



JOE GRIFFIN

One Day at a Time

Overview of Christian Doctrines

EDITED BY
JOHN CAMERON SMITH

“Eye has not seen nor has ear heard,
neither has there entered into the minds of men
those things that God has prepared for those
who love Him. (1 Cor. 2:9). For He Who spared not His
own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not
with Him freely give us all things? (Rom. 8:32).
He has done exceedingly abundantly beyond
all we could ever ask or think. (Eph. 3:20).
For we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16).”



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Joe Griffin Media Ministries

St. Charles, Missouri

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This book is edited from the lectures
and unpublished notes of Joe Griffin.

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FROM THE PASTOR

I taught a 52-lesson series on the basic doctrines of the Christian faith in 1989-1990. My written notes for this series were transcribed by Carole Allen and then published in a four-book series in 2005. A few years ago, a staff of volunteers headed by Trina Lawson transcribed the actual pulpit recordings of these lessons for use by John Cameron Smith, Senior Editor of Joe Griffin Media Ministries. He was given the task of editing these presentations for publication. The end result is ***One Day at a Time***, which took over four years to complete since his efforts were interrupted twice by heart surgeries that threatened not only his life but also the future of this book. Undaunted, John recovered and once his strength returned he took up the task afresh.

The objective of this book is to present the essential doctrines of the Christian faith in more detail than the four basic books, which function more as study guides to be utilized along with the MP3 recordings of the original series. ***One Day at a Time*** expands on the subjects covered in the 1989-1990 series, and incorporates more advanced biblical doctrines.

Development of this book was assisted by dedicated believers who offered their time and talents to the project. Trina's transcribers included Lucia Ciuper, Sharon Fehr, and Melinda Kline. Proofreaders are also essential and we were blessed with several: Susan Smith, Jeannine Vesser, Melodie Bautista, Andrée Couch, and Rev. David Ross.

A book's cover should convey the intent of its contents and Cindy Rawlins's design does exactly that. The writer of the book of Hebrews provides instructions about how a believer is enabled to grow spiritually:

Restore power to weak hands and disabled knees [*metaphors for a believer out of fellowship*], **and make straight wheel-tracks with your feet** [*facilitate biblical doctrines in the soul under the ministry of the Holy Spirit*] **so that the weakened limb will not be dislocated** [*to have the capacity to learn God's purpose for your life*], **but rather be restored** [*the restoration of the soul by means of spiritual growth*]. (Heb. 12:12-13)

When wagon trains first rolled over the American prairies in the early 1800s, they cut into the turf leaving behind marks or traces. When other wagon trains followed, these traces were enlarged into deeper and broader ruts called wheel-tracks. In Hebrews 12:13, the NIV Bible uses the term

“level paths.” In the Greek of the Bible, the word is τροχιά (*trochiá*), which is used figuratively for one’s behavior patterns, character traits, and lifestyle. In Proverbs 23:7 (NASB), as a person “thinks within himself, so he is”. The believer in Jesus Christ is commanded to organize his thinking from instructions contained in the Word of God: “Make straight wheel-tracks” is the present active imperative of the verb ποιέω (*poiéō*).

Once memory traces are facilitated into wheel-tracks, you are to trust in their veracity and make them a part of who you are. From this inner resource, you will be able to successively confront life’s pressures and circumstances and manage them from a position of strength. God honors His Word wherever it is found, including within your soul.

The Word of God is described as “alive and powerful” in Hebrews 4:12. When inculcated into your soul as wheel-tracks of righteousness, divine power makes possible the life God desires for you. As a result, your future options are expanded, the Word is magnified, and God is glorified.

This is the believer’s mission in life. But to accomplish this objective, the study of the Bible and the utilization of its doctrines must become priority one in your life. This book is designed to assist and encourage your efforts to continue and maintain this process – ***One Day at a Time***.

Joe Griffin
St. Charles, Missouri
October 2013

PREFACE

If you are a believer in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then before beginning your Bible study it is mandatory that you name your sins directly and privately to God the Father:

If we confess our known sins to Him, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all wrongdoing, including unknown or forgotten sins.

(1 John 1:9)

As a result, you will be filled with God the Holy Spirit in fellowship with God the Father, and spiritually prepared to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God:

God is spirit, and believers who worship Him must worship in the filling of the Holy Spirit and *[application to life of biblical]* truth. (John 2:24)

If, however, you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then the issue is not your naming of sins to God the Father; rather, the issue is access to His saving grace by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone:

He who believes in Christ has eternal life; but he who does not obey the command to believe in Jesus Christ shall not see eternal life in His presence, but is condemned to the Lake of Fire, alienated from God.

(John 3:36)

Because of God's enduring, immutable grace, believers do not become discouraged: though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed *ONE DAY AT A TIME*. For our modest, momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

The believer remembers Bible doctrine; he has confidence the Lord's logistical grace functions never cease, for His compassions never fail; they are renewed *ONE DAY AT A TIME*. Great is His faithfulness. (Lam. 3:21-23)

Using the Holy Bible as our textbook, we begin with an assessment of the existence and essence of God followed by an overview of the basic biblical doctrines of Protestant Christianity. Since the Bible represents God's written Word, scriptural verses and their interpretations, together with footnotes, are used extensively throughout this overview to reveal and explain Christian theology and its relevance in our lives.

LOGICAL PROPOSITIONS

Introducing the concept of God as the Sovereign Creator and Authority of the universe are six propositions, which, although logical, cannot be either proved or disproved, but are necessary to an understanding of God and His personalized grace plan for the human race. Our faith-based acceptance of these propositions is dependent on our objectivity and perception of reality.

God Exists

The essential proposition throughout this overview is that God exists and has always existed, possessing neither a beginning nor an ending. Were we to simply conclude, "*I do not believe that God exists,*" we ignore the possibility that He could exist outside the limits of our present knowledge. Logically, then, our statement of disbelief should be rephrased, "*Based on my current knowledge, I do not believe that God exists.*" Requiring only objectivity from the reader, this overview will endeavor to increase his knowledge of the existence and essence of God and the importance of His plan for mankind.

As we acquire knowledge, we utilize one or more of the following systems of learning to determine our perception of reality:

Rationalism: Reality is perceived by reason or rational thought (for example, philosophers). As revealed in the Bible, however, the finite human mind is neither capable of rationally confirming nor fully comprehending the existence of an infinite God.

Empiricism: Reality is perceived by individual experimentation or observation (for example, scientists). Yet, God is an invisible Spirit that man cannot personally experience or observe.

Faith: Reality is perceived by man's confidence in the authority and veracity of another being. Therefore, the Christian confidently believes in the intrinsic authority of an eternally existent God whose wisdom and veracity are revealed in the Bible.

In contrast to rational and empirical perception wherein human intellect and observation merit the credit for explaining reality, faith is a non-meritorious system of learning whereby only the object of our faith is worthy of the credit. Imperfect man is incapable of meritoriously contributing to God's perfect plan for the human race. Therefore, when we state, "*I believe God exists,*" we have identified God as worthy of our confidence by means of faith in Him:

Eye has not seen nor has ear heard [*empiricism*], neither has there entered into the minds of men [*rationalism*] the things [*personal destinies*] that God has prepared for those [*believers*] who love [*by means of faith in*] Him. (1 Cor. 2:9)

The decisive issue in Christianity, therefore, does not concern the one who believes but rather what is believed. The only justifiable objects of Christian faith are God the Father, the Bible as His "**Written Word**," the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the "**Living Word**," and God the Holy Spirit.¹

The existence of a Supreme Authority or Power may also be inferred from the study and observation of the universe. For example, certain teleological questions may be noted that offer credibility to His existence:

- Other than an infinite deity, what authority was the original source for the design and initiation of the first act of creation?
- What supreme power is responsible for controlling and sustaining the unerring mathematical precision that regulates the universe?
- Is it reasonable that the origin and complexity of the universe are the unintentional results of randomly occurring events?

These questions notwithstanding, the finite human mind can neither prove nor disprove the existence of a Supreme Authority, and we are obliged only by faith to trust in the existence and authority of God and His written Word. More faith is required to believe in evolutionary theory than in the sovereign and immutable Judeo-Christian God who revealed Himself to mankind in the Bible. Authenticating that God does indeed exist, the believer's obedience to His mandates adds "*muscle to his faith*" by increasing his confidence in the reality of God's existence and the significance of His Word in his life. As revealed by the divinely inspired writers of Scripture, to faithfully live the Christian way of life serves to experientially reinforce the believer's trust in the existence of God. Thus, following salvation, the foremost objective is the believer's faithful study of God's Word and its application to his life.

¹ Scriptural verses are quoted in bold font and exegetical commentary included therein is italicized. Unless otherwise noted, *The New International Version, New Scofield Study Bible*, is referenced throughout. Several verses have been changed to more literally reflect the original Hebrew or Greek languages in current English: CTL (corrected translation) and EXT (expanded translation).

God Reveals Himself

If God exists, then we must assume He is responsible for our existence. Moreover, if He created mankind and desires a relationship with us, then it is reasonable to conclude that He would reveal Himself to His creation. If not, we could neither know that God exists nor understand His divine purpose for our lives. Orthodox Protestantism asserts that the Bible is the only legitimate source of divine revelation, and this overview is founded on that assertion. Thus, we may conclude that the Bible was written to confirm His existence and explain His grace plan to and for the benefit of the human race.

God Makes Sense

Since God reveals Himself in Scripture, He must necessarily communicate in words and concepts that we can comprehend.² He is totally professional, coherent, and organized in all His thoughts and revelations (1 Cor. 14:40), which, expressed through His perfect essence, characterize all that is in the Bible. As is evident in this overview, accurate interpretation of scriptural verses from its original languages reveals the authenticity,³ completeness, and consistency of God's Word throughout all sixty-six books of the Bible:

What may be known about God is plain to believers, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been created, so that unbelievers are without excuse. (Rom. 1:19-20)

God Has a Plan

Since God reveals Himself and desires a relationship with each member of the human race, He designed a grace plan to sustain those relationships. For the spiritual believer who perseveres in his study and application to life of biblical principles, God's plan blesses and empowers his life on earth and in eternity. Only the negative response of the unbeliever to the gospel of Jesus Christ and/or the negativity of the believer toward God's Word prevents man from fulfilling God's personalized grace plan for his life.

We are the Objects of God's Plan

If God desires to reveal Himself as our Sovereign and Absolute Authority, then we are the objects of His plan and the Bible is written to and for the benefit of human beings. His personalized plan for each believer includes all that is necessary to explain and empower the Christian way of life.

² God's Word uses "*anthropopathisms*," which are human traits ascribed to Him that He does not possess in order to convey doctrines that are understandable within the human frame of reference.

³ Refer to Appendix B – Authenticity of the Bible, page 154.

We Owe God a Hearing

If the above-mentioned propositions are valid, then we owe God a hearing that requires only our concentration and objectivity. The opportunity to learn about God and His purpose for our lives is provided by this overview. Since God's grace plan functions alongside man's free will, we may choose to accept or reject the information offered herein. Apart from our concentration and objectivity, the Word of God does not require any effort from us, but unconditionally offers all that we need to know about Him. Since God has revealed Himself in the Bible as the "**mind of Christ**"⁴ (1 Cor. 2:16), only by the study and application of God's Word may the believer successfully live the Christian way of life.

SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION

From the original, divinely inspired languages, how biblical verses should be interpreted has been the source of continuing controversy throughout human history. Known theologically as the science of *hermeneutics*, two principal systems of scriptural interpretation have emerged:

Allegorical: Figurative or symbolic method of explanation that attempts to determine hidden or implied spiritual meanings of the text, while de-emphasizing its literal meaning from the original biblical languages.

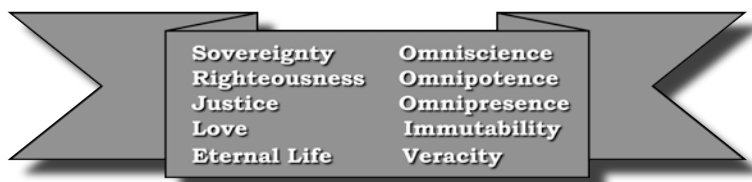
Literal: Factual, exacting, or precise interpretation of the grammatical and historical context of Scripture from the original biblical languages, avoiding allegorical explanations unless otherwise indicated by the text.

Except for relatively few scriptural verses requiring allegorical interpretation, we believe God intended His Word to be interpreted literally as inspired only by Him, not allegorically by theologians attempting to discover hidden or implied spiritual meanings. The diversity of biblical interpretation, or the multiplicity of religious denominations, has evolved primarily from futile human efforts to explain the Word of God allegorically. Why would God entrust the responsibility of interpreting His sacred doctrines to man's ability to discern hidden spiritual meanings in the form of allegories? Allegorical interpretations reflect the personality, values, priorities, and/or belief systems of the translator — human traits that can easily distort the original, God-inspired meanings, often resulting in the creation of denominational divisions within Christianity. Accordingly, avoiding the use of allegories except as required by the biblical text, the "literal-grammatical-historical" method of interpretation from the original languages⁵ is used throughout this overview.

⁴ Also referred to as Bible doctrine, God's Word, or simply Word, Scripture, or doctrine, all of which are synonyms for the written biblical version of God's divine wisdom.

⁵ Refer to pages 59, 61, 64-65, and 155 for further explanation.

Divine Attributes



God's innate essence is comprised of ten divine attributes that define His perfect character. These absolute attributes are of equal value and cooperate with each other to support and safeguard His grace relationship with the human race. Each member of the Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — possesses an identical, inalienable character.⁶ Only from knowledge of these perfect qualities of character are we able to comprehend the essence of God. Lacking this knowledge prevents the realization of our personal destinies within the grace plan of God and, thereby, the Christian way of life.

Sovereignty (*Absolute Authority*)

God's sovereignty establishes His authority, will, and purpose throughout the universe — **“the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other”** (Deut. 4:39). God controls both life and death of all that exists; and, ultimately, the exercise of His sovereign power **“will be done on earth as it is in heaven”** (Matt. 6:10):

The Lord brings death and He makes alive; He brings down to the grave and raises up. The Lord sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts. (1 Sam. 2:6-7)

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the majesty, and the splendor. For everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom. You are exalted as Head over all. (1 Chr. 29:11)

⁶ Refer to Appendix B – Divine Integrity, page 156.

Righteousness (*Absolute Standard*)

God's righteousness identifies the perfection of His intrinsic essence. With neither a beginning nor ending, God is eternally honorable and the standards of His righteousness can never be altered (Ps. 145:17). Functioning under the authority of His integrity, God established principles of human morality in Scripture that reveal His righteous standards for mankind. Since God's righteousness cannot accept anything less than His perfection, He condemns human sin and rejects human righteousness:

All of us have become unclean since our self-righteous acts [without the ministry of the Holy Spirit] are like a filthy garment to God. (Isa. 64:6, EXT)

God imputes His own perfect righteousness to believers at salvation, which establishes an eternal relationship with Him as members of His family:

For God has made Christ, Who had no sin [sinful nature], to become sin for us [imputation of all sins to Him on the cross], so that we might become [receive] the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]. (2 Cor. 5:21)

Justice (*Absolute Judge*)

God's attribute of justice represents His unalterable impartiality as required by His righteousness. By safeguarding the principles of His righteousness, God's judgments are always objective and impartial (Rom. 2:11), and never intolerant or unjust (2 Chr. 19:7):

He is the rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God Who does no wrong, upright and just is He. (Deut. 32:4)

God [Father] presented Him [Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement [payment for our sins], through faith in His [Christ's] blood. He [Father] did it to demonstrate His justice ... so as to be just and the One Who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:25-26)

There are those who believe the most egregious of their sins could not have been redeemed by Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross. They may also believe that acts of human effort will prompt God to forgive their sins or facilitate their entry into heaven. Such beliefs are blasphemous since Christ died spiritually on the cross in full payment for every past, present, and future sin committed by mankind. No one sin or any number of sins exceeds the price Jesus Christ has already paid for human sinfulness, nor is human effort capable of supplementing or improving what He accomplished on our behalf.

When a person believes by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, God graciously imputes His perfect righteousness to him (1 Cor. 1:30), and he is then justified by and becomes acceptable to God. What the righteousness of God accepts, the justice of God blesses (Eph. 1:3); what the righteousness of God rejects, the justice of God judges (Rom. 5:12). God is just when He saves the souls of those who believe in Jesus Christ and condemns to the Lake of Fire⁷ those who choose to reject His plan of salvation.

Love (*Absolute Benefactor*)

God's love is eternal and unalterable for "**God is Love**" (1 John 4:8). His perfect love is always rational, never emotional, and is inseparably united with His attributes of righteousness and justice to define His integrity. What His righteous standards require, His justice implements by means of His divine attribute of love. As the motivation for His grace, God's love is either personal or unconditional:⁸ personal love is directed toward His own righteousness, the other two members of the Trinity, and believers who are imputed with His righteousness at salvation; whereas unconditional love is directed toward the human race, including unbelievers. God's unconditional love for mankind is evidenced by His provision of an eternal relationship with Him that cannot be replaced with anything existing in creation:

For God so loved the world [*believers and unbelievers*] **that He gave His one and only** [*uniquely born*] **Son** [*Jesus Christ*] **that whosoever** [*anyone who*] **believes in Him** [*Christ*] **should not perish** [*condemned to the Lake of Fire*] **but have everlasting life** [*with Him*]. (John 3:16)

Since we are able to love only because God first loved us (1 John 4:19), we cannot truly love God or our fellow man without initially accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior:

"He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, Who sent Him. I [*Christ*] **tell you the truth, whoever hears My Word and believes Him Who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned** [*to the Lake of Fire*]." (John 5:23-24)

"I [*Christ*] **am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me.**" (John 14:6)

⁷ The Lake of Fire is the eternal residence for unbelievers, Satan, and his fallen angels wherein they live in misery and are forever alienated from God (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:12-15).

⁸ In the English and Greek, the word "*love*" is a transitive verb that requires both a subject and an object: the subject is the one who loves and the object is the one loved. Therefore, personal love places emphasis on the qualities of the object, and unconditional love (without conditions or limitations) places emphasis on the virtue and integrity of the believer (or subject) who loves. Refer also to pages 84-86.

Eternal Life (*Absolute Being*)

God has neither a beginning nor an ending since He cannot experience either birth or death. For God to be God, there never has been a time when He did not exist and there never will be a time when He does not exist. Since He created both time and space, His eternal existence necessarily transcends both. The concept of an eternally existing One is established in a dialogue between Moses and God on Mount Sinai:

Moses said to God, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel and say to them, ‘the God of your fathers has sent me to You,’ and they ask me, ‘what is His name?’ what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I AM that I AM. This is what you are to say to the children of Israel: ‘I AM has sent Me to you.’” (Exod. 3:13-14)

God identifies Himself as **“I AM that I AM,”** which is translated from the Hebrew words אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*’ehyeh’asher’ehyeh*). Though difficult to understand in English, these words depict God as the eternally existing One, which is how the Jews interpreted this phrase in the Hebrew. Jesus Christ also identified Himself with eternal existence in a debate with the Pharisees, highly legalistic Jews who constantly challenged His deity:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing My day; he saw it and was glad.” “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to Him, “and You have seen Abraham!” “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I AM!” (John 8:56-58)

In the Greek of the Bible, **“I AM”** is translated *“I am the eternally existing One,”* a phrase the Pharisees recognized as an assertion of deity. However, they did not accept Jesus Christ as their Jewish Messiah who they believed would immediately free the Israelites from Roman subjugation and establish His earthly kingdom on David’s throne in the city of Jerusalem.⁹

Christ Himself documents another example of His eternal existence in the Book of Revelation wherein He uses past, present, and future grammatical tenses to metaphorically explain the concept of eternity:

“I am the Alpha [beginning] and Omega [ending]...Who is [present tense], and Who was [past tense], and Who is to come [future tense], the Almighty.” (Rev. 1:8)

⁹ Χριστός (*Christós*), translated “Christ,” is the Greek depiction of the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (*Mashiach*), translated “Messiah,” which identifies the Jewish Redeemer from the tribe of Judah and the family of David who would ultimately liberate the Israelites from foreign subjugation.

On the night Jesus Christ was betrayed, the Jewish ruling body (Sanhedrin) conducted one of His trials. Caiaphas, the high priest, asked Jesus, “**are You the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the Blessed One?**” (Mark 14:61). Jesus responded, “**I AM**” (Mark 14:62), enraging Caiaphas who then proceeded to accuse Him of the capital crime of blasphemy. As the “**I AM**,” the Bible asserts that Jesus Christ is the only source of salvation for mankind: “**I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me**” (John 14:6).

Omniscience (*Absolute Intellect*)

Omniscience is defined as “*infinite awareness and understanding of all that is knowable.*” In His omniscience, God knows the thoughts, decisions, and actions of all human beings that have occurred or will occur throughout human history, as well as their causes, effects, and inter-relationships. In intricate and minute detail, He knows beforehand all that is knowable about human beings and offers personalized plans for their lives that only He is capable of creating. Additionally, God has always known what would have occurred had we decided differently or taken advantage of opportunities we chose not to pursue. God never adds to or modifies His omniscience since there is nothing He is not aware of or does not already know. However, God’s knowledge of all human thoughts, decisions, and actions does not interfere with man’s freedom to exercise his own volition. By divine decree, mankind is permitted by God, as was His angelic creation, to either accept or reject His grace plan.¹⁰

The ministries of God the Holy Spirit are accessible by believers to enable their comprehension of God’s omniscience that is revealed only in Scripture:

O Lord, You have searched me and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely. (Ps. 139:1-4)

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them [*sparrows*] will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Matt. 10:29-30)

If the will of God includes a divine purpose for sparrows, surely He has created a personalized plan for human beings that include the “**very hairs**” on their heads. Attention to endless detail is an attribute of God’s essence.

¹⁰ In eternity past before the creation of the human race, God established by divine decree the co-existence of man’s free will with His sovereign will throughout human history.

Omnipotence (*Absolute Power*)

Omnipotence defines an all-powerful, invincible God who exercises supreme authority over all that exists. God is capable of achieving whatsoever He desires, whenever He wishes, for whosoever He chooses. However, God restrains His unlimited power since He desires that no one should perish, and patiently waits for everyone to decide in favor of His plan of salvation:

He is patient [restraint of power] with you, not wanting anyone to perish [condemned to the Lake of Fire], but everyone to come to repentance [salvation]. (2 Pet. 3:9)

In actual fact, scientific laws formulated by human science are God's laws that science has merely discovered. Since God alone created and sustains these laws, He possesses the power to override or change them to advance His plan and policy. When He exercises His power in this manner, the Bible identifies these divine acts as miracles. As one example, God's omnipotence is confirmed in the Book of Joshua wherein He interrupted the orbital progress of planet earth around the sun for one full day:

Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. (Josh. 10:12-13)

God's omnipotence was used to benefit Israel by fixing the universe in place for twenty-four hours. Such extraordinary feats by God that defy scientific laws are difficult for some to accept as factually supportable. The essence of unlimited power, however, defines God's ability to perform miracles to accomplish whatever He pleases for His own purposes. If these miracles did not actually occur, but instead are interpreted as fables or myths, then how can we justify our belief in any other passage of Scripture? If we omit any part of Scripture, then how can we justify the inclusion of any other part?

The deity of Jesus Christ also has the innate power to perform miracles: for example, He attended a wedding feast during which He demonstrated His omnipotence by converting water to wine:

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water," so they filled them to the brim. Then He told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. (John 2:7-9)

The Third Person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit, possesses the identical attribute of omnipotence. He performed one of the most spectacular miracles when He fertilized Mary's ovum resulting in the perfect humanity of Christ. Since Mary was a virgin at His conception, Christ was not contaminated by sinful nature genes that are routinely transmitted by the human male to his offspring during procreation.¹¹ Instead, the Holy Spirit created uncorrupted male chromosomes that were united with Mary's ovum, resulting in His virgin birth. Lacking a sinful nature and the imputation of Adam's original sin, the humanity of Christ was born spiritually alive and in sinless perfection:

“How will my pregnancy be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Holy Spirit will overshadow you. So the Holy One [*Jesus Christ*] to be born will be called the Son of God ... For nothing is impossible with God. “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” (Luke 1:34-37, EXT)

Omnipresence (*Absolute Eyewitness*)

Omnipresence identifies God's ubiquitous presence within the universe; He is present in all locations at all times, observing instantly and simultaneously all events as they occur. He has forever existed as the omnipresent eyewitness to all incidences and occurrences within His universe. He has always known all that is knowable; and all that is knowable He personally observes:

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account. (Heb. 4:13)

Note that omnipresence is not a form of pantheism, which rejects the personality of God and defines Him as another impersonal force within the material universe, physically present in all things.

Immutability (*Absolute Stabilizer*)

Immutability is defined by unalterable perfection: **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”** (Heb. 13:8), which is an intrinsic attribute possessed by all members of the Trinity. God's immutability provides the assurance His other attributes of essence can never be altered or compromised. Sustained by His omnipotence (Heb. 4:12), God's Word is the eternal, enduring truth of the universe. In harmony with His integrity, God's immutability cannot be superseded by His omnipotence.

¹¹ Refer to chapter 5, Fall of Man, page 24.

God upholds and protects those who remain faithful to Him, which in turn increases the believer's faith and confidence in Him. He honors His Word and always keeps His promises. Empowered by God the Holy Spirit, the believer's knowledge and application of God's immutable Word provides constancy in his life. Whereas man is changeable, untrustworthy, unfaithful, and vulnerable to the temptations of his sinful nature, God is immutable, trustworthy, faithful, and the embodiment of absolute perfection:

In the beginning, O Lord, You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They [heavens and earth] will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end.
(Heb. 1:10-12)

Veracity (*Absolute Counselor*)

Veracity expresses God's absolute truth or impeccable truthfulness. As God, He is never unreliable, mistaken, deceitful, or dishonest. Therefore, the Bible represents God's absolute truth as revealed to the human race. Since His essence cannot change (*immutable*) and is perfect truthfulness (*veracious*), His Word (Truth) is forever faithful (*righteous*):

For the Word of the Lord is right and true; He is faithful in all He does. (Ps. 33:4)

If you continue in [to study and apply] My [Christ's] Word, then you are truly My followers. And you shall know the truth [of the Word] and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)

During the night prior to His crucifixion, Jesus Christ offered an intercessory prayer to God the Father in support of all who believed in Him:

"My prayer is that You protect them [believers] from the evil one [Satan]. They are not of the [devil's] world, even as I [Christ] am not of it. Sanctify [set apart] them by the truth; Your Word is truth ... For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."
(John 17:15-19)

Since to sanctify means to be set apart for a special purpose, believers are sanctified first by the gospel of Jesus Christ and secondly by God's truth as their souls are steadily renovated to understand, assimilate, and employ the absolute truths of His Word. In so doing, the believer glorifies Jesus Christ and magnifies His Word as he progresses toward spiritual maturity.

Biblical Validation

Consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Christian Trinity (or triune Godhead) is the union of three distinct personalities or persons with identical intrinsic essence. Although only one God exists, He reveals Himself in Scripture as either the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, each possessing the same attributes of divine essence. These ten attributes, or intrinsic qualities, are co-equal, co-infinite, co-eternal, and cannot be altered or separated from the eternal oneness of His divine essence. No member of the triune Godhead possesses more or less of these attributes than the other members.

The Bible assigns to each member of the Trinity a unique role in the plan of God: the **Father** is the divine author of the plan; the **Son** is the visible member of the Godhead who implements and fulfills the plan; and the **Holy Spirit** teaches and empowers the plan in the lives of believers. These separate roles in God's plan do not diminish the equality of deity among the members of the Godhead nor act in opposition to one another.

Therefore, the monotheistic belief in “**One God**” reveals the concept of the Trinity as authenticated throughout the Bible:

There is no God but one. (1 Cor. 8:4)

For us there is but one God, the Father, from Whom all things came and for Whom we live. (1 Cor. 8:6)

One God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:6)

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:5)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor. 13:14)

The Trinity is also revealed in the Old Testament by the Hebrew word for God, אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*) (Gen. 1:1), whereby the plural suffix “*im*” refers to more than one person. A subsequent verse also identifies the plurality of the Trinity by including plural pronouns (“**Us**” and “**Our**”): “**Then God said, ‘let Us make man in Our image, and in Our likeness’**” (Gen. 1:26). Thus, the concept of a Godhead consisting of plural personalities is documented in the very first chapter of the Bible.

In the New Testament, the reality of the Trinity is referenced in the baptismal ritual of Jesus Christ:

As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the [Holy] Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven [God the Father] said, “This is my Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:16-17)

The above two verses provide definitive evidence of the existence of the triune Godhead since all three members are portrayed as acting in concert to identify Christ as the God-Man about to embark on His earthly ministry.

Godhead Analogies

The application of the “one-in-three and three-in-one” epigram may assist in the understanding of the triune God. For example, the Godhead consists of one essence in three personalities (“one-in-three”) and three personalities in one essence (“three-in-one”). Mathematics also may be used: $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ identifies their oneness of essence; and $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ correlates with their three distinct persons or personalities.

Simply by observing the natural world, the “one-in-three and three-in-one” epigram may be inferred. For instance, time is one constituent of God’s universe consisting of three tenses: past, present, and future. The Bible states that God the Father is not humanly visible — He may be compared to the future that is also unseen. God the Son is the only visible personality of the Godhead — He may be considered illustrative of the present. God the Holy Spirit teaches truth from past biblical events — He may be correlated with the past. These comparisons demonstrate that time is related to the oneness of divine essence but is distinguished by three grammatical tenses that illustrate the three personalities of the triune Godhead.

Another biblical analogy may be related to the spectrum of light. Located near the middle of this spectrum is a narrow band of frequencies that can be seen and felt by human beings. Positioned to one side of this visible light are the invisible short wavelengths (or higher frequencies) and, to the other side, the invisible long wavelengths (or lower frequencies). The short wavelengths are identified as ultraviolet, which cannot be seen or felt. The long wavelengths, also known as infrared, cannot be seen but may be felt. By analogy, these frequencies correspond to the three personalities of the Trinity: ultraviolet light represents the Father who is neither seen nor felt; visible light represents the Son who is both seen and felt; and infrared light represents the Holy Spirit who is unseen but is felt.

The three-dimensional triad of space — length, width, and depth — further illustrates the triune Godhead. If everything were one-dimensional, nothing would be visible; therefore, a second dimension must be evident for the first dimension to be seen. By analogy, God the Father is not visible to mankind except as revealed by His visible Son, the God-Man Savior:

No one has ever seen God the Father. (1 John 4:12)

“Anyone who has seen Me [*Jesus Christ*] has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me?” (John 14:9-10)

Since length (*Father*) is invisible without width (*Son*), space also requires a dimension of depth (*Holy Spirit*) to differentiate three-dimensional reality. Therefore, again by analogy, God the Holy Spirit provides the depth of knowledge required to understand, appreciate, and experience the reality of the three personalities of the Godhead.

Language of Accommodation

Desiring to communicate with the human race, God inspired the biblical authors to write in a “*language of accommodation*” by which His infinite thought was translated into language understandable by the finite minds of men. As a result, human thoughts, emotions, and sins not possessed by God are attributed to Him in Scripture to accommodate our human intellect and frame of reference. An example of this language is found in the Book of Genesis: **“The Lord was sorry that He had made man on earth, and He was grieved in His heart”** (Gen. 6:6, NASB).

The use of the words “**sorry**” and “**grieved**” serve to accommodate our frame of reference by expressing in human terms God’s disappointment with man’s failure to abide by His righteous standards. God’s essence never undergoes a change of mind or expresses regret with regard to His creation. However, since man had become totally absorbed in sinfulness, God altered His policy toward man from blessing to discipline (Gen. 6:7). Consequently, using words of accommodation, God’s perfect righteousness as executed by His justice changed divine policy toward mankind consistent with changes in human behavior.

Another scriptural use of the language of accommodation attributes human anatomy to God: **“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil”** (1 Pet. 3:12). As they pray, righteous believers are both observed with His eyes and heard by His ears — that is, the Lord is attentive

to the prayers of the positive believer.¹² For the negative believer, however, the Lord's face reflects displeasure, a human-like reaction associated with man's non-compliance with His divine standards.

The grace plan of God is designed for the benefit of the human race, and each member of the Trinity is assigned a specific responsibility to fulfill in that plan. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are words of accommodation that are used biblically to define those responsibilities:

Father: Defines His responsibility as the person who authored the grace plan of salvation and eternal life for the human race.

Son: Identifies the visible member of the Trinity who agreed to implement the Father's plan by His sacrifice on behalf of mankind.

Holy Spirit: Reveals the member of the Godhead responsible for explaining and empowering the Father's plan for the believer.

God the Father

Numerous verses in Scripture refer to the First Person of the Trinity as "Father." For example, He is called the Father of Jesus Christ in chapter 1, verse 3 of 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Peter, 1 John, and 2 John. Additionally, He is said to be the Father of all believers: "**You are all sons of God [the Father] through faith in Christ Jesus**" (Gal. 3:26).

God the Father is the supreme Sovereign of the universe who planned the subsistence of all that exists; and, in His grace, authored the redemptive salvation plan for the entire human race:

One God and Father of all believers, Who is over all [sovereign] and through all [omnipresent] and in all [indwelling of believers]. (Eph. 4:6)

For God loved the world so much, that He gave His uniquely born Son [Christ], that anyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not judged, but he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the person of the unique Son of God. (John 3:16-18, CTL)

In His omniscience, God the Father anticipated the sinfulness of His fallen human creation by conceiving a salvation plan available to the entire human race. In His omnipotence, He fulfilled His plan based on the redemptive, substitutionary work of His Son on the cross on behalf of a sinful mankind.

¹² A positive believer is one who is dedicated to living the Christian way of life as evidenced by the study, recall, and utilization of Bible doctrine in his daily life.

As a result, the Father's grace plan not only liberates man from the bondage of his sinfulness, but affords him access to the ministries of the Third Person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit, which empower the believer to learn and apply God's plan in his life. Only the negative response of the unbeliever toward the gospel message of salvation and of the believer toward the Truth of the Word of God prevents man from fulfilling his personal destiny as a member of God's eternal family.

God the Son

As the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ agreed to implement the Father's grace plan of salvation for the benefit of a sinful human race. Since God's perfect righteousness cannot permit a relationship with the imperfect essence of man, an impartial mediator capable of representing both parties was required to intercede on behalf of both God and man. As undiminished deity (*God*) and true humanity (*man*) inseparably united in one person forever, only Christ Jesus is qualified to serve as the mediator: **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"** (1 Tim. 2:5).

In His humanity, had Jesus Christ committed even one sin during His earthly existence, He would not have been qualified to become our mediator; in fact, He would have required a mediator for Himself (Jas. 2:10). As our mediator, Jesus Christ must also be God, not merely an agent or representative of the Father (John 1:1,14).

In His role as the prophesied Savior, Jesus Christ willingly deprived Himself of His attributes of deity and became mankind's substitutionary sacrifice on Calvary's cross as the punishment mandated by God the Father for all past, present, and future sins of the human race. Since He was undiminished deity and true humanity in one person, His spiritual death on the cross was acceptable to God as the penalty to be paid for the sins of mankind:

In the beginning was the Word [*Christ*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He [*Christ*] was with God in the beginning. The Word became flesh [*human*] and made His dwelling among us [*Incarnation*]¹³.
(John 1:1-2,14)

God made Him [*Christ*] Who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might receive the righteousness of [*be reconciled to*] God. (2 Cor. 5:21)

We [*Apostles*] have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. (1 John 4:14)

¹³ Refer to Dispensational History, Incarnation, page 78.

The undiminished attributes of deity indivisibly combined with the essence of true humanity in one person forever is known as the ***Hypostatic Union***,¹⁴ which identifies Jesus Christ as the unique person of the universe — He is different from God since He is also man, and different from man since He is also God:

In the person of Jesus Christ are two natures, inseparably united, without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union between two natures being both personal and eternal.

In His humanity, Christ could have sinned but by use of His positive volition toward God, He was able not to sin (Matt. 4:1-11). Hence the Latin maxim: *Posse non peccare, non posse peccare*; He was “able *not* to sin and not *able* to sin.”¹⁵ Since Jesus Christ willingly submitted to God’s salvation plan, the language of accommodation is used to identify Him as the Son of God who, in His humanity, is always obedient to His Father:

Who [Christ], being in the essence of God [deity], did not consider equality with God something to be maintained [as only deity], but emptied Himself,¹⁶ taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself [submission to God’s salvation plan] and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:6-8)

Only one Savior exists throughout history, whereby an eternal relationship with the Godhead is assured by faith alone in Christ alone — **“Let us fix our eyes [focus our faith] on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him [willingly] endured the cross”** (Heb. 12:2) — with the result believers are provided the potential opportunity to share in the happiness of God.

However, as often occurs after their salvation, too many believers are ignorant of God and His absolute Word and suffer the adverse consequences of personal, and potentially national, suffering and discipline.¹⁷ Having been saved but without doctrine learned and applied, the negative believer cannot take advantage of the divine blessings that are credited only to those who persevere in their knowledge and application of God’s Word to life and circumstances.

¹⁴ Hypostatic Union is derived from the Greek for “*essence*” — Jesus Christ is “**the exact image of [God’s] divine essence [hupostasis]**” (Heb. 1:3).

¹⁵ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God* (4th ed.), (R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries, 2005), 88.

¹⁶ Refers to the concept of *κένωσις* (*kénōsis*), whereby Jesus Christ voluntarily deprived Himself of the independent use of His attributes of deity during His earthly existence.

¹⁷ Refer to page 79 (footnote #71) and Appendix B — *Cycles of Civilization*, page 162.

God the Holy Spirit

In the Father's plan, the Holy Spirit functions as the believer's Counselor or Teacher of divine thought:

“If you love Me [*Christ*], you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Holy Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17)

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My [*Christ's*] name, will teach you all things and will bring to your remembrance everything I have taught you.” (John 14:26)

These verses are prophetic since Jesus Christ reveals the imminent arrival on earth of the ministries of God the Holy Spirit occurring ten days following Christ's ascension into heaven. The ministries of the Holy Spirit (*indwelling, filling, teaching, and recall*) provide the believer with the requisite divine resources to learn, appreciate, and apply the Word of God. Furthermore, God the Holy Spirit assures the accuracy of Scripture as literally interpreted from the original languages (2 Pet. 1:20-21) and enables the believer, limited by his finite mind, to comprehend the infinite wisdom of God for application in his life (1 Cor. 2:6-14).

The Holy Spirit also empowers the God-conscious unbeliever to understand the gospel message of Jesus Christ (John 16:7-11). Should the unbeliever respond positively to the gospel, the Holy Spirit transforms his faith-based belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior into an eternal relationship with the triune Godhead:

For it is by [*God's*] grace you have been saved, through faith [*in Jesus Christ*] — and this [*salvation*] not from yourselves, it is the [*irrevocable*] gift of God — not by works [*human effort*], so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)

The triune Godhead is revealed in the following verse, each possessing a separate personality even as all three share an identical divine essence. As the Counselor, the Holy Spirit reveals the plan of God to believers, and serves as the unseen power of God who teaches and makes possible the Christian way of life for the positive believer:

“When the Counselor comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth Who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me [*Christ*].” (John 15:26)

Introduction

The plan of God reveals His provision of salvation for unbelieving man (**Phase One**), His purpose for the believer following salvation (**Phase Two**), and the unsurpassed eternal life that follows physical death (**Phase Three**). This predestined plan was conceived in eternity past by the Father, executed by Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit for the exclusive benefit of believing mankind. In order to obtain optimal advantage from God's grace plan, the believer is challenged to learn and apply biblical truth as the qualification for his advance toward life's objective of spiritual maturity.

Salvation

Scripture asserts that salvation is possible only by God's grace through faith in Christ — **"it is by grace you are saved by means of faith"** (Eph. 2:8). Evidenced by the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, **"grace"** identifies God's offer of an irrevocable gift and **"faith"** is the means by which the believer is saved. Therefore, man is saved by his affirmative response to God's grace gift of salvation by means of faith alone in Jesus Christ alone as his personal Savior.

Salvation is the initial phase of God's plan for the human race by which we are reconciled to God and become the beneficiaries of an eternal relationship with Him. In His humanity, Christ was judged by the Father and endured spiritual death on the cross as punishment for all of mankind's past, present, and future sins. Resulting from the believer's belief in Christ as his personal Savior, God's grace reconciles by imputation man's sinfulness to His perfect righteousness, offers him the gift of eternal life in fellowship with Him, and transforms him into a new spiritual species as a member of His family:

God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died as a substitute for us. (Rom. 5:8, CTL)...Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

Using a human analogy, the following portrayal illustrates the voluntary nature of Christ's sacrifice on the cross on behalf of mankind:

Imagine a court of law wherein a man is being tried for serious crimes. Neither the man nor his attorney is successful in absolving him from his crimes — a guilty sentence of death is certain. On the day of the jury verdict, a stranger enters the courtroom and offers to substitute himself for the man's guilt and suffer the penalty of death in his place.¹⁸

Similarly, Christ willingly offered Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for mankind's past, present, and future sins throughout human history, thereby activating God the Father's grace plan of salvation. Numerous passages in Scripture explicitly identify Jesus Christ as the only legitimate focus of faith for our eternal salvation, among which are:

Salvation is found in no one else [only Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son [Christ], that whoever believes in Him shall not perish [condemned to the Lake of Fire] but have eternal life [or eternal security]. (John 3:16)

Eternal security is explained in Scripture by a historical analogy. Since sheep lacked the necessary instincts to find their own necessities of food and water and were powerless to defend themselves from predators, shepherds were employed to ensure their continued survival. By analogy, believers are compared to sheep, requiring Jesus Christ as their Shepherd. He provides for their spiritual sustenance and protection and feeds them when they are hungry for Bible doctrine. Just as a shepherd is personally familiar with his own flock of sheep, so Jesus Christ knows each of His believers to whom He imparts eternal security that can never be changed or revoked:

My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)

Believer in Time

The interval of time between salvation and physical death is *Phase Two* of God's plan for believers. At salvation we become members of His eternal family wherein we are mandated to **"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"** (2 Pet. 3:18). Consisting of Bible

¹⁸ Thieme, *A Matter of Life and Death*, 1-2.

study as empowered by the ministries of the Holy Spirit, God commands our reliance on His system of learning¹⁹ to enable our spiritual advance in His plan. Progress is measured by our increased knowledge of and occupation with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Positive interest and concentration in each successive Bible class enhances the believer's ability to understand the absolute value of biblical concepts inspired by God, which contributes the capacity and momentum for sustained spiritual growth in his life.

The believer is not capable of growing spiritually without first applying what he has learned, and he obviously cannot apply what he has not yet learned. In order to become “**approved unto God**,” we must conscientiously and shamelessly dedicate ourselves to the study of His divine truth:

Study [the Word of God] to show thyself approved unto God, a workman [worker in God's Word] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [accurately understanding] the Word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV)

Without partiality or preferential treatment, God welcomes any member of the human race into His grace plan who believes in Christ for salvation, and He will bless those who utilize His Word in their daily lives:

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism [or partiality] but accepts [welcomes] men from every nation who fear [respect] Him and do what is right [put into practice the plan of God].” (Acts 10:34-35)

Believer in Eternity

Eternity is the exciting and motivational *Phase Three* in the believer's life. The inevitability of physical death does not create anxiety in the believer who fully understands the divine concept of eternal life. New believers should learn that once saved, they immediately receive God's irrevocable grace gift of eternal life in fellowship with Jesus Christ. The Bible is written so that we might believe Jesus is the Christ, the uniquely born Son of God, and by believing in Him we have eternal life (John 20:31). The Eternal State is described in the Book of Revelation:

The [eternal] dwelling of God is with men [believers] ... He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [including the sinful nature] has passed away [been abolished]. (Rev. 21:3-4)

¹⁹ Refer to chapter 13, Divine System of Learning, page 66.

God creates in the new believer a human spirit (1 Cor. 2:12) to which eternal life is imputed and with which the Holy Spirit enables his comprehension of the Word of God. Hence, the believer in Jesus Christ consists of a body, soul, and human spirit (*trichotomous*) as differentiated from the unbeliever who consists only of a body and soul (*dichotomous*). At physical death, the soul and human spirit of the believer depart his body and are immediately transferred to heaven where he receives an interim body that is ultimately transformed into a new resurrection body at the Rapture of the Church.²⁰ Liberated from the imputation of Adam's original sin and the inherited sinful nature, the believer enjoys freedom from the unopposed control of his former sinful state by satanic influences:

**We live [the Christian way of life] by faith, not by sight.
We are confident ... and would prefer to be away from
the body [physical death] and at home [face-to-face in
interim body] with the Lord [Christ].** (2 Cor. 5:7-8)

The Greek for “**home**” is translated, “*to be among one's people, in his own place, and in his own land;*” or, as stated in the Book of 2 Corinthians, “**absent from the body, face-to-face with the Lord**” (2 Cor. 5:8, CTL). The phrase “*face-to-face,*” translated from the Greek πρὸς (*prós*), describes the intimacy of the believer's eternal relationship with the Lord.

Thus, there are two kinds of life for the believer in Jesus Christ: physical life on earth that terminates with physical death (*Phase Two*) and soul life that continues throughout eternity in the presence of God (*Phase Three*). Should the Rapture occur while Church Age believers²¹ are physically alive, they do not receive an interim body but rather a resurrection body not unlike that of the resurrected Christ. With the expectation of an eternal relationship with Him that surpasses all human comprehension, the Apostle Paul writes:

So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The [physical] body that is sown [born with] is perishable [contaminated by the sinful nature from Adam], it is raised [resurrected] imperishable [freed from control by the sinful nature]; it is sown in dishonor [disobedience], it is raised in glory [to Christ]; it is sown in weakness [corruption], it is raised in power; it is sown a natural [physical] body, it is raised a spiritual [resurrected] body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Cor. 15:42-44)

²⁰ Refer to chapter 14, Dispensational History, pages 92-93.

²¹ Refers to believers living during the Dispensation of the Church (chapter 14), which identifies the present-day period of human history.

Introduction

Since man is innately powerless to comply with God's righteous standards, we must conclude we are unacceptable to Him in our fallen condition. Why are we unacceptable? How can we become acceptable? The answer to the first question is found in the Book of Romans:

All [human beings] have sinned [inborn sinful nature and imputation of Adam's original sin] and fall short of the glory [perfect righteousness] of God. (Rom. 3:23)

The impeccability of God cannot sustain a relationship with the imperfection of man. As a result, God in His grace provided the answer to the second question by creating a salvation plan for the benefit of mankind:

He [Jesus Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins [that reconciled man to God], and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

While Jesus Christ was dying spiritually on the cross, all of the personal sins of mankind were imputed to Him and judged by God the Father. Therefore, the reconciliation of man to God at the moment of salvation must be divinely approved in every case through personal faith alone in Christ alone.

Original Sin

Personal sin is a volitional act of disobedience to biblical mandates. The first instance of personal sin, recorded in the Book of Genesis, genetically corrupted the essence of Adam and Ishah²² and, consequently, all of their succeeding progeny. This corruption of human essence is referred to as "*The Fall of Man*."

And the Lord God commanded the man, "you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat thereof, dying you will surely die."
(Gen. 2:16-17, CTL)

Adam was given one lone mandate from God along with the punishment for disobedience: Do not eat from a certain tree in the Garden of Eden, or else "**dying [spiritually] you will surely die [physically]**." If Adam chose

²² Hebrew name for the woman created from Adam. Following her original sin, she would later become known as Eve ("mother of all living").

to eat the fruit from this tree, he would suffer two deaths: spiritual death followed eventually by physical death. Since our original parents disobeyed God's mandate, they suffered both spiritual and physical death. The historic and lasting effect of Adam's disobedience was the genetic transmission by procreation of his corrupted sinful nature, along with God's imputation of Adam's original sin, to all of his descendants throughout human history:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and [spiritual] death through sin, and in this way death came to all men. (Rom. 5:12) ... For as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many [human race] were made sinners. (Rom. 5:19)

The Book of Genesis reveals the tactics used by Satan to persuade Ishah to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden:

Now the serpent [indwelt by Satan] was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God [Christ] had made. The serpent said to the woman, "Did God [referring to divine essence only] really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God [divine essence only] did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it [not commanded by God], or you will die [physically].'" "You will not surely die [physically]," the serpent said to the woman." (Gen. 3:1-4)

As previously noted, however, God did not prohibit eating from all the trees in the Garden of Eden, only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; nor did He prohibit the woman from touching the fruit. Due to her spiritual ignorance, the woman was susceptible to satanic tactics intended to confuse and corrupt her thinking. In her dialogue with Satan, the woman emphasized physical rather than spiritual death and did not allow for the cause-and-effect relationship between the two deaths. Also, Satan's use of the word "**God [Elohim]**" deceptively refers only to His essence of deity, which identified his recurring strategy to identify God the Father while ignoring God the Son, Jesus Christ. This strategy has been evident throughout history by the concept of deism, which recognizes a Supreme Being while rejecting the Son of God, Jesus Christ, as mankind's prophesied Lord, Savior, and Intercessor before the Father. As the original ancestors of a fallen humanity, our first parents committed the first sins of the human race, a singular, momentous event in human history that corrupted human essence and activated the substitutionary role of Christ in the salvation plan of God.

To encourage the woman's disobedience to God, Satan masqueraded as her trusted serpent to persuade her that God unfairly restricted her in the Garden. By taking advantage of man's tendency to believe he is treated unfairly, Satan employs human agents to convey his deception, always with the intent of promoting his rulership of the world in opposition to God's plan for mankind:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ ... for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:13-14)

Sinful Nature

The sinful nature may be described as an impenetrable barrier that prevents any relationship between imperfect man and perfect God. Only by God's grace — namely, only by the substitutionary, sacrificial death of Christ on the cross — may this obstruction be eliminated. Once the barrier is removed at salvation, man's volition "guards the door" to his soul and chooses whether to resist or accept the temptations advocated by his sinful nature. Therefore, man's innate sinful nature is the source of temptation, whereas his volition is the source of sin: the believer is unable to sin unless first convinced to do so by his volition. When we consent to satanically inspired temptation, God's will is resisted, God's Word is rejected, the Christian way of life is forsaken, and we become indistinguishable from the unbeliever:

Fellow believers, I [Paul] could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. (1 Cor. 3:1-2)

Apart from the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we are hopeless and helpless to control our sinfulness — hopeless since we are spiritually separated from God and helpless because we are powerless to reinstate our relationship with Him. Accepting Jesus Christ as Savior transforms us into a new spiritual species as children of God's eternal family:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ [a believer], he is a new spiritual species [child of God]; the old things [sinful nature] have lost their [unopposed] power; behold, all things have become new. All this [divine assets] is from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through [the spiritual sacrifice of] Christ. (2 Cor. 5:17-18)

Although the believer continues to commit sin, the sinful nature has lost its unopposed power within the soul. Freely serving as our sacrificial substitute, Christ paid the penalty for all our sins and removed the barrier between God and mankind, thereby enabling our eternal relationship with the Godhead.

Relationship or Religion

At this point, we must assert that Christianity is neither a religion nor belief system based on human thought or effort that man self-righteously believes can contribute to or improve upon God's plan for the human race. Rather, it is a personal relationship between God and individual man made possible by His grace gift of salvation that sanctions the imputation of His own perfect righteousness to new believers:

Christianity is defined by God's grace plan for the believer resulting from the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross on behalf of all past, present, and future sins of mankind.

Once saved, God imputes His righteousness to the new believer (Rom. 3:22), and God the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to restrain his own inherited imperfection by the use of God's Word. Therefore, if the believer persists in learning and utilizing God's Word, he is divinely empowered to live the Christian way of life. Accordingly, Christian service or the performance of good deeds becomes the result, not the means, of the believer's spiritual growth: **"Bearing fruit in every good work [divine good], [as a result of] growing in the knowledge of God's Word"** (Col. 1:10).

Conversely, religion advocates self-righteous attempts by man to earn or protect his salvation or gain the approbation of God by various acts of human effort. Rather than orienting and adjusting to God's plan by accepting His Son's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross as all that is needed for salvation, religion too often promotes works-oriented, human intervention into God's grace plan. Whether for salvation or God's approval, acts of human virtue are scripturally depicted as **"filthy rags"** to God (Isa. 64:6):

For it is by [God's] grace you have been saved, through [by means of] faith [in Christ] — and this [salvation] not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works [human effort], so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)

Since God's righteousness cannot accept less than His own perfection, He rejects the imperfection of human righteousness (Titus 3:5). Only mankind's compliance with God's perfect righteousness is compatible with His grace. Religion, conversely, is Satan's "ace trump" that is utilized by him and his

human emissaries to misrepresent the distinction between what God in His grace has accomplished for man and what man arrogantly assumes he can contribute to or improve upon God's perfect plan:

Emotionalism and empty ritualism dominate many churches. Mysticism supplants objective knowledge of Bible doctrine. Good deeds are touted as an approach to God. Morality is distorted into legalistic asceticism and is preached as a substitute for Christian virtue. Christian service is enforced through guilt, fear, penance, doubt concerning one's eternal status, or false hope of divine blessings. Political activism precludes divine viewpoint thinking. And there are endless schemes to raise money.²³

Therefore, our relationship with God is correctly defined as trusting in the inerrancy of His written Word as literally, grammatically, and historically interpreted from the original manuscripts. The variety of religions existing today attests to man's futile efforts to define his relationship with God by relying upon scriptural interpretations that are acceptable to him. However, what should be obvious to the doctrinal believer is the fact that imperfect man is inherently incapable of improving upon the infinitely superior will and purpose of God's grace plan for the human race.

Motivated by human need and weakness, certain belief systems have been established in a futile attempt to facilitate man's entry into heaven, provide deliverance from sin, and/or gain access to an eternal relationship with God through human righteousness and effort. Such confusion defines the term "religion" — namely, man by his own efforts striving to attain the approval of God. Accordingly, both the believer and unbeliever must be prepared to distinguish between false and true gospels of God's grace plan of salvation.

False Gospels

Certain religions under the banner of Christianity require demonstrations of human effort to supplement their belief in Christ for salvation. They assert that it is not sufficient to simply believe in Jesus Christ for our eternal salvation; rather, we must actively participate in the process of being saved in order to authenticate or complete the salvation process. These distorted systems devalue the person and work of Christ by obscuring the distinction between what He has already accomplished for our salvation and the extra salvific actions man assumes he can do for Him. Despite the absence of scriptural verification, false gospels thrive today because man in his self-

²³ Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History* (2nd ed.), 140.

righteous arrogance sincerely believes he can and should contribute to his own salvation, examples of which include:

Verbalization: Belief in Jesus Christ as Savior is supplemented by the verbalization or confession of personal sins, often resulting in public expressions of regret or declarations of guilt.

Commitment: In order to be saved, salvation must include a personal commitment to modify one's behavior, frequently related to increased church attendance or service; discontinuance of immoral thoughts and actions; and/or the acceptance of behavioral traits usually attributed to Christians. However, God accepts the believer without any previous or concurrent pledge to modify his behavior. Once saved, if we remain positive to His written Word, then we will be encouraged to adopt those thoughts and actions that distinguish the Christian way of life.

Both verbalization of sins and commitment to change one's behavior are falsely justified by the misinterpretation of the word "*repent*," which in the English means to change one's mind in association with remorse or regret. However, the Greek word for repent, μετανοέω (*metanoéō*), simply expresses a change of mind concerning the perception of Christ as Savior, and does not require the expression of personal regret, guilt, or the discontinuance of certain habits.

Lordship: Salvation is defined by the epigram: "*If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.*" The phrase "*not Lord of all*" implies that we are not saved if Christ is not Lord in every aspect of our lives. For salvation, however, the new believer needs only to acknowledge the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Once saved, knowledge of His Lordship is acquired as a result of persistent Bible study and spiritual growth by which the believer becomes increasingly familiar in all phases of his life with the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Ritual: Certain ceremonies or rituals must accompany salvation in order to authenticate one's belief in Christ as Savior. Circumcision, water baptism, and the Eucharist ("*Lord's Table*"²⁴) under the guise of transubstantiation²⁵ are rituals commonly regarded as obligatory. Following Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, however, rituals are no longer mandated for salvation.²⁶ Although water baptism ritual is an optional,

²⁴ The Eucharist represents the remembrance and celebration of the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ consisting of the eating of unleavened bread, symbolizing the sinless perfection of His humanity, and the drinking of unfermented grape juice, symbolizing His substitutionary sacrifice in payment for all past, present, and future sins of mankind (1 Cor. 11:23-32).

²⁵ "A false doctrine claiming the bread and cup in Communion are supernaturally transformed into the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ" (Thieme, *The Anglican Conflict*, 94).

²⁶ Refer to chapter 15, Mystery Doctrines, page 99.

acceptable Christian practice when used to testify to one's acceptance of Christ as Savior, the Eucharist ceremony is the only ritual mandated for Church Age believers.

Morality: Ethical behavior is required for salvation — specifically, all immoral thoughts or actions must be discontinued. Therefore, salvation cannot be accomplished unless man's behavior is somehow judged to be sufficiently moral. Innately, however, man's imperfect essence is not capable of ever fulfilling God's impeccable standards; only faith alone in Christ alone enables God to accept the believer despite his limitations. Since ethical behavior is mandated for both believers and unbelievers, personal morality is not required for salvation (Rom. 3:20). God justifies new believers only by their faith in Jesus as the Christ (Rom. 5:1).

Emotion: Some form of emotionalism must accompany one's belief in Jesus Christ, whether "speaking in tongues"²⁷ or otherwise including overt emotion in the salvation process. Although the new believer may be grateful upon learning that his pre-salvation sins, including the most egregious, have been forgiven and forgotten by God, Scripture does not identify any emotional expression as a precondition or requirement for salvation. Simply accepting Christ as our Savior liberates us from the unopposed satanic control of our sinful nature.

Church Membership: Salvation requires membership in a certain church, whereby, as a member of this church, we are then judged to be a believer in Jesus Christ. If this claim were true, then Old Testament believers could not have been saved since the universal Christian church did not exist until after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Psychological Works: Falsely correlates faith in Jesus Christ with the raising of hands, engaging in public declarations of faith or guilt, walking the aisles, or weeping at the altar.

Reverse Invitation: Requires we invite Christ into our heart and/or life in order to be saved. However, the act of inviting is an expression of human effort that devalues the person and completed work of Christ on the cross. In addition, it is supreme arrogance and confusion for anyone to invite Christ into his heart, which the Bible describes as "**deceitful above all things**" and "**desperately wicked**" (Jer. 17:9 KJV). This is tantamount to inviting Christ into a tomb.²⁸ Without invitation, Jesus Christ enters the lives of all believers who simply believe in Him.

²⁷ Temporary ability to speak in foreign languages during the precanon years of the Church Age, after which it ceased to exist. Refer to chapter 14, Dispensational History, page 92.

²⁸ Unbelievers are described in Matt. 23:27 as whitewashed tombs on the outside (self-righteous arrogance), but full of dead men's bones on the inside (full of hypocrisy).

Too often in religious practice, the gospel of salvation communicated to unbelievers fails to correlate man's reconciliation to God and the resultant deliverance from the Lake of Fire (*purpose of salvation*) with His grace gift of eternal life (*result of salvation*). Therefore, man is falsely counseled to literally earn his immortality through various forms of human effort. Both the purpose and result of salvation must be included in the gospel message of Christ to accurately reflect God's will and purpose for mankind. Otherwise, the essential importance of God's grace plan is diminished, and acts of human, rather than divine, righteousness for salvation are encouraged.

True Gospel

In the Greek of the New Testament, the use of one word clarifies the believer's acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior: the noun πίστις (*pístis*), translated into English as "*faith*," and its verb πιστεύω (*pisteúō*), translated as "*believe*." We have previously learned that the act of believing is virtuous only if the object of our belief is meritorious. When we say, "*I believe in Jesus Christ*," our belief has virtue because the object of our faith (Christ) has merit. As the virtuous object of our faith, Jesus Christ voluntarily agreed to die spiritually on the cross in full payment of the sins of mankind, thereby affording believers the unique opportunity of an eternal relationship with God. Since mankind is innately incapable of supplementing or improving upon Christ's redemptive sacrifice, *faith alone in Christ alone is the only true gospel message*.

Numerous passages in God's Word clearly state we are eternally saved not by human effort, but by simply believing in Jesus Christ as the uniquely born Savior, an act of faith "**as small as a mustard seed**" (Matt. 17:20). "*Faith*" and "*believe*" are the only words revealed in Scripture for one's salvation, indicating that faith alone in Christ alone, devoid of human effort (Eph. 2:9), is all God predestined for the salvation and eternal security of the soul:

For God so loved the world that He gave His uniquely born Son [Christ] that whosoever believes in Him should not perish [condemned to the Lake of Fire] but have everlasting life [with Him]. (John 3:15-16)

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who rejects the Son shall not see [eternal] life, but the wrath of God abides on him [sentenced to the Lake of Fire]. (John 3:36)

Yet to all who received Him [Christ], to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12-13)

Introduction

At salvation the believer acquires a human spirit used by the Holy Spirit to teach him the plan of God and empower him to live the Christian way of life. For God the Holy Spirit to teach and empower, the believer must first be in fellowship with Him, freed from satanic control of his sinful nature. The believer is spiritual only when his soul is occupied by and under the control of the Holy Spirit: that is, an inner state of stability and tranquility resulting from the confession of personal sins, directly and privately, to the Father.

Soul Conflict

Two opposing authorities, God the Holy Spirit and the sinful nature, are engaged in an ongoing power struggle for the control of the human soul. When we are in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (*state of spirituality*), He occupies our soul and controls our thoughts, decisions, and actions. When we are sinful (*state of carnality*), our soul is occupied and controlled by the sinful nature until confessional prayer restores fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The believer volitionally responsible for creating conflict within his own soul by surrendering to the evil temptations of his sinful nature, rather than deciding to trust in and rely on God's Word. For the duration of our earthly lives, we are constantly challenged to be either spiritual or sinful.

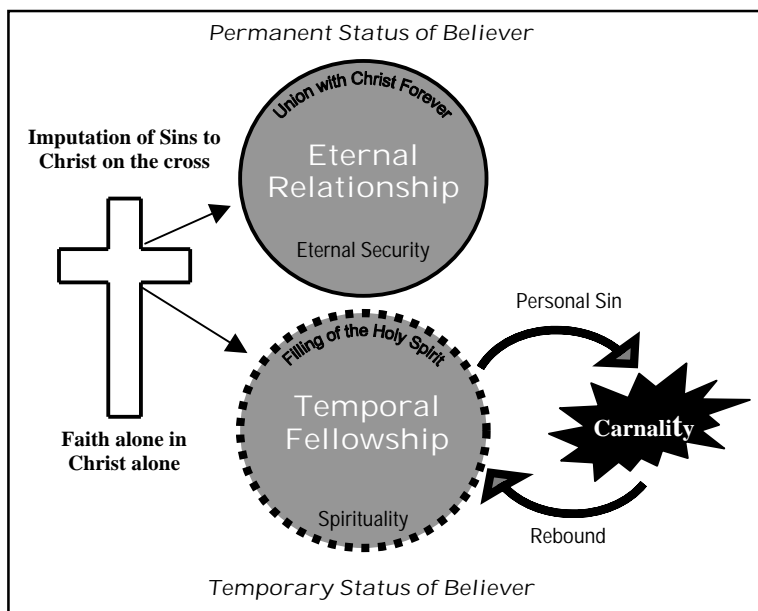
Spirituality and carnality are defined by two absolute and mutually exclusive conditions of the soul: at any instant in time, we are either spiritual or sinful, but never partially spiritual or sinful. Neither is one sin more or less sinful than any other sin or a multiplicity of sins. Whether our soul is spiritual or carnal is solely dependent upon which of the two opposing authorities is in control at that point in time. This constant power struggle is documented in the Book of Galatians:

So I [Paul] say, live by [be in fellowship with] the [Holy] Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires [temptations] of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other. (Gal. 5:16-17)

The more the believer utilizes biblical concepts while in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, the greater his capacity to resist the temptations of his sinful nature. The phrase “*sinful nature*” is derived from the Greek σάρξ (*sárx*), which literally translates into English as “*flesh*” or “*body*.” The sinful nature genetically imputed to Adam at the “Fall of Man,” and thereafter to following generations, resides through procreation in every cell of human body.

Power Spheres

The new believer in Jesus Christ becomes the recipient of unique spiritual privileges and opportunities. At salvation he instantaneously gains access to two spheres of divine empowerment within which he is empowered to glorify God by living the Christian way of life. Inside the top power sphere, illustrative of his permanent status, God the Holy Spirit baptizes the new



believer into an eternal union with Christ as a new spiritual species. This spiritual baptism corresponds to an act of identification of the new believer with Jesus Christ whereby he is transformed from his previous unbelieving condition into an eternal member of God’s family. Once transformed, the believer is assured of his eternal security regardless of his previous sinfulness:

My sheep [*believers*] listen to My voice [*Christ*]; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish [*sentenced to the Lake of Fire*]; no one can snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)

Within the bottom power sphere, representative of his temporal status, the believer is spiritually controlled and empowered by God the Holy Spirit to learn and utilize God's Word in his life. With His guidance, the positive believer is enabled to continue his progress within God's grace plan toward spiritual maturity. However, differing from his eternal position in the top sphere, his position within the bottom sphere is only temporary. When the believer sins he is instantly deprived of all the ministries of the Holy Spirit, and the evil enticements of his sinful nature gain control over his soul. Although he retains the eternal advantages within the top sphere, he relinquishes his spiritual position within the bottom sphere; and as a member of God's eternal family, he is accountable to Him for the sins he commits. Only by the confession of his sins to God the Father²⁹ does he regain his spiritual status in fellowship with the Holy Spirit; and only by fellowship with the Holy Spirit is the believer empowered to advance spiritually in fulfillment of God's grace plan for his life.

Confession of Sins

The punishment for human sins endured by Jesus Christ on the cross makes possible the believer's recovery from personal sin. Since God the Father was satisfied with His Son's substitutionary sacrifice, His grace plan for mankind simply requires the acknowledgment or naming of our sins to Him, directly and privately, by means of confessional prayer:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our known sins to the Father, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all wrongdoing, including unknown or forgotten sins. (1 John 1:8-9)

The Greek word, *ὁμολογέω* (*homologéō*), translated "**confess**" in the English, was used historically to identify the testimony of a witness under oath in a court of law and meant to cite, specify, name, or acknowledge. Similarly, the believer (as his own witness) should acknowledge to God (as under oath) the personal sins he has committed. He must simply name his known sins, and God in His grace forgives him of all of his sins, including those that at the time were either unknown or forgotten. Unaccompanied by human emotion, effort, or righteousness, the believer confesses his sins directly and privately to God as promptly as they occur. Rebound from sinfulness reinstates the believer's spiritual status in fellowship with God,³⁰ which enables the Holy Spirit to guide and support his spiritual advance to maturity.

²⁹ We may identify this recovery process by the word "**rebound**" (to bounce back), which describes the process needed to reinstate our spiritual status and restart the Christian way of life.

³⁰ Refer to chapter 18, Doctrine of Prayer, page 131, for the proper protocol for prayers to God.

Since sin represents disobedience to, or non-compliance with, God's Word, confession of sins must be addressed only to Him. Based on Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross, only God the Father is capable of forgiving personal sins and cleansing the sinful believer from all wrongdoing. Even though God forgives the believer's confessed sins, personal sins are still subject to the legal penalties enforced by human jurisprudence.

The ministries of the Holy Spirit enable the believer to grow spiritually by means of his knowledge and use of doctrine. The believer's comprehension of divine thought and his recall of doctrine previously learned are facilitated in order to successfully resolve the pressures and problems that inevitably occur in life. Due to His impending crucifixion, Jesus Christ prophesied the arrival on earth of the ministries of God the Holy Spirit, which were later credited by the apostles for their ability to facilitate recall of pertinent doctrines for application to life's difficulties:

“All this [My teachings] I have spoken while still with you [the apostles]. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to [taught] you.” (John 14: 25-26)

“I [Jesus Christ] will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the [Holy] Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you [believers] know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17)

Dependent on rebound and the divine counsel of the Holy Spirit, the positive believer is empowered to learn and apply Bible doctrine by the renovation of his mind consistent with the thinking of Jesus Christ:

Do not conform any longer to the example of this [devil's] world, but be transformed by the renovation of your mind so that you may prove what God's will is — His good [of intrinsic value], pleasing [compatible with God's plan] and complete will. (Rom. 12:2, CTL)

So I [Paul] tell you [believers] this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the unbelievers do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening [stubbornness] of their hearts. (Eph. 4:17-18)

Introduction

When the believer commits personal sin, he loses his spiritual position within the bottom power sphere and, as a consequence, forfeits the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. If his sin remains unconfessed, he enters into a state of carnality wherein the soul is occupied and controlled by his sinful nature. Within this state of sinfulness, the believer's volition is encouraged to commit personal sins, perform acts of human good, and participate in evil behavior under the influence and enticement of satanic thought. Since he is no longer spiritual, he is immediately alienated from God and powerless to live the Christian way of life. At that moment in time, the believer and unbeliever become indistinguishable from one another as they both become willing accomplices in Satan's iniquitous strategy for world domination in opposition to God's plan for the human race.

Personal Sin

Personal sins are classified as either mental attitude, verbal, or overt. The most destructive are mental attitude sins, since they activate and encourage the other two sin categories and often evolve into multiple sins. Mental attitude sins originate as thoughts in the minds of believers who at that moment choose to ignore or reject God's mandates. Such sins are evident in pride, jealousy, envy, guilt, arrogance, bitterness, implacability, hatred, self-pity, fear, worry, and anxiety. For example, believers are mandated not to fear, fret, or worry:

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isa. 41:10)

Stop worrying about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Phil. 4:6)

Verbal sins, which are external expressions of mental attitude sins, include gossip, malevolence, slander, distortion, and perjury. Destructive effects of these sins on the sinner are found in the following verses:

A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin. (Prov. 26:28)

Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell [theologically known as the Lake of Fire³¹]. (Jas. 3:5-6)

Overt sins are the observable outcomes of mental attitude sins, often involving other people. These sins do not occur instantly, but are initially inspired by the believer's sinful thoughts. Such sins include murder, drunkenness, stealing, embezzlement, fraud, cheating, adultery, arson, rape, drug abuse, plagiarism, bribery, and occult activities. The Ten Commandments of the Old Testament prohibit several of these sins, some of which are relevant to both believers and unbelievers (Exod. 20:3-17).

Human Good

Acts of human good are activities or deeds of assistance to others without the spiritual guidance of the Holy Spirit. Incited by satanic deception and often motivated by narcissism, the believer's soul willingly acquiesces to his sinful nature. Even if encouraged by human standards, such deeds are **"works of the flesh"** (Gal. 5:19), produced by a believer in a *state of carnality*, rather than *"divine good"* produced by the power of the Holy Spirit through the believer in a *state of spirituality*: **All our righteous acts [human good from the source of the sinful nature] are like filthy rags [to God]** (Isa. 64:6).

The spiritual sacrifice of Jesus Christ condemns the practice of human good as the futile process of gaining salvation for the unbeliever and earning God's approval for the believer. Despite respectable or moral motivations, all human effort originating from the sinful nature is unacceptable to God. Conversely, human deeds enabled by the Holy Spirit are considered acts of divine good that are pleasing to Him:

He [Christ] saved us, not because of righteous things we have done [acts of human good], but because of His mercy [God's grace]. He saved us through the washing of rebirth [spiritual regeneration] and renewal by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

Evil

Evil identifies Satan's grand strategy to manipulate, deceive, and eventually control the thoughts, decisions, and actions of the human soul. In opposition

³¹ The Lake of Fire is the ultimate destination of Satan who was the first sinner of God's creation. He is the agent of sin and the Lake of Fire becomes an analogy for the source of sin.

to the Holy Spirit, Satan cleverly takes advantage of man's corrupt sinful nature to resolve the problems of human life apart from God's Word. As a result, evildoers defiantly challenge God's plan and purpose for the human race and persevere in their efforts to discredit the believer's faith in Christ. Inspired by satanic objectives, evildoers always obscure and obfuscate Christ's redemptive sacrifice on behalf of mankind along with the promised eternal union of the believer with Him.

The concept of evil includes *Satan-inspired, man-centered efforts independent of God* to improve the human condition under such banners as progressivism, religion, socialism, communism, multiculturalism, extreme environmentalism, and macro-evolutionary hypotheses. The book of Matthew warns:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves ... Every tree that does not bear good fruit [divine good] is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit [human good and evil] you will recognize them. (Matt. 7:15-20)

Even if well-intentioned, these evil activities have always been harmful, and potentially destructive, to the sanctity of human freedom, privacy, property, prosperity, and spiritual growth. Only the believer's personal relationship with Jesus Christ and his reliance upon God's Word may be trusted to ensure the fulfillment of his purpose and happiness on earth. There are no problems confronted by man that God has not already anticipated and provided the essential resources by which they may be resolved. By maximizing our faith in Him, we experience God's immutable faithfulness to provide all that is required for life and godliness:

For it is by God's grace you have been saved, by means of faith in Christ — and this salvation not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by human effort, so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8-9, EXT)

Grace defines God's divine system consisting of unmerited favor independent of human involvement and encompasses all that He is free to do for mankind based on the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Evil, on the other hand, is the cosmic system of merited favor dependent upon human participation and encompasses all that human energy can produce based on human viewpoint. An important biblical principle should become obvious:

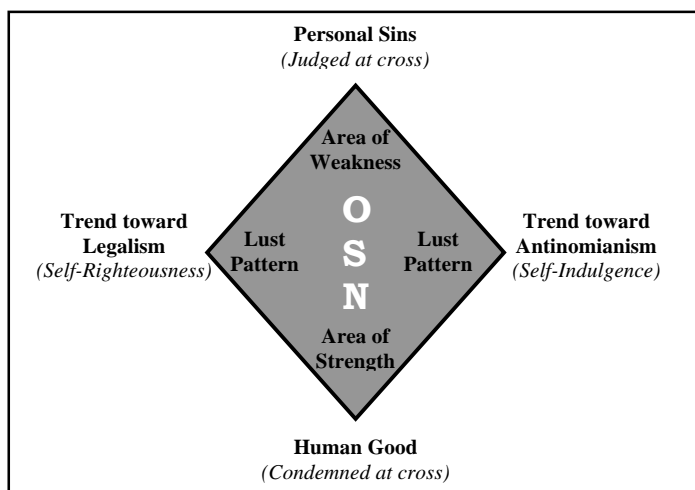
Christianity is defined by God's grace for the believer based on the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on behalf of mankind, not by human thought or effort that man self-righteously believes can contribute to or improve upon God's plan for the human race.

Introduction

Resulting from the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, our original parents acquired a sinful nature, which was thereafter transmitted genetically to ensuing generations by means of procreation. As a result, all human beings are born spiritually dead and powerless to restrain their inborn tendency to commit sin. The Apostle Paul writes of this seemingly uncontrollable human condition:

I do not understand what I do [why I sin]. For what I want to do [remain sinless] I do not do, but what I hate to do [sin] ... As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it [sin], but it is sin living in me³²[sinful nature]. (Rom. 7:15-17)

The old sin nature³³ (OSN) may be depicted in the shape of a diamond consisting of areas of weakness and strength and two primary lust patterns that attempt to dominate man's soul.³⁴ Perpetually in conflict with the Holy Spirit, the sinful nature is unrelenting in its efforts to establish its authority over the human soul in order to advance satanic thought and control throughout the world.



³² It is human volition that grants permission for sin to occur, but the sinful nature is the source of the temptation to sin under the influence of Satan and his emissaries.

³³ Theological term synonymous with the sinful or sin nature that traces its genetic, ancestral origin back to Adam's original sin in the Garden of Eden.

³⁴ Adapted from publications of R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries.

Area of Weakness

Since the old sin nature resides in the human body, believers are constantly tempted to submit to its innate tendency to dominate the soul:

If we [*believers*] claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us ... If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him [*God*] out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives. (1 John 1:8-10)

When the believer succumbs to these temptations, he engages in personal sin and enters into a condition of carnality that is controlled by his sinful nature in opposition to God's plan. As previously noted, personal sins are classified as mental, verbal, and overt, all of which represent acts of disobedience to the mandates of God. Therefore, the area of weakness of the old sin nature is the source of temptation from which, if permitted by the believer's volition, personal sins originate. All personal sins were imputed to Jesus Christ on the cross and judged by God; consequently, all pre-salvation sins are instantly forgiven at the moment of salvation, whereas post-salvation sins are forgiven only by the use of confessