, are passionately legalistic in their approach to living the Christian life.

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In Romans 8:3 the apostle Paul writes, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.” The word “law” here refers to the “law arrangement” God made with the Jews as recorded in Exodus.

Notice that the “law arrangement” was weak because of the flesh. That tells us that in the plan of God, “law arrangements” are between rules and flesh. What is flesh? Flesh is faith in ourselves. Flesh is our know-it-all attitude.

In order to confirm that flesh is self-confidence, let us examine the historical event when the arrangement was made. On three occasions—Exodus 19:8, 24:3, 7—the nation of Israel declared that *they would do all that God required*. That is the nature of the law arrangement, and the Israelites intended to keep all the laws God commanded—only to fail time and time again.

A classic case of a Christian living a legalistic life would be one who reads the Ten Commandments every morning with the intention of living by them throughout the day. Most of us do not do that. Likely, many of us know better than that.

Most of us, though, have promised God, for example, that we would pray so many minutes a day. When we did, we placed ourselves under law just as much as if we sought to keep the Ten Commandments.

The rules could have come from our pastor, the one who disciplined us, our Sunday school teacher or any other well-meaning servant of our Lord. Where the rules came from does not matter. What matters is the “I will do” approach. The “I will do” or the “I will not do” approach is always the approach of the flesh.

In Romans 7:21 Paul reveals that we are guilty of law-living if we do nothing *more than choose to do good*. The thing that makes even the choosing to do good law-living is the “I will do” or the “I will not do” approach.

Unfortunately, many warmhearted evangelicals are steeped in such legalism and do not know it.

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Because Through Law-Living We Will Be Guilty of the Works of the Flesh

Because all law-living is flesh-living, when we serve the Lord in self effort we will be guilty of the works of the flesh. We have already seen that any law arrangement is an arrangement between rules and the flesh. Notice then the result of law-living:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like (Galatians 5:19–21a).

Freedom from the law, because it is freedom from the flesh, is also freedom from these deadly sins.

We will forego any more comment on these works of the flesh, but there are two “flesh” factors we should mention that come from legalistic living.

First, those who are the most rigid in their rules are also those who have the most cutting spirit. Here is the reason. When flesh establishes rules, it is offended when others do not keep its rules, whatever they are.

Second, in spite of the flaming commitment on the part of the legalist, *availability to the Lord is impossible*. In Romans 8:6–7 the apostle Paul declares, “For to be carnally minded is . . . enmity against God.” To be carnally minded is to think the thoughts of the flesh. When the attitude resurrects that we are wiser than God, we may even struggle with the Lord’s suggestions of what we are to do. We may find ourselves stubbornly rejecting the will of God.

Because Law-Living Always Results in Spiritual “Death”

One of the most solemn statements in Scripture is Paul’s testimony in Romans 7:9 of falling back into legalism after becoming a Christian. He says, “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”

Law-living for Paul meant “death.”

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Some believe this testimony is of Paul's pre-Christian days. Yet the overall context indicates that it is a Christian testimony.

A key to understanding Paul's testimony as being Christian is to isolate a time when he was "without law." His statement in Philippians 3:5 that he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" reveals that from childhood he was under law. That thought alone undermines the thought that there was ever a time before he became a Christian that he was "without law."

There is another way we know this is Paul's testimony after becoming a Christian—his use of the word "revived." The revival of sin implies that sin lived, had ceased to live and then lived again. The implication of Paul's "revived" is that sin lived in the pre-Christian Paul when he was under law, ceased to live for a period following his conversion when he was not living by law and then revived when he lapsed back into law.

Most everyone who has come to Christ as an adult has a testimony like the one just described. For a period of time after they received Jesus, their Christian life was one of joyfully walking with God without any thought of living by rules. After several months of such freedom, some well-meaning friend taught them that they needed to discipline themselves to regular periods of time for prayer and Bible study. That attempt at discipline placed them under law, because it placed the burden for their lives on them. Now they must perform.

How did Paul, the believer, lapse back into law? Just before Paul's statement about the revival of sin through the law, he writes that covetousness filled him when he was confronted with the commandment not to covet.

But what caused the confrontation? We can only guess, but conceivably it happened like this. On a day when Paul was very tired he began to remember how covetous he had been in his pre-Christian days. He had longed to be the number-one Pharisee. Then he thought, "I just must not be as covetous as a Christian as I was as a Pharisee." *The law had come!*

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With the coming of the law, the burden for Christian victory was on him. Self-confidence was back. Sin was back. Death was just around the corner.

What does Paul mean by death? He did not die physically. He did not lose his salvation. He means an emotional and spiritual state of mind that can best be described with the word “death.” It is that state of mind Paul describes in Romans 7:15: “For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”

Sound like someone you know? It does! We have experienced the same death Paul experienced. And what a death it is. We may have a deep longing to do such things as love our enemies, forgive those who sin against us, minister in many ways and be bold in witnessing to the lost.

Yet, regardless of how deep the desire or how often the effort, we are unable to do any of these things effectively. We faithfully make the effort, but we do not have the resources for success. Our failure is a living death.

We may hate ourselves for our fits of anger, fear, jealousy, hate and cowardliness—along with other works of the flesh. Yet we never have the spiritual ability to have victory over these things that are so distasteful to us. Again, our failure may be described as death.

When the law comes into our lives—whether by keeping rules or choosing to do good—sin revives, and we die. By now we have experienced this death enough that we are able to give expression to the cycle of the events we go through. It goes like this:

We adopt the rule or choose to do good.
Sin—the know-it-all attitude—resurrects.
We fail in our spiritual striving.
Then comes guilt.
Then comes depression.
Then we feel second rate.

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Such a life can well be described as “death.” So, freedom from law is freedom from “death.”

We know that death by experience because we have spent, in some cases, many years in its grip without knowing what was wrong and what we could possibly do to have change and victory. Thank God there is a way out.

Freedom Through Experiencing Our Oneness With Christ

Because of our oneness with Christ in crucifixion, we may be free from law-living. The key verse setting forth our freedom from law is Romans 7:4. It reads:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:4).

This is, of course, a reference to our crucifixion, burial and resurrection, which Paul develops in Romans 6:3–13. So, because all law-living is flesh-living, when we experience the crucifixion of our flesh, we are free from law-living of any type.

Freedom Enables Us to Live as Brides of Jesus Christ

In Romans 7:3 Paul reminds us that a wife is free from the law of her husband when he dies. Then in verse 4 he informs that we are free from the law by our own crucifixion that we might be married to another. Of course, the One we may be married to is the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a glorious thought! Most of us have heard for years that the Church is the bride of Christ. Here the Scriptures inform us that each individual Christian may experience life as the bride of Christ.

We will not, though, live on that high plane until we give up our rules and choose to relate to Him as our Bridegroom. *How could we live a life of submissiveness to our Bridegroom when we have already decided our own goals and own rules for reaching them?*

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When we relate to our Lord as His bride, we “bring forth fruit unto God” (Romans 7:4). Remember, He is Christ “raised from the dead.” Those of us who are the brides in this marriage are also those who “are raised from the dead.” What a marriage—and what fruit will issue forth from it.

From that marriage will issue forth newborn babes into the family of God as the lost are led to Christ. From that marriage, nurture and growth will result in the lives of those who are already in the family.

Freedom—Some Tough Questions

Living in freedom from the law and living as the bride of Christ is for many of us such a new thought it leaves us confused. Such new thinking leaves us with some disturbing questions. Some of those questions are:

- What about the imperatives of the Scriptures?
- What about the rules on my job?
- What about Christian leaders who live by rules?
- What about church schedules?

These are tough questions. There are others that will occur to us as we grow in our experience of the life of grace and in our freedom from living under law. There are some satisfactory answers.

What About the Imperatives of the Scriptures?

An overarching answer to this question is, “When we respond to our Lord as our Bridegroom, we will keep the imperatives of the Scriptures.”

Think of the ministries of the Holy Spirit in our lives: He leads us to witness. He guides us into all truth—which means, among other things, that He puts us in the Bible. He leads us in prayer. He fills us with love, faith and faithfulness. In short, when we walk in the Spirit, we will walk in harmony with the imperatives of the Bible.

Does this mean that we no longer need to read our Bibles? No, it does not. The Holy Spirit, because He guides us into all truth, will continuously keep us

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reading and studying our Bibles. When we walk in the Spirit, our Bible knowledge will increase noticeably. Some will become, for the first time in their lives, students of the Scriptures.

One reason the Holy Spirit will keep us in the Bible is because the more Bible knowledge we have, the easier it is for us to know if an impression to do something is an imperative from the Holy Spirit or from a desire of our flesh.

Furthermore, when the Holy Spirit leads us to do a thing commanded in the Scriptures, He also empowers us to do it. When we attempt to keep those imperatives in the flesh, we will not succeed.

What About the Rules on Our Jobs?

The apostle Paul speaks to our responsibilities on our jobs when in his Ephesian letter he writes:

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ”
(Ephesians 6:5).

When we receive a word from our employer, we receive a word from the Lord. We must understand that his rules are the leadership of the Lord for us. There are those rare exceptions when we might be ordered to do something that would dishonor the Lord. On those occasions we must look only to the Lord for direction, because only He can tell us how to respond.

Yet within the framework of our rules on the job, there is ordinarily much freedom. For example, we talk with the other employees, and we are free to perform our job tasks in our own distinctive manner. It is in those areas of freedom within the framework of the rules that we are to receive direct guidance from the Spirit.

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What About Our Spiritual Leaders Who Live by Rules?

One answer to this question is that many of our spiritual leaders have not yet discovered their freedom from law.

Another answer is that God could guide our leaders to do certain things at certain times. He could tell them that at five o'clock every morning, He is going to make it possible for them to be in prayer and Bible study. When God does so lead, the burden is on Him and not our leaders who are only responding to His leadership. When God's guidance leads to a certain schedule, living out the schedule might look like legalism, but it is not.

What About Church Schedules?

Is it legalism to arrive at a church gathering at a specific time? When the Lord leads the church, He leads it as one body. In that sense there must be schedules arrived at by the body as directed by the Lord. It should not be considered legalism for us as members of the body to follow the direction of the Lord for that body. It would be impossible for the church to function if there were not God-given times for gathering together.

Let us continuously be open to any revelation from the Lord of any law-living we may be in engaging in.

Let us continue to experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection, and one of the by-products will be freedom from law.

CHAPTER 14

LIFE IN THE HEAVENLIES

“I apologize for calling you on Christmas Day, but I just had to call and tell you that I woke up in heaven this morning.”

The speaker was a man who understood his union with Christ and had, for several years, experienced his crucifixion. This was his first experience of enthronement.

The man’s heart was so full of joy and praise because of the experience he had to share it. He chose to share it with someone who would know by experience what he was talking about.

Seemingly, not many have experienced life in the heavenlies. Perhaps that is one reason not many have written on this blessed theme. We must not, though, permit the lack of literature on this glorious theme keep us from understanding and experiencing life in the heavenlies.

Our approach to this theme should be in a spirit of prayer that the Lord would reveal to us this truth. If we are to enjoy life at its best, we must experience enthroned living.

A Life Abundantly Taught in Scripture

The possibility of life in the heavenlies is abundantly taught in Scripture.

Taught by the Apostle Paul

Even though he is not the only New Testament author setting forth the life of enthronement, Paul has written more about the theme and the experience than any other.

In Ephesians 2:5–6 Paul shows that our resurrection with Christ means three things: We have been made alive, we have been raised from the dead and we have been seated in the heavenlies. In each statement he uses the past tense.

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Philippians 3:8–14 is a powerful testimony concerning life in the heavenlies. Here the apostle Paul says he has reduced his life to one thing: experiencing his resurrection. And the ultimate in resurrection living is life in the heavenlies.

In Colossians 3:1–4, Paul writes one of his strongest statements about enthroned living.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1–3).

Taught by the Author of Hebrews

The author of the book of Hebrews proclaims the idea of enthronement. His approach is different, but the idea of enthronement is clear. He writes:

And so, dear brothers, now we may walk right into the very Holy of Holies where God is, because of the blood of Jesus. This is the fresh, new, life-giving way which Christ has opened up for us by tearing the curtain—his human body—to let us into the holy presence of God. And since this great High Priest of ours rules over God’s household, let us go right in, to God himself (Hebrews 10:19–22a, TLB).

Though the words used by the author of Hebrews concerning life in the heavenlies are far different from those of Paul, the same idea is clearly set forth.

Taught by Jesus

Jesus testifies, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven” (John 3:13). Over and over He testified that He did only those things He saw and heard. Jesus experienced enthroned living during His earthly existence.

Then just before His ascension He said, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). Among other things this means that we are to experience enthroned living.

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A Life in Two Worlds at the Same Time

Enthroned living for believers still living on earth means existing in two worlds at the same time.

Immediately following our encouragement to walk into the Holy of Holies, Hebrews 10:24 admonishes us, “In response to all he has done for us, let us outdo each other in being helpful and kind to each other and in doing good” (TLB). We obey that command by living in two worlds simultaneously.

Our Lord’s statements about His own life of enthronement clearly mean that He lived in two worlds at the same time. A study of those passages is enlightening and is both a help and encouragement to one desiring to understand and experience life in the heavenlies.

The blessings of life in the heavenlies are abundant. They have been divided into two sections of the chapter. First, there is a discussion of personal blessing. There follows a section on the blessings God brings to others through those who experience life in the heavenlies.

A Life of Personal Blessing

It is obvious that many of the results of enthroned living have been placed here that arbitrarily might have been placed in other categories.

A Life of Worship

Surveys have shown that among evangelicals, personal worship has not been given priority. This seems to be so even among spiritual leaders who are most zealous in Christian service. There are four passages that should claim the attention of those who place service above worship.

The first details our Lord’s rebuke of Martha in Luke 10: 41–42 because of her attitude toward Mary’s desire to be with Him. He then adds, “One thing is needful.” Being in the presence of our Lord is the “only” thing that is needful. Does this mean that we will be lazy? No, it does not! It does mean that service must be the result of worship.

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The second is Paul's statements in Philippians 3:1–8 of his passion to know Christ and that anything hindering that experience is "dung."

The third passage is John 17:3 where our Lord prays, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." The word translated "know" is the word for *experiential* knowledge. Knowing God the Father and God the Son by experience is to have the abundant life.

In the fourth passage, Hebrews 12:2 says that the ability to face life's difficulties is ours by "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Here is an encouragement to gaze upon the Lord Jesus.

The open door to continual worship of the Lord is experiencing our oneness with Christ in enthronement. From the position of enthronement, worship moves to its highest level.

The New Testament does not advocate either worship or service. It teaches that we may live in both worlds at the same time.

A Life of Faith

Paul's discussion of enthroned living in Ephesians chapter 2 ends with:

God . . . hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6–7).

The next verse states that we receive grace through faith. "By grace are ye saved through faith" (v. 8).

If grace comes through faith and life in the heavenlies is a life of grace, then the experience of life in the heavenlies results in a growing faith.

Our Lord intends that the life of the believer be one of continuous faith. Enormous promises are made to those who live by faith. Romans 1:17 declares, "The just shall live by faith." When we live by faith, rivers of living water flow

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from us and we do greater miracles than did Jesus, according to John 7:38 and John 14:12.

If we would seek, then, the life of faith and its indescribable blessings, we would seek a continuous experience of life in the heavenlies.

A Life of Acquaintance With Christ

In the “enthronement” passage of Colossians 3:1–4 that we have already mentioned, Paul writes of the revelation of Christ.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:1–4).

This is not a passage on eschatology. The words “shall appear” are better translated “shall be revealed.” It is Paul’s intention to set forth this revelation of Jesus Christ as an experience in this present time for all those who are experiencing life in the heavenlies through experiencing their union with Christ.

In Philippians 3:10 Paul writes that his one supreme passion in life was to know Jesus Christ. He means to know Him by experience. He goes on to say “and the power of his resurrection.” That is, his longing was to experience Him in the position of enthronement.

Our Lord informed Simon Peter he was a man blessed of God as a result of the Father’s revelation to him that Jesus was the Christ. We should think of ourselves as being just as certain that we will be blessed by living the life of enthronement and having Christ “revealed” to us. One can only imagine the blessedness of that life, which is receiving a continual revelation of the Lord Jesus.

A Life of Divine Guidance

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Again, we draw from the rich passage of Colossians 3:1–4. The revelation of Christ is not exclusively to enlarge our concept and adoration of Him. Christ is also revealed to believers so that we may know what He is presently doing and desires to do in and through us.

In the Colossians passage, Paul refers to Christ as “our life.” One immediately thinks of our Lord’s claim in John 14:6, “I am the . . . life.” Also, Paul’s often-quoted testimony of Galatians 2:20 comes to mind: “I am crucified with Christ and I am no longer living, but Christ is living in me” (author’s translation).

The first verse of the book of Acts implies that the entire book is a record of the activity of Jesus Christ. That being true, the works of the Christians described in Acts were the works of Jesus Christ in and through them. A survey of Acts reveals that Jesus did these works through the believers as He revealed His will to them.

Jesus always builds His Church. He does it *through believers*. Therefore, He must guide us by showing us where He is going and what He is doing. That is, we must know those things He desires to do in and through us. We then respond by moving forward as He wills to move forward through us.

The Colossians passage suggests that we come to know best what our Lord desires and intends to do through us when we experience life in the heavenlies.

Such promises are strong motivation for us to seek life in the heavenlies each moment.

Not only will we be richly blessed but all those around us will be blessed when we experience life in the heavenlies.

A Life of Blessing to Others

Not only will we be richly blessed, but all those around us will be blessed when we experience life in the heavenlies.

A Life of Christian Service

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Paul records in 2 Corinthians 2:17, “But as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” In his teaching and preaching of the Word of God, Paul came directly from God but never left the presence of God. What a ministry! It is ours also if we minister as we experience life in the heavenlies.

Our Lord says repeatedly that He did only what He saw the Father doing or heard the Father saying. Think of His statement in John 5:17: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” His continuous communion with the Father—in heaven—was the source of His ministry.

Hebrews 10:19–25 almost shockingly presents the same plan for service. For years it confused me that the author of Hebrews so beautifully conveys our privilege of living in the Holy of Holies and then abruptly speaks of service. Now I see that is the way we can most effectively serve others.

A Life of Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayer is another feature of service to others. Yet service to others through intercession from our position of enthronement with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies enlarges the idea of intercession.

In 1 John 5:14–15, a promise is made that prayer will be answered when we pray according to the will of God.

God does certain things whether we ask Him to or not. We may feel confident the sun will rise tomorrow. On the other hand, there are some things that all the praying in the world will not change.

Would a good hot-hearted prayer meeting have kept Jesus from dying on the cross? Of course not! Such praying would have been contrary to the will of God because it was the plan of God from eternity that Jesus die on the cross.

Yet it also is true that *the Lord confers countless blessings upon us and others because we do pray.*

Our part in bringing blessing to others through prayer is first to know the will of God and then to ask Him to fulfill His own desires.

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The best way to know the desires of God for others is through communion with Him in the position of life in the heavenlies.

A Life of Burden for Others

We do not have to carry a burden for others to be fruitful in Christian service—faith is the essential thing. A new effectiveness in service, though, comes to those who labor with genuine concern for others.

One of the most penetrating statements about burdens is that of Paul recorded in Philippians 3:10. Paul's expressed desire is, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings."

It is an expressed desire to know experientially in his own heart the sufferings of the Lord Jesus for those on earth. Paul knew that by a face-to-face fellowship with Jesus in the heavenlies, the hurts of Jesus would spill over into his own heart. What brings pain to the heart of our Lord?

The only time our Lord is seen standing at the right hand of the Father is at the death of Stephen. The standing by our Lord as Stephen was stoned to death indicates an intense interest and concern on the part of the Lord Jesus for His suffering servant. Such intensity reveals that our Lord hurts when believers suffer for Him.

In Ephesians 4:30 the Scriptures introduce us to the "grief" of the Holy Spirit. This "grief" is in a context of exhortations for believers to turn from certain sins. Disobedience in the believer will bring grief to the Holy Spirit. If sin in the life of a believer grieves the Spirit, it grieves also the Father and Son.

In Romans 9:2 Paul tells of a great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart because of unbelieving Jews. There is a tendency here to admire Paul, but it is certain that this grief originated in the heart of God.

The Bible mentions three types of people: the natural man, the carnal man and the spiritual man. The persecuted believer is the spiritual man. The believer with sin in his or her life is the carnal man. The unbeliever is the natural man.

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We have seen in the above passages that our Lord carries a burden for those in each of the three categories mentioned.

The sufferings of Jesus, then, are for all who abide on this earth. For that hurt to pour into our hearts is for us to know “the fellowship of his sufferings.” Paul entered into the fellowship of that suffering through experiencing life in the heavenlies.

If Paul experienced burden for others by abiding in the heavenlies, we could expect the same results by living out our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

It needs to be repeated that the essential need for fruitfulness in Christian work is faith. *Let us not think we must wait for a hurting heart to be used of the Lord in ministry.* The hurting heart will come over a period of time as we day by day experience life in the heavenlies.

A Life of Authority Over Satan

Satan is our vicious enemy. His primary purpose is not to make us immoral. It is to take us from the divine plan for our lives. As long as we believers are just “wandering around” in our walk with the Lord, Satan is ecstatic with glee, whether we become immoral or not. Is there anything immoral about eating fruit from a tree as in the case of Adam and Eve or turning stones into bread as in the temptation of the Lord Jesus?

Satan is the master of technique. Often his assault is of the indirect variety as he maneuvers through others—as in the case of Eve, Job’s wife and Simon Peter. In direct attack he whispers his deadly ideas just as he spoke tempting words to our Lord. He plans and makes special attacks on God’s children as seen in Ephesians 6:13. Like in the tragic case of Job, he uses our shattered emotions. As revealed by Jesus in John 8:44, he has the ability to make us believe deadly lies—and especially lies about God. He is the expert of the half-truth.

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Armed with these truths, we are more capable of interpreting the plans and activities of Satan against us. We need, however, more than knowledge of him and his intentions and techniques. We need the ability for counterattack.

And we have it!

Hebrews 2:14 says Jesus became a man “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” We Christians have weapons that are “mighty through God” according to 2 Corinthians 10:4. Many have taken comfort in the fact that Ephesians 6:10–18 tells us of the availability of the whole armor of God for “wrestling” against the enemy.

But we have more!

In a recorded prayer, the apostle Paul requests that the eyes of his readers would be enlightened that they may know, among other things, their authority over Satan. In the heavenlies we are in a position of authority over Satan. Rejoice while reading the following words that are the conclusion to Paul’s mighty prayer:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:18–22).

Until I saw oneness with Christ, I seldom thought of Satan. Now I daily think of him. I know him as a totally defeated enemy who is under my feet and with whom I can deal from a position of authority.

So can all of us as we believe and choose to experience life in the heavenlies.

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A Life Experienced by Living Out Our Union With Christ

All believers have been enthroned with Christ in the heavenlies since the moment of receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord. Yet we will experience life in the heavenlies only as we believe we are seated in the heavenlies and choose to experience life on those terms. We must remember this:

There are things true of us in the Christian life that we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

Many believers do not know about their enthronement, and therefore, they have not yet had reason to choose or believe such a life.

Also, we must understand that we will experience crucifixion before we will experience enthronement.

When enthroned living does become experiential for us, spiritual blessings will flow like a waterfall from an unceasing source of supply.

Enormous and important changes are ours when we experience life face-to-face with our Lord in the heavenlies. Let us not retreat from the possibilities of such a life until it becomes our daily adventure. Life in the heavenlies is not “pie in the sky by and by.” It is ours—now!

CHAPTER 15

GOD'S MIRACLE WORKERS

Living out our union with Christ is by choice and faith. Because experiencing our oneness with Christ frees us from faith in ourselves, it results in a growing faith in God, which is the very essence of the Christian life.

In order, then, to show all the changes we may expect when we experience our oneness with Christ, one would need to give space to everything faith does.

There is no attempt to do that here. There is, however, one promise made by our Lord to those who live in dependence on Him that is so vast and significant it must be given a place in a book on living by grace through faith. Consequently, this entire chapter discusses this one glorious promise.

We Do Greater Miracles Than Did Our Lord

The promise referred to is the one of Jesus that those who live a life of total dependence on Him will do greater miracles than He did. His promise is:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:12).

The Greek form of “believeth” suggests continuous action. Those who continue in a state of total dependence on Jesus will do the types of miracles Jesus did. But they will be miracles on a higher level.

Is this promise so great we have ignored it because we think it untrue? *For some reason* many of us have ignored it. We must believe it. We must experience it in order to have the fulfillment of life God planned for us.

Jesus said we may do the greater miracles because He was going to the Father. Jesus reveals that His going to the Father would be the occasion for the coming of the Holy Spirit. He says:

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Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John 16:7).

The Holy Spirit had a ministry both during Old Testament times and during the time of the earthly ministry of Jesus. From the day of Pentecost forward, though, the Holy Spirit has engaged in a new ministry. He now inhabits the lives of all believers.

It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers that makes possible the "greater" works. The miracles of Jesus were of the physical variety, yet ours mostly will be of the spiritual variety, and that is what makes them "greater."

We Do Miracles by the Words of God

Only two verses before, our Lord made the promise we are considering, Jesus said the following about Himself:

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works (John 14:10).

With this statement, our Lord makes it known that just as His works were performed by the Father and were performed with words, ours will be performed in the same manner. Just as the Father worked in and through the earthly Jesus, He will work through believers today.

However, there is one distinctive about our accomplishment of the miracles. The words used to perform them will always be the same. They will be the words of crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

All the miracles the Father will perform through us will be by speaking through us the words of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Many of the miracles the Father will do through us, though, will be performed by speaking also of the death, burial and resurrection of the believer.

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We Do the Types of Miracles Performed by Our Lord

“The works that I do shall he do also,” Jesus said of the one who lives in total dependence on Him. In another passage, He provides us a limited listing of His types of works. When two disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus if He were the Messiah, He responded with:

Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them (Matthew 11:4–5).

Any casual reader of the four Gospels knows this is not a complete list of Jesus' miracles, but it is His list. Although it would be most profitable to discuss here all of our Lord's miracles, the discussion instead will be confined to this list of miracles given by our Lord Himself.

The Dead Are Raised Up

Three of the most famous stories in the Bible are those of Jesus raising from the dead Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain. Each of these incidents is a living parable that those who live a life of continual trust in Jesus will also raise the dead.

In John 5:25 Jesus speaks of a resurrection that is clearly spiritual. He says:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live (John 5:25).

Those who come to Jesus for salvation experience a spiritual resurrection—it is the resurrection mentioned often in the Scriptures.

The cry ascends to heaven from every quarter, “Why do we do so poorly in evangelism?” One answer to this burning question is found in our approach to evangelism.

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Earlier it was shown that we will keep the law not by trying to keep the law but by walking in the Spirit. It is also true that we would be more effective in evangelism if we would place the emphasis on a walk with the Lord—rather than on evangelism—as our first responsibility.

It was the apostle Paul who declared that anything that kept him from becoming experientially acquainted with Jesus Christ was “dung.” He said he had given up everything that he might have that personal acquaintance.

Is such a statement a denial of evangelism? *No!*

Is Paul saying that knowing Jesus Christ is more basic than evangelism? *Yes!* And on good authority Paul was making such a claim. Our Lord told Martha that life was bound up in one thing—the thing Mary was doing while Martha was so caught up in pots and pans. What was Mary doing? “Mary . . . sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word” (Luke 10:39).

To be face-to-face with Jesus is to be in a continuous state of worship—but that does not mean we will never be out where the people are at the same time. Many more believers would engage in evangelism if they were first led to experience their union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.

They would live in two worlds at the same time. As they lived out their lives face-to-face with Jesus, they would, at the same time, live out their lives face-to-face with people on this earth—including the unsaved. For a person to communicate with the unsaved as he or she at the same time is in communication with Jesus is to add mighty power to the witnessing situation.

The expression of the angel who came to Zacharias with the message of the birth of John the Baptist could be the expression of all who live out their union with Christ. His message to Zacharias was:

And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings (Luke 1:19).

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Those who live out their union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection go forth from the Father—and with the Father—to tell the lost of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. They do so in a state of dependence on Him.

The miracle-working activity of raising the dead for many of us waits on our living out our union with Christ that we might live in total dependence on our Lord.

When we are the instruments of God in raising the spiritually dead, the miracle is instantaneous just as the miracles of Jesus. However, the miracles we now examine are not instantaneous.

The Blind Receive Their Sight and the Deaf Hear

Think of Lazarus raised from the dead but lying on the ground in his grave clothes. After the Lord raised him, He said to His disciples, “Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44). Picture the scene. Lazarus was alive, but he could neither see nor hear because of the grave clothes. Many believers are like Lazarus in his grave clothes. They have spiritual life as he had physical life, but they are unable to see and hear spiritually as Lazarus was unable to see and hear physically.

The following words of Jesus give us the needed and correct perspective on what it means to possess spiritual sight and spiritual hearing:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise (John 5:19).

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30).

These statements reveal that all of the activities of Jesus were the result of His seeing and hearing. Of course, He refers to His communion with the Father. These are references to His spiritual seeing and hearing as He lived out His life in two worlds at the same time.

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In light of these statements of Jesus about His own seeing and hearing, we understand that one feature of our miracle-working ministry is that of making it possible for believers to live in communion with God.

How do we do it? How do we “loose” believers that they may see and hear? We must first see and hear the Lord ourselves by experiencing our own union with Christ. Then God can use us to loose other believers. He will loose them through words.

Just as we raise the dead by telling them of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we loose blind and deaf believers by telling them that they themselves are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

Not all those we tell are ready to hear. Some, though, have been prepared by the Holy Spirit to hear and believe. They also are prepared to choose life on these terms.

When those who are prepared do believe and choose the life of crucifixion, burial and resurrection we tell them about, we have become the instrument of God in healing the blind and deaf.

To those who have the spiritual ability to see and hear, God is able to give words of peace and comfort and guidance. God is able to enlighten for them His Word. God enables them to see needs in their own lives and in the lives of others that they have not seen before. And God gives a greater vision of Himself.

May the thrill of our call to the ministry of healing the spiritually blind and deaf move us forward to share joyfully with fellow believers the message of their own crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

The Lame Walk

Think again of Lazarus. After our Lord raised Lazarus but before the disciples “loosed” him, he could not walk. Lazarus was fully alive—but he was “lame” because of the preparations made for his burial.

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Paul's "what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" in Romans 7:15 is perhaps the most vivid statement of spiritual paralysis we could find. Paul called this spiritual condition "death" because it was so unbearable to him.

What were some of the things Paul would do that he could not do? We can only conjecture, but we know some of ours. We would be courageous enough to take the gospel to the unsaved. We would be patient with the irritable. We would love our enemies. We would want our friends to be blessed and used by the Lord. We would forgive those who have sinned against us. We would trust God with our burdens. We would have an effective prayer life. We would leave all our circumstances in the hand of the Lord. We would move on in life in spite of all our limitations. We would stand above our feelings of inferiority.

We would do these things. But we are unable to do them. We are spiritual paralytics, surrounded by multitudes of professing Christians with the same problem.

What are the things Paul hated but could not help doing? We may not know all Paul had in mind, but we do know those things in our own lives that fall into this category. We are helpless to quit such things as our anger, our impatience, our jealousy, our bitterness, our spirit of competition, our desire to be number one and our desire for revenge.

Paul's confession was that his healing from spiritual lameness came through experiencing his union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. It is the same with us. It will be the same with all believers.

Chapter 1 related the story of a young man who entered the process of healing of his fears. He was a spiritual paralytic until that process of healing began. His is a classic example of the healing of one lame because someone told him of his own crucifixion, burial and resurrection, and he chose to live in the light of what he was told.

Let us experience our own healing and then begin our healing ministry of the spiritually lame by sharing with them their union with Jesus Christ.

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Lepers Are Cleansed

“That’s me!”

Everything about that moment indicated spiritual delight for the young man: the excitement in his voice, the shifting forward of his body, the glow in his eyes.

He had already begun to live out his union with our Lord. He had asked for a meeting with a pastor who had experienced the life of grace longer than he. During their conversation, the pastor told the young man that he would become a miracle worker and that among other things he would heal lepers.

“As you well know, one of the directives in Scripture for a leper was that he live an isolated life,” said the pastor. The young man nodded, suggesting his familiarity with the passage. The pastor then shared with him a number of things that make it difficult for us to function normally in society. Or, in other words, the pastor shared with him a number of things that make us spiritual lepers.

“One of the things that makes us lepers is our timidity,” continued the pastor. Then he explained to the young man that when he teaches others of their union with Christ and they begin to experience it, they will be set free from their timidity—meaning, of course, that in freedom from timidity, they are healed of spiritual leprosy.

It was at that point that the young man broke in with, “That’s me!” He went on to tell of an experience that very morning in an office he often visited. He said, “I noticed that for the first time since I have been going in there, I was free to talk with the people whose presence always before had intimidated me because of my timidity.”

The young man left the pastor’s office thoroughly convinced that by sharing with believers that they were one with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, he would also become a miracle worker.

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Shyness is not the only thing that makes it impossible for us to function normally around others. Bitterness, hate, paranoia, feelings of inferiority and jealousy have the same effect.

Also, we become spiritual lepers when characteristics of our lives cause others not to desire our company. Such things as fits of anger, hate and a spirit of criticism often cause others to shun us.

Even the healing of spiritual lepers is pictured in the loosing of Lazarus. He was much alive but was unable to live in fellowship with others until the disciples "loosed" him. May we do the same for the spiritual lepers all around us.

In conclusion, be reminded that it is God who does the miracles through us. Yet the understanding that God has chosen us as His instruments of miracles should fill us with a deep sense of gratitude to God and feelings of a healthy self-image.

You are somebody special!

You are God's opportunity to walk around the streets of your town doing the miracles Jesus did—but on a higher level.

With this chapter we end the section on the changes we can expect when we begin to live out our union with Christ. Part Five deals with some of the practical matters related to the thrilling life of grace.

PART FIVE — PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most of the discussions to this point have been largely “theological.” There are, though, things we need to understand about the life of grace that are more “practical” than “theological.” These are discussed under the theme “Practical Considerations.”

Those who would continue in the life of grace must understand suffering. This part begins with a discussion of this theme. In the first days of living out union with Christ, many questions about this new walk arise. Answers to a number of these are in the chapter titled “What About This?”

All who live the life of grace are in danger of making mistakes. The chapter titled “Red Flags Waving” deals with some of these possible mistakes. Finally, the last chapter concerning practical thoughts on maturing in the life of grace is titled “Obeying Obedience.”

CHAPTER 16

UNDERSTANDING SUFFERING

Someone has said, “Life is a series of mortar attacks.”

That person is right—and Christians are not immune. The older we become, the more we realize God’s purposes for our sufferings.

Some have characterized Christianity as being a “fun” thing. Others have made Christianity a sure and certain route to financial prosperity and perfect health. Have some of us forgotten that we follow a leader who, in His earthly life, had “not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20) and, in cruel death, “was numbered with the transgressors” (Mark 15:28)?

If we would eliminate suffering from Christianity, we would eliminate the cross. When we eliminate the cross, we destroy the entire Christian movement.

Suffering is so bound up with living out our union with Christ that the Christian who does not understand will be unable to continue living the life of grace. Consequently, we must have some understanding of the biblical teachings about the place of suffering in the lives of believers.

Suffering Is Essential to Living Out Union With Christ

In several ways, suffering relates to our experience of living out our union with Christ.

Suffering Often Prepares Us for Receiving the Message of Grace

“For two weeks the Lord has been preparing me for this message.” The young man who spoke these words almost shouted them to the man who had just presented in a chapel service the message of our union with Christ. The young man—a professor at Southern Baptist College in the Philippines—went on to tell of the deep despair he had been experiencing in that two-week period of time.

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His case is typical.

When the Lord begins to use us in sharing the life of grace, we will discover that everyone is not ready to hear. In almost every case, it will be the “broken” person who has an open ear to the life-transforming message.

They, like us, have discovered that “doing our best for Jesus” just does not work. They, like us, have sown to (or because of) the flesh and have reaped corruption. They, like us, in a state of despair are ready to look again into the Word of God for answers for their failure and bewilderment. They, like us, know there is something more in the Christian life they must have.

It needs to be repeated that this book will likely be just another book in the hands of the person who has not come to the end of self. To a person, though, who has come to the end of self, the reading of this book could be the beginning of a new day and a new life. Brokenness through God-sent suffering is one of the essentials for living by grace.

Suffering Enables Us to Experience the Life of Grace

I had been experiencing the life of grace for several months when my Bible reading brought me again to the “thorn-in-the-flesh” passage of 2 Corinthians 12:1–10. I was familiar with the passage but had never seen its ties with the new life God had given me.

When I read again that it was necessary for Paul to have a thorn in the flesh that he might live by grace, I was so shocked I spoke to Paul. I said, “Paul, you are the man who taught us that we are dead to sin and alive to God. Now you are telling me I must suffer in order to live by grace.”

The life of victory I had been experiencing by reckoning and choosing seemed all I needed. Yet I could not argue with Paul. If Paul needed circumstances to keep him in the life of faith, so do the rest of us.

In time, I discovered a companion statement of Paul that relates suffering to faith. As you read Paul’s statement, keep in mind that our sin problem is faith in ourselves—our know-it-all attitude. Here is the passage:

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For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead (2Corinthians 1:8–9).

The statement is so clear, no explanation seems necessary. It constitutes another testimony by Paul that even he had to suffer in order to have victory over faith in himself that he might have faith in God.

The Christ Who Lives Through Us Is Hated by Our Generation

A third reason that we need to understand suffering if we are to continue in our newfound walk was explained by our Lord to His disciples just hours before His cruel death at Calvary. To prepare His followers for the sufferings they would endure at the hands of sinful men throughout their lives, Jesus says:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you (John 15:18).

People of the twentieth century would respond to Jesus the same way those of the first century did if He were to come again in the flesh. With the exception of being in a different culture, His life would be the same—and the hearts of men have not changed.

Jesus does live in our twentieth-century culture. He lives “in” and “through” those who understand and live out their union with Him. Paul did not say “I am no longer living, but Christ is living in me” because he was a super saint. He said it because the Lord had revealed to him his union with Christ, and he was living out that union. When we live out that union, we can say, “I am no longer living, but Christ is living in me.”

When the world confronts Christ in us, it is responding to Him—not us. And their response to Him is often a response of hate. Consequently, *we become the victims of the world’s hatred.*

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The depth of the world's hatred of us has far deeper dimensions than even the world understands. The hatred of our Lord both during His earthly sojourn and in us is inspired by Satan.

We must understand that we ourselves cannot do Satan and his kingdom harm. Jesus can! When Satan knows that Christ is living through us, he, with much animation and agility, sets out to stop us. In his counterattack, he enlists every supporter available.

Satan captivates the idle minds of those around us and fires all available ammunition. Because he is not only a liar but also a murderer, he always has "death" as an objective. He intends to destroy our Christian testimony and our impact for the cause of Christ.

Satan's attack on believers is well illustrated by the following experience of a pastor who had been living out his union with Christ for a few years.

"A lot of things are going wrong in our church, and it looks like it's all your fault," said a deacon to his pastor. But because he somehow knew the facts, the deacon added, "But those of us who understand know it's not your fault." Fortunately, the pastor had been living by grace long enough to understand that God was using the tough times to increase the life of grace in him.

For a peace-loving person, it is hard to be the brunt of an increasing number of false accusations, words and looks of anger and hate and unexplained rejection.

However, when we comprehend that it is the Christ within us who is the object of the hatred, we both understand and endure the pain and rejection. Furthermore, because it is for "Jesus' sake," we delight to be identified with Him in being "despised and rejected of men."

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Suffering in Light of God's Sovereignty

Paul's testimony in the thorn-in-the-flesh passage—along with other passages—introduces the truth that no suffering is able to reach us apart from it being the will of God.

In some Christian circles the theme of God's sovereignty is much discussed. Controversies rage, for example, over the theme of our election to salvation. Yet, for some reason, the theme of God's sovereignty in the details of individual Christian lives has received scant attention.

We need to be cautioned that there is a difference between our *inner* and *outer* lives. *Within* our own hearts we may choose to live outside the will of God. Our outer circumstances, though, are completely under the control of God.

When we speak of God's sovereignty, we mean His absolute control of all things. Nothing can reach us except it be His will for us. If God is not sovereign in all our circumstances, why does the apostle Paul admonish us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to give thanks in all things? Why would the Holy Spirit lead us to be "giving thanks always for all things" as expressed in Ephesians 5:20?

We can be thankful in all things only because the "all things" are from the Lord and for the purpose of blessing.

Earlier it was mentioned that there will be an outbreak of hate toward us when Christ lives through us. It is difficult to believe that it could be the will of God for us to suffer at the hands of Satan and evil men. Does the Bible teach this? It does. On the day of Pentecost in his explanation of the meaning of all the supernatural events that were taking place, Simon Peter proclaimed:

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

Jesus was crucified by wicked hands. He was murdered by sinful men. Murder is sin. On the cross, however, our Lord was in the center of the will of the Father.

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From eternity, the Father had planned the crucifixion of our Lord. We are incapable of comprehending such thoughts. We accept them by faith.

Suffering may intensify once we begin to experience our union with Christ, because when we choose that life, the Lord now has the expression of our own heart that we desire a life of total dependence on Him.

We should not believe God sends suffering to enjoy watching us suffer. Suffering is a method used by God to free us from our know-it-all attitude in order that we might live by faith in Him.

This is not a suggestion that all suffering is only for the purpose of breaking our faith in ourselves. All sin brings suffering. Suffering is God's way of bringing us eternal glory according to Romans 8:17. Yet all suffering does—regardless of other factors involved—turn us to faith in God.

All suffering should be faced with the belief that it may be for only a season and the Lord may choose to take it away. Paul prayed for the removal of the thorn in the flesh. We should take every burden to the Lord for an interpretation of His will in the matter. He may or may not want to take the burden away.

Possessing the knowledge that our circumstances are completely under the control of our all-loving, all-wise and all-powerful God will carry us over many painful experiences in life.

“I have been helping my brothers and sisters through all this,” a lady cheerfully said to her pastor. Then with victory in her voice and on her countenance she added, “Before you became my pastor, it would have been the other way around. My brothers and sisters would have been ministering to me.”

Along with her brothers and sisters, on the previous Sunday she had buried her father. They had buried their mother a year earlier. The family was unusually close.

Both she and the pastor knew that her comment about his ministry centered in one thing—he had taught the sovereignty of God in our daily circumstances.

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Let us obey Paul's admonition recorded in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to give thanks in all things. Many have had their circumstances changed by doing so; many have found peace in the midst of their trying circumstances by doing so.

Try it!

CHAPTER 17

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

What do we do when we learn that we will be traveling to some exciting place we have never been before?

Most of us begin to acquaint ourselves with the place we will visit. We get down the maps, we collect pictures and we question anyone we know who has been there.

To any new venture in life, we usually respond with the same sense of inquiry. It is true of our venture into the life of grace.

Hopefully, many questions about the life of grace have already been answered. Because it is likely, though, that some of them have not been answered earlier, the intent of this chapter is to answer other questions about our oneness with Christ.

The selection of questions is based on the frequency with which they have been asked by others in their first weeks and months of living by grace and by their relative importance.

Are You Teaching Sinless Perfection?

Some who have not been introduced to the life of grace accuse those who believe and experience it of teaching sinless perfection.

Those who do teach the message of union with Christ, along with the apostle Paul, teach that believers are to consider themselves to be dead to sin and that their old man has been crucified. Although such reckoning means that we are to thank God we do not have to sin, it is neither a claim nor a promise that we are not going to sin.

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

Teachers of the message of union with Christ claim the possibility of a deliverance from slavery to sin. They teach, for example, that by living in union with Christ a believer may progressively be freed from enslavement to anger.

How Will This Affect My Involvement in Evangelism?

The chapter titled “God’s Miracle Workers” quotes our Lord’s statement that when we live in total dependence on Him, we will raise the dead. That means we will lead the unsaved to Christ. We will live in total dependence on Him only as we live out our oneness with Christ.

Living out our union with Christ is effective in making us more fruitful in evangelism.

There will possibly be a change in our manner of involvement in evangelism. Chapter 1 related Joe’s testimony concerning his fruitfulness in evangelism. He testifies, “Before I understood my union with Christ, I witnessed to everybody I saw, but I never won a single person to Christ. Now that I am permitting the Lord to guide me and empower me in my witnessing, I am witnessing less but leading the lost to Christ.” Joe, in fact, leads scores of people to Christ.

Furthermore, some of us who experience our union with Christ are as zealous to take the message of death, burial and resurrection to the saved as we have been to take it to the unsaved. This zeal to have a second life-changing ministry may possibly result in our witnessing to the unsaved less because of spending time in our second life-changing ministry. It will not result in our being less effective in evangelism.

Also, it will take time for the Lord to change us from a life of initiation to a life of response. As a result, most of us will need to spend more time alone with the Lord than we have previously. Again, the result may be less witnessing for a season. At the same time it will result in our being more effective witnesses.

We must remember that as far as the record goes, it was almost 15 years after his conversion before the apostle Paul was used to any great extent in

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evangelism. If it took the Lord that long to change Paul, we must not think we will soon become the mature person and witness the Lord wants us to be.

Living out of their union with Christ, some will witness to fewer people with greater effect. Others, under the leadership of the Spirit, will witness effectively to even more people. Some may begin to witness for the first time. Witnessing to the lost may be something we have always longed to do, but our spiritual paralysis has made it impossible. Living out our union with Christ is going to free us from that paralysis. In living out our union with Christ, we are going to be filled continually with the Spirit. Anyone who is filled with God's Spirit will be continually testifying of the Lord Jesus.

The important thing is to walk with God in light of our union with Christ. He will bring the changes. He will use us when and how He desires. But we can be certain of one thing. When we live in total dependence on the Lord by living out *our union with Christ*, we will raise the dead.

Why Have I Not Heard of This Before?

When a person's life is radically changed—in a period of a few minutes in some cases—they want to know why the secret has been kept from them. This is ordinarily the first question they ask.

I was first confronted with the question soon after the Lord began using me in sharing this message. After some thought, I likely answered, "I don't know." I have been asked the question many times since, and my answer is still, "I don't know." For reasons probably understood only by God, this is not a well-known message.

Yet it is possible that many have heard the message before. It is even possible that many have read books teaching the life of grace. Yet in His sovereignty, God had not at that time prepared them to understand it.

The books the Lord used to teach me the life of grace had been in my library from one to seven years—and I had read them. Yet it was when I wanted to die more than live if God could not change me that God gave the revelation.

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

Doesn't Everyone Teach This?

While some think they have never heard the message of living by grace before, others testify that it is nothing new. They think they have always understood it. Their question is, "Doesn't everyone teach this?"

Unfortunately, the answer to the question is "No!"

Some think that because they understand they are to live by faith, they understand and experience the life of grace.

Others who have for years understood that Christ was in them conclude that they fully understand and experience the life of union with Christ.

Still others believe that living out our union with Christ is nothing more than being "totally committed" to Christ.

These vague and incorrect perceptions of the life of grace are tragic. We experience the abundant life only as we understand and live out our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Anyone who is not teaching that is not teaching life as set forth in the New Testament.

What if Reckoning Does Not Work?

As has been stated over and over in this book, we will not experience our oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection until we believe we are crucified, buried and resurrected. Faith is one essential. We must add the second essential for experiencing our oneness with Jesus.

There also must be an act of the will. We must choose to experience our crucifixion, our burial and our resurrection.

The need for both faith and choice has been thoroughly discussed in Part Three, "Basic Approaches"—which is a discussion of Romans 6:11–13. Anyone who genuinely lives out the five imperatives of those three verses will experience crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

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How Do We Keep Our Minds on Jesus All the Time?

The life of union with Christ calls for a moment-by-moment response to the leadership of the indwelling Spirit. Such a life calls for continual fellowship with our Lord. Can it be done?

By a sovereign work, God often permits those in the first weeks of living out their union with Christ almost unbroken, conscious fellowship with Him. The Lord grants this to reveal the type of life we may have. Then we settle back to life much as it was before—at which time spiritual growth begins.

In Paul's great section on living by grace in Romans 5:12–8:39, he mentions the "law of the Spirit." By saying the Holy Spirit works by a law, Paul means that He never departs from His method and purpose of action. Paul writes:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

Paul means that the Holy Spirit never departs from His intention and actions to give us abundant life by leading us to experience our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

This means that the responsibility for keeping our minds on the Lord and on the truth of our union with Christ is not ours. That responsibility belongs to the Holy Spirit. Our place is to respond when He faithfully reminds us of our oneness with Jesus and our need to believe and choose crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

According to Romans 6:16, we may become slaves to living out our union with Christ as we obey the commands of Romans 6:11–13—one step at a time. In this way we more and more have our minds on the Lord and what His moment-by-moment leadership is for our lives.

The important thing is that we be able to look back over long periods of time and realize we are growing in our seasons of continuous fellowship with the Lord.

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

How Can We Know if the Impression Is From God or From Our Flesh?

Learning to live out our union with Christ may be likened to a baby learning to walk. There is much uncertainty. We want to walk as the Spirit leads, but we know ourselves well enough to know we may decide a thing is God's will just because we want it to be. So how can we know for sure when God is leading?

Admittedly, we cannot always know. We must often go forth without knowing for sure whether we are in God's will or not. And just as a baby falls many times in the process of learning to walk, we will many times misinterpret the will of God. Yet all the time we are learning how to interpret His will.

However, even in our earliest days of living a life of response rather than initiation, there are ways we can know if a thing is God's will or not. The most certain assurance we have that a thing is God's will is whether the impression we have about a thing is in harmony with the Scriptures. God always leads us to do those things that are in harmony with His Word. So the more of God's Word we have stored in our hearts, the easier it is for us to know if something is God's will or not.

Although God may call us to do something we passionately desire to do, He may also call us to do something we have no desire for. So another way of knowing if God is leading us to do a certain thing is a continuing sense of "oughtness" about it. If over a period of time we continue to have a sense of "oughtness" about doing a thing, we may believe it is God's will that we do it whether we have a desire to do it or not.

Jonah is an excellent example. He despised even the thought of going to Nineveh. He tried to run in the opposite direction from Nineveh. Yet it was God's will for him to go to Nineveh and preach there. Moses did not want to return to Egypt and lead the children of Israel from bondage, but it was God's will for him to do so.

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An impression is often from the flesh and not God's Spirit when we think the doing of it will make us look good in the eyes of others.

Do not be afraid to make mistakes. The child who is not willing to fall will never learn to walk. The believer who is not willing to make mistakes will never learn to walk in the Spirit. A good approach to learning to walk in the Spirit is to "go with what you get." Do what you believe is the will of God. Go with the 51 percent. As we go, we will learn.

God is not disturbed when we misinterpret His will. He is the loving heavenly Father who wants us to learn to walk. He is disturbed if we never attempt the walk.

How Can We Share This Message?

When we have struggled with spiritual failure for years and then found the victory, we want to shout it from the rooftops. We long for God's children to find the same victory we have finally found. How do we go about it?

We share the message of union with Christ by living out our own crucifixion, burial and resurrection. This means first of all that just as the unsaved have noticed a difference in us, the saved will also notice that we are different. They will see the newfound love, joy, peace, patience and faith.

Second, one of the most important things we have learned about this new way of walking with the Lord is moment-by-moment direction of the Holy Spirit. We will share with others as the Holy Spirit directs us.

We share this message by use of our personal testimony. Our Christian friends will want to know why we are different. We inform them of our new understanding and our new approach to the Christian life.

We share this message by teaching the Scriptures. The Lord will lead us to equip ourselves so that we will be able to tell others how they may enter the life of grace. The process may be slow, but as we follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we will, in time, be equipped to take this life changing message to others.

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

The Lord has already prepared some to hear us. Ordinarily, the person most prepared to hear us is the one who loves the Lord dearly, has never before heard the message of union with Christ, has had little success from Christian efforts, sees himself as an utter failure and is in difficult circumstances.

Just as in taking the message of the gospel to the unsaved, not everyone will be encouraging in response. Some will be offended when we suggest—by implication—that they have not yet discovered how to live the Christian life. Of course, we must always remember that “pride dies hard.” Some will hear us out but do nothing. Others will be sure we have gone into heresy.

Just as we receive negative responses from the unsaved, we also will receive negative responses from the saved. But thank the Lord we also will receive positive responses from the saved. Just as it has been our privilege to lead some to know Jesus as Lord and Savior, it will be our privilege to lead many to the life that is abundant.

Why Do I Change So Slowly?

“I’m just not changing fast enough. What’s wrong?” This is the sincere cry of some who have chosen to live out their union with Christ.

In our Lord’s sovereignty, He often grants a few weeks or even months of indescribable ecstasy when we first live out our oneness with our Lord. Ordinarily, after that, He permits us to return to life much as it was before. Here growth begins.

Please give proper emphasis to the word “growth.” If the New Testament teaches anything, it teaches that our Christian life is one of growth. In the parable of the sower, our Lord points out that sudden growth means inadequate rootage. Let us take heart in our Lord’s plan of continuing growth rather than sudden growth.

We all have many questions that have not been dealt with here. As we continue our new walk with the Lord, He will, in His own time and way, give us answers.

CHAPTER 18

RED FLAGS WAVING

“You can get there by going a mile down this highway and then turning left. Be careful, though, as you turn. It’s a dangerous corner. There have been a lot of bad wrecks there.”

Many of us have been given travel directions with such added warnings. In some cases we have considered them unnecessary while in other cases they possibly prevented a wreck.

This work seeks to give directions in living the life of grace. Such a work, though, needs to wave some red flags of warning. There are several “dangerous corners” many have faced in traveling this highway of victory. Some of these red flags, for you, will be unnecessary. Others you may need.

Do Not Think Everyone Is Ready to Hear What Has Happened to You

The previous chapter suggests that some of our Christian brothers and sisters are not ready to hear of our newfound joy in the Lord.

Some will not hear us because they have never heard the message before. They have been under sound Bible teachers for years who never mentioned union with Christ. They cannot believe there is a way of Christian living their teachers have not told them about.

Some will reject the message of living by grace because they believe it will hinder the work of evangelism. They commit themselves to evangelism first and cannot believe anything is more important. Yet Paul said that his one passion in life was to know Jesus Christ. Paul’s evangelism grew out of his personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ. We could have the same experience.

Some will reject the message because they did not discover it before you did. Pride will hinder their reception of the simple truth of God’s Word.

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Some will reject it because they have no interest in being totally available to the Lord. Their approach to the Christian life is one of being available to the Lord only when it is convenient.

Some will reject the message of grace because it appears to them that they are successful in the work of the Lord now. They see no need to use a different approach.

Some will reject the message of grace because they believe it is heresy. They will identify us with others who are clearly misinterpreting the Scriptures in other areas.

Some will reject living by grace because it takes the struggle out of the Christian life. Flesh wants to achieve. It has no desire for a life of total dependence on God.

Yet everywhere we go, there are some ready to hear this life changing message.

Just as some are saved the first time they hear of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, some will enter into the life of grace the first time they hear of their own crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Others will receive the message and, in some cases, years later will enter into the experience.

Go forth with your newfound, life changing message with joy and faith. Some will respond and enter the life of victory. But be ready for some rejection.

Guard Against a Tendency to Laziness

God is a Being of action. He is mightily at work in this earth. When He lives in and through a person, that person is one of action.

In the early days of the transition from a life of initiation to one of response, we often become confused. We cannot determine if the Lord is prompting us or if it is the flesh. It is easy to become paralyzed. We must not permit that to happen. We must be active and “go with what we get.” We must be willing to make mistakes. The Lord will understand.

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When we enter the life of grace, we enter into a “walk.” We are as babies learning to walk. We will fall, but then will go forth to try again. We will learn this walk of response, but we must keep walking.

In our first months of living by grace, we may spend more time alone with the Lord than ever before. If so, we must remember that *private activity is not inactivity*.

It is true that the New Testament teaches that we may enter a life of “rest.” Yet Hebrews 4:10 says it is not a rest from work. It is a rest from our own works that we might enter into God’s works.

There is not a clearer statement in print about the relationship between the life of grace and work than that of the apostle Paul:

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Grace rolls up its sleeves and goes to work.

Grace will not permit us to be “armchair Christians.” Rather, it will push and goad until it places us where the action is. Grace puts us to work.

Guard Against the Rejection of “Lonely” Activity

Some of us are by nature “public people.” We are always where the action is. Even if we know that private activity is not inactivity, we may find it difficult to respond to the Spirit’s leadership to spend lengthy periods of time in Bible study and prayer.

Furthermore, the Lord may make it impossible, for a season, for us to attend Christian gatherings such as conferences and conventions, which have been such a blessing through the years. This is not a reference to attendance at our home church.

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In our first days of living out our union with Christ, we are both learning a new theology and a new way of life. We are moving from a life of initiation to a life of response. It seems that most of us need extended periods of time alone if we are to experience these changes. New thought patterns and new habits are being established.

If the Lord should will times of loneliness for us, we should accept them with joy and permit the Lord to realize in our lives all He has in mind.

Do Not Go Just Part of the Way

For 23 years, I chose to be dead to sin and alive to God. I knew the experience only when the Lord revealed to me that I was already dead to sin and alive to Him. Choosing victory in the Christian life is not enough. On the other hand, if we are reckoning on our oneness with Christ but not giving up our point of view about life, we will not have victory. We must believe we are dead to sin and alive to God. We must choose to be dead to sin and alive unto God.

Do Not Turn Back

Many who have entered the walk of living out their union with Christ are tempted to turn back to the ordinary life of the flesh. There are reasons. You have already read things in this book that could possibly make you want to turn back.

For one thing, when God wills a time for us to be alone with Him, some will not understand what is happening in our lives. Not many will desire to make the journey with us. We may no longer have the closeness with some we have been close to in the past. The loss of these close friends could turn us back.

In addition, we often suffer more than before. When we believe and choose our crucifixion, burial and resurrection, it seems to free the Lord to send us our "thorns in the flesh" that we might live by grace. Furthermore, Satan knows we have become a force against him, and he uses every idle mind to make life difficult for us.

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Every temptation to turn back, however, can be an opportune time to establish ourselves more securely in the life of grace by moving forward rather than retreating. Every decision to continue in the life of grace gives us strength for victory over any temptation to turn back.

Do Not Make Hasty Decisions About Giving Up Present Christian Service

Because of the radical changes brought about by living out our union with Christ, we might decide that all of our present Christian work is wrong.

We must understand that even though we have not fully known how to live the Christian life, we have not wasted our entire lives. If we have loved the Lord, much of what we have done has been in the center of His will. We are likely in the center of His will in our present place of service.

So we must give the Lord adequate time to reveal to us any changes He desires in our ministries. Otherwise, we could be an unsettling factor in our church or in other places of Christian service for numbers of people.

If suddenly we walk away from our present places of service, people may think we have lost our walk with God, and our testimony will be damaged.

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Guard Against a Negative Attitude Toward Those Who Are Not Yet Experiencing Their Union With Christ

When we begin to experience the changes that are ours by living out our union with Christ, Satan may seek to produce in us negative attitudes toward those who have not yet found the life of grace.

One man confessed that he was experiencing anger toward those who had disciplined him, because he realized they had failed to tell him the most important truth of all for Christian growth.

Some admit feelings of spiritual and intellectual superiority to believers who do not understand their oneness with Christ.

There may be temptation to resentment or an attitude of condescension toward those who reject us and our new message. We may conclude that all those who have not had the life of grace revealed to them are totally wasting their lives.

There may be temptations to have contempt for those who are burning out themselves “in the flesh” as they “do their best for Jesus.” We may conclude that any preacher who does not live out his union with Christ has nothing at all for us.

Some have been tempted to leave their church and try to start one that is built on the message of living by grace because they think they see little good in their present church. This is not to say the Lord, in time, will not lead in the establishing of a new church based on the message of living by grace.

All these attitudes are wrong. We must guard against them. Our best protection against them is simply living out our union with Christ.

Hopefully, this discussion will be of value as we face the “dangerous corners” of the walk of grace. There will be others that have not been mentioned here. The Lord will guide us around them and into broader avenues of victory as we live out this glorious life.

CHAPTER 19

OBEYING OBEDIENCE

It is possible that you have experienced your union with Christ for the first time since you began reading this book. You like it. You know it is the life for you. It is your desire to live in grace for your remaining days on earth.

You can do that very thing. The purpose of this closing chapter is to show how living by grace can, in time, become a lifestyle.

The apostle Paul closes his discussion of Romans 6:3–13 on how to live by grace with “ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

Paul does not mean that all believers are under grace. He refers to those believers who understand their union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection as set forth in 6:3–10 and who obey the commands of 6:11–13. In Galatians 5:18 Paul writes: “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

Then in Romans 6:16 Paul explains how those believers who enter the life of grace may, in time, experience it as a lifestyle. He writes:

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Romans 6:16).

The statement gives us two options. We may be the slaves of *sin* by obeying *sin* or we may be the slaves of *obedience* by obeying *obedience*. We would have expected Paul to have written that we may obey sin or God. Yet he writes that we may obey *sin* or *obedience*.

What does Paul mean by obeying obedience? Notice that the result of obeying obedience is *righteousness*. The last of the five imperatives of Romans 6:11–13 is that we give the parts of our bodies to God who will do works of *righteousness through them*. Obeying obedience, then, is obeying the five imperatives of 6:11–

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13. By obeying them over and over we, in time, will become slaves of living by grace.

The purpose of this chapter is to give a few practical suggestions that will assist us in becoming slaves to a lifestyle of living by grace by obeying obedience—that is, by continuously obeying the five imperatives of Romans 6:11–13.

Understand the Power of Habit

We are all creatures of habit. Before daylight one morning a few days before I wrote this chapter, the electricity in our home went off. In going to our kitchen to get a candle, I passed four light switches. Without thinking I reached for each of them to turn on the lights as I passed by. I am a slave to turning on lights when the room is dark. We all become “slaves” to those things we do over and over.

All of us know by our own experiences that we are creatures of habit. And we all have a habit to break. It is the habit of reasoning our way through life. Also, if we are to live out the Christian life as God intends, we have a habit to develop. It is the habit of responding our way through life.

Just as a baseball player can break a habit of swinging his bat the wrong way and start a new habit of swinging his bat correctly, we can break and make habits of life. Moving from a habit of initiating to responding may be a longtime process, but it can be done. It must be done if we are to move to a lifestyle of living by grace.

Understand the Passages to Study

Throughout this work, attention has been drawn to a few—and rather brief—passages: Romans 6:3–13; Galatians 5:17–24; Romans 7:1–4; Ephesians 2:4–7; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 8:2–3; Galatians 6:14; and Colossians 3:1–4. These are basic.

As you study and master these briefer passages, you will move to larger sections. Knowledge of Romans 5:12–8:39 is a must for enlarging our

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understanding of the life of grace. The entire book of Galatians will be helpful. Ephesians 1:14–22 enlarges our understanding of life in the heavenlies. Second Corinthians 1:3–11 and 12:7–10 are essential passages for understanding suffering and how it results in a life of grace.

The greatest book in the Bible on living by grace is the Gospel of John. The reason for this is because it presents Jesus as living a life of total dependence on the Father. In John 20:21 Jesus says, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” As Jesus lived out His earthly life in total dependence on the Father, He sends us forth to do the same.

In time, you will possibly say, “Now that I understand the life of grace, I see it on every page of the Bible.” Many have said that. It is true. The entire Bible teaches the total sufficiency of God for every area of life and our need to depend on Him for that sufficiency.

Yet in the early days of our learning to live the life of grace, we must give much attention to the few passages mentioned in this work. Little by little the Lord will increase our understanding of our union with Christ.

Understand the Non-Biblical Helps

The Lord provides non-biblical helps to a lifestyle of grace. These are in the form of such things as newfound friends who understand and experience grace and will share with us the details of their walk with the Lord, seminars, audio and video recordings, and books.

We must, though, be very careful in selecting these non-biblical helps. We may waste time and money and even be influenced away from the life of faith. I have marveled at things I have read in books that someone recommended to me as teaching the message of our union with Christ.

Some have given expression of the truth of Christ being in us without even a mention of our being in Christ. Some advocate nothing more than the thought we are to live by faith. Some actually destroy the life of grace by promoting nothing more than “doing our best for Jesus.”

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Recently, I was given a book authored by a man who has a reputation among some as teaching the life of grace. As I read, I was saddened to discover that his book, even though filled with Scripture, for the most part placed the burden for life on us. To live as the man suggests is to be in the flesh.

Someone has said, “Buy books by the author and not the cover.” That is good advice. It is good to follow that advice in placing yourself under the influence of someone who reportedly will help you understand the life of grace.

The following books are among those that I believe can be helpful: *Handbook to Happiness* by Charles Solomon, *The Mystery of Godliness* by Ian Thomas, *Born Crucified and Crowded to Christ* by L. E. Maxwell and *Bone of His Bone* by F. J. Huegel. The books of Miles Stanford also give a sound and helpful treatment of the life of grace.

Understand the Three Rs

It will be helpful to understand and practice the three “Rs.” In the life of grace, they are *repent*, *receive* and *reckon*. The best time to repent of a sin is the moment we commit it. Furthermore, the best time to receive the forgiveness is the moment we repent. Simply as an act of faith we thank the Lord for His forgiveness of a sin we have just confessed.

We may find it difficult to do, but as soon as we repent of a sin and receive God’s forgiveness, we should reckon ourselves dead to that sin—and, at the same time, to the know-it-all attitude from which the sin came. Satan will make it seem ridiculous that we could believe we never again have to be guilty of a sin we have just committed. Let us not listen to Satan. We should obey the Scriptures.

If we will move forward with these three “Rs,” we will be able to continue in our progress of obeying obedience.

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Understand the Need to Relax

As we grow into the lifestyle of grace, we change slowly. At times it seems we do not change at all. We must relax ourselves into God's hands and God's timing. Any attempt we make at creating change is flesh at work—and only delays change.

Understand the “Law of the Spirit”

The Holy Spirit operates in the lives of all believers according to a law. Paul names it “the law of the Spirit.” That is, the Holy Spirit carries out a ministry in the lives of all believers from which He never departs—hence, the term “law.”

In Romans 8:2 Paul writes, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” With legitimate changes in translation from the Greek, this rather vague statement can be more easily understood.

The words “of life” may be translated “which is life.” The idea of “life” is the “abundant life,” and the idea of “in Christ Jesus” is “in union with Christ Jesus.” With those changes, the statement reads, “The law of the Spirit which is abundant life in union with Christ Jesus.” The definition of the law of the Spirit, then, is as follows:

The law of the Spirit is His unceasing intention and activity to give all believers the abundant life by leading them to understand and experience their union with Jesus in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

By understanding and trusting the Spirit to work in our lives according to this law, we place the responsibility for keeping our minds on God and on our union with Christ on Him—and no longer carry the burden ourselves.

Before I understood the law of the Spirit, I struggled to keep my mind on God and on my union with Christ. I carry that burden no longer. No believer needs to carry such a burden. It is the Holy Spirit who will keep us reminded to live out our crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

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As we move forward in our newfound pathway of dependence on God, we will find life to be more exhilarating than we ever imagined it could be. As we stay on the pathway, in time, we will become a slave to the life of grace.

The crowning result of becoming a slave to the lifestyle of living by grace is the life abundant promised by the Lord Jesus.

CONCLUSION

In reading this conclusion, some readers will say, “You have saved the best for the last.” This is so because here I consider the captivating and convincing testimonies of some who live out their oneness with Christ.

Those relating their stories are Jerry Halbrook, pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in McKinney, Texas; Pastor Bill Barnett of Oneonta, Alabama; Bill’s wife, Nancy Barnett; and Janie Kuykendall, my wife.

Reading these testimonies will bless us by our seeing what the Lord has done in other lives, but also in setting forth what God can do in our own lives. These testimonies make clear the way to experience the life of grace.

Personal Testimony of Jerry Halbrook

At the age of nine I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior. For years, though, I remained a spiritual infant, even though the Lord never ceased to disturb me about my Christian life. I thought He was drawing me to total dedication, and in my heart, I intended someday to be dedicated totally to Him. In time, I was.

When I made the full surrender at 23 years of age, I immediately became deeply involved in my church—a rather large church—in Mobile, Alabama. I served for two years as a choir member, junior deacon, bus captain, Thursday night visitor, rescue mission preacher and worker, Church Training worker and occasionally a Sunday school teacher. I was “doing my best” for my Lord.

In November of 1977—two years following my total commitment and deep involvement in the Lord’s work—God called me into full-time Christian service. Immediately following the call, I experienced the greatest tragedy of my life, which, I must add, was accompanied by remarkable portions of God’s sustaining and strengthening grace.

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My total commitment, my two years of experience in Christian service and the tragedy—with the accompanying grace to face it—combined to bring me to the satisfying conclusion that I was now an instrument fit for the Master’s use. As far as I was concerned, I now had the equipment to be used mightily of God in my call to full-time Christian work.

In August of 1978 I moved to Dallas, Texas, to attend Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, a school used wonderfully by the Lord to bring blessing to me. Soon after I moved to Dallas, the Lord provided an opportunity for me to serve as the bus pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Oak Cliff. At the time Calvary had one bus and a van running only one route.

When in becoming acquainted with the community I realized there were thousands of children in Oak Cliff, I knew I had been called to serve in a bus minister’s paradise. Without hesitation, I vowed to be the best bus minister in the history of my denomination, Southern Baptist. I knew that my experiences had endowed me with the right background for the work; I knew how deeply I was dedicated to the Lord and the work; I knew that I had the knowhow to make things happen. I would be the best employee Jesus had on the payroll.

Yet I failed! I utterly failed!

Within six months after I began my work with the church, our bus was mechanically falling apart, I could not get bus workers, my only bus captain moved to another city and the company from which we rented a second bus terminated its service with us. In addition to the personal dilemma I was facing at the church, I was having a great struggle with my schoolwork.

At the time the “dark night of my soul” was almost unbearable, but now my heart overflows to God for it. It was only by seeing that my talents, my experience and my motivational skills could do absolutely nothing for the Kingdom of God that I was able to understand that all of my planning and passionate working for God were nothing more than a “raging” of my flesh.

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After almost three years of God-given hurt and failure, I was now ready to experience life as God intends it.

In one brief span of time, on a Monday in March 1979, the Lord changed my life. The change came during my weekly meeting with my pastor—a meeting I had entered carrying the despair and embarrassment of my failures.

Wanting to address the fact that I was not producing more as the church's bus minister, I said, "I don't know what is wrong. I am studying hard and making just average grades, I can't get help in children's church, I can't get help in the maintenance of the bus, I can't get money to expand, my only bus worker is leaving and I am tired physically and mentally."

I had expected him to respond with, "Jerry, you are just not dedicated enough" or "You are not praying and working hard enough." I was wrong!

To my surprise his response was, "Jerry, I am going to tell you what I expect out of you. I expect you to have a walk with God. If you never get another bus worker, children's worker, mechanic or even another child, I expect you to walk with God. Stop trying to manufacture your own fruit and let the Vine do that. You are just a branch; abide in Him and let Him produce the fruit. Rest in Jesus; stop working for Him and begin to let Him work in and through you."

On that Monday in March 1979, union with Christ became more than just theological jargon. It became reality.

My pastor had shared with me the message of our oneness with Christ from the first day I met him, so I knew the theology of the message. But it was not until I learned by painful experience that I could not do God's work for Him, but that only He can do His work, that I was ready to experience the life of union with Christ.

By summer the Lord was giving me a peaceful life of resting in Him—the faithful One. As I began to trust Him to do His own work, He began to produce fruit. He sent workers; He inspired our people to purchase an almost-new bus and

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construct a bus yard with a tool shed and refreshment house; He provided money to have our old bus overhauled and sent a new bus captain.

Best of all, He began to use us to share the message of the gospel with increasing numbers of people. This happened in two ways. First, many more children began to respond to our invitation to ride our buses to our Sunday school and our children's church.

Then a totally unexpected blessing came. We began to reach some of the children's parents. In time, enough of them became Christians and began attending church that we established a Spanish department at our church. That work has been so fruitful that soon we had two Spanish congregations with one of them enjoying mission status and meeting in its own buildings. In time, our church was sponsoring five missions.

As well as seeing fruit in my Christian service, I began experiencing changes in my personal life. Prayer was no longer just words as I learned to pray under the direction of the Spirit of God. The Lord also speaks to me daily through the Bible, and I now look upon it as the living Word of God rather than a rule book.

No longer did I attempt to learn in the classroom by my own capabilities—I am now a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and studying on my Doctor of Ministry degree. I completed my studies at Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in 1983. I learned to look to the Spirit of God to teach me through my professors.

In short, the Lord has given me the "abundant life."

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Personal Testimony of Nancy Barnett

Although I was saved when I was 17 years old, it was in college that I really began to grow spiritually. I was introduced to part of union with Christ, and my life changed. There was deep peace and joy as I realized that the old Nancy had died when Jesus died on the cross and all I had to do was receive this and then trust God. I didn't have to do anything to try to get God to love and approve me. All I had to do was make myself available to God.

Those years of growth were exciting. Then in 1978 God began to break my self-confidence. Everything I had been able to do so well began to fall apart. My quiet times with God became dry, and I found I didn't even have the desire or discipline to continue.

I became frustrated with teaching in public school—primarily because I wasn't in control and things weren't going "my way." It was then that I began to see and experience my union with Christ. All of God's resources were available to me all the time. It was not dependent on whether I had my quiet time that morning. It was not by self-effort but by His grace that I could do anything.

Not only did God have a plan for my life, but He had a moment-by-moment supply of whatever I needed. When Bill and I were married, both of us understood union with Christ. However, as always, the Lord began to reveal new areas of flesh. We both had preconceived ideas of married life.

As a wife my expectations were not always met, so I expressed anger or disappointment. This created in Bill a natural insecurity and frustration. The Lord showed me that I had inherited from Adam a know-it-all attitude and that I thought I knew better than Bill or God how to make a marriage work. The Lord freed me from those opinions and taught me to respond to His opinions. As a result, much pressure was removed from both Bill and me. We both now have a greater rest.

By grace I was saved, and by grace I walk moment by moment, trusting not in my own ability but in His abundant grace.

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Personal Testimony of Bill Barnett

At the age of nine, I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior. As most Christians, I knew relatively little of what God had in mind for my spiritual life. After my parents divorced, I experienced several years of spiritual dryness. This lack of knowledge of God's will for my life and the spiritual dryness lasted throughout high school and college days.

Christmas of 1975 was a particularly low point in my life as my efforts of self-direction had led me to what seemed a dead end, and I felt desperate. That Christmas I prayed a new prayer telling God that my ideas were not working and that I wanted to know what His ideas were for me.

That prayer was, in fact, just how God wanted me to live each day of my life—not depending on my own logic or best ideas but honestly looking for God's divine leadership as I reckon my know-it-all attitude out of power so I might rest and actively do God's will.

However, that attitude and approach did not last long. Soon I began to depend on my own "good ideas" and external standards of Christian behavior rather than depending on God's ideas and leadership. In His sovereignty, God allowed some measure of success as I took leadership roles in the Baptist Student Union of Texas A&M University and later with the Baptist General Convention of Texas as a Mission Service Corps Volunteer.

From 1975 to 1978, I heard several people explain the teaching of God's grace and my union with Christ. It was not until the fall of 1978, however, that I heard such a clear scriptural presentation of this truth that it began to change my life.

Understanding my union with Christ has greatly affected my marriage and blessed every area of my life. As a husband, I soon discovered that my own natural goodness, patience and love were not enough for me to be the husband that God intended me to be for Nancy, my wife. When I learned that God, through Jesus, had crucified even those "good qualities," it caused me to depend

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totally on “God’s resources of goodness and patience and love.” This allowed me to become a channel of God’s love to Nancy.

In resolving conflicts in our marriage, the message of grace has had great impact. Knowing that the root of our conflict was our old nature, we began to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God. This opened the door for God’s forgiveness and reconciliation to flow more freely between us. God gives His grace day by day in expressing His love to each of us through each of us.

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Personal Testimony of Janie Kuykendall

For as long as I can remember I have believed that God loves me, and from earliest childhood I have longed to return His love.

At 12 years of age, I received Jesus Christ into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior. Throughout my teen years, my deep love for God never wavered—but was a continuing standard for me to achieve.

Accompanying my longing to love the Lord was a consuming desire for perfection in all things; I was especially devoured with the desire for lofty achievement in academic and musical pursuits. Driven by such passion, I put forth intense effort that culminated in many successes. And I believed God was helping me with my accomplishments.

Life in those years was not always a lot of fun. Achieving these high standards was a continuous struggle. Also, there were failures that, partly because I had always worked so hard for success, were accompanied with deep depression.

Then in college days, my heart was filled with delight when in the will of God, I married a pastor. I knew it would give me an opportunity to demonstrate what a “perfect” pastor’s wife was like. I energetically worked at being the model for the wives of all pastors. Seldom would I decline a job at the church. But in time delight turned to depression, because again there were failures.

“How can I try so hard and fail so miserably?” I would ask myself.

After years of trying and failing, I recognized that I could not go on with business as usual because something was wrong with me. In my search for answers, I came to understand that the life I had been living was centered in “self.” For the first time in my life, I clearly recognized that my life was one of self-will and pride.

The Lord’s revelation of the true condition of my heart was “soul sickening.”

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All along I had known that I was not experiencing the New Testament concept that Christ should live through me. Now I knew at least one reason why.

In addition to the sickness of soul about my “inner” life, the Lord began to increase the failures of my “outer” life. Increasing despair was swiftly pushing me to the breaking point.

As the Lord was crushing me that I might live by grace, my husband began to experience living by grace. I was not blessed! On the contrary, I became angry about his newfound joy.

The Lord continued to do the work He had begun in me, and on a Saturday afternoon, a few weeks after I began to see the difference in my husband, I decided that I could not go on—I was not even spiritually capable of teaching my Sunday school class the next day.

At that very moment, my husband came home and handed me a small booklet, which I immediately began to read. Through that tiny booklet, the Lord showed me that “in Christ” I was a new creature and as a result had a new mind. I could now “think” differently.

On that Saturday afternoon, the Holy Spirit changed my thought life. I immediately began to think of God differently. Also, I saw my oneness with Jesus Christ—that I had been one with Him since the moment I had given my life to Him. That day it was revealed to me that I was dead to sin and alive to God—I was one with the Lord Jesus Christ in crucifixion, burial, resurrection and enthronement.

That Saturday afternoon I began to “reckon” on my oneness with Christ in death, burial, resurrection and enthronement—and experienced immediate change.

I began again to enjoy being a pastor’s wife. My prayer life radically changed as I looked to the Lord for His leadership in how I should pray. What a freedom it was not to continue to pray mechanically in a set pattern but to permit the Lord to place in my heart His concerns and desires.

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A new and refreshing love for all people seems now to flow continuously from God's heart into mine along with a longing for the glory of the Lord.

Now I comfortably refuse jobs at the church when I am not directed by the Holy Spirit to accept them.

Along the way I have ceased to struggle as a parent. By God's grace I have yielded my children and grandchildren into the hands of God. It is such a peaceful thing to leave them in the care of the "heavenly" Father. More and more I am living a life of response rather than one of initiation, which means that I am "resting from my work" but am actively engaged in His work.

For 34 years now I have continued both to "reckon" myself dead to sin and alive to God and have "chosen" to be dead to sin and alive to God. Daily, and many times throughout the day, I claim and choose my oneness with Christ in death, burial, resurrection and enthronement. As I do, the dear Lord continues to work blessed change in me.

I praise His name!

A LAST WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

This book contains the presentation of some of the truth of “union with Christ.” It is the testimony of the New Testament that “union with Christ” works in the life of the Christian. It works experientially.

This book also contains the testimonies of some of us who are living out our “union with Christ.” It is our testimony that “union with Christ” works in our lives. It works experientially.

We are happy to confess that it is in Christ that we “live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

David Kuykendall

OTHER BOOKS AVAILABLE

Other books teaching the life of grace are available to download for free through our web site:

www.livingbygrace.org

Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness: Another companion book to *Our Oneness With Christ*. The first three chapters are a digest of *Our Oneness With Christ*. The book then broadens the concept of the believer's oneness with Christ revealing specific changes the Lord brings into the lives of believers who experience their oneness with Christ.

Here's Life: A verse-by-verse exposition of Romans 5:12–8:39, which is the most extensive passage setting forth the truths of the believer's oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection. This is especially helpful to those who desire verse-by-verse Bible study.

The Pursuit of the Upward Call: An exposition of Philippians 3:1–14. The passage reveals that Paul's one passion was an unceasing experience of life in the heavenlies. He expresses his approach for arriving at such an experience. Other passages are used to discuss the blessings of life in the heavenlies.

The New-Creation Life: Based on the one verse of 2 Corinthians 5:17, this work develops the truth that because believers are "in Christ," they are already crucified, buried and resurrected. The book deals with the believer's life from conversion into eternity.

A Graceful Body: An exposition of Ephesians 5:22–33, the most important passage in the New Testament dealing with the theme of marriage. The book shows how only by living out our union with Christ can we live out the teachings of this passage on marriage.

ABOUT THE BOOK

“Dear God, if You can’t change me, please kill me.”

Within days after David Kuykendall prayed that prayer, the Lord revealed to him his oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Understanding those truths resulted in the change he longed for and knew he must have. His book, *Our Oneness With Christ*, sets forth those biblical truths God revealed to him.

What Others Say

“The most liberating book I have read. Truly enlightening concerning the sin problem.”

Jerry Halbrook, Pastor
Parkway Baptist Church, McKinney, Texas

“The truths of *Our Oneness With Christ* have enabled me to be a husband and father from God’s point of view.”

John Belken
Commissioner on the State Parole Board for Arkansas

“A study of *Our Oneness With Christ* is the best discipleship foundation a new church can have.”

Kenny Moore, Director
Church Planting Division
Colorado Baptist General Convention

“The truths of *Our Oneness with Christ* have relieved me from the burden of trying to perform for Jesus in my strength.”

Mike Holman
MAF Missionary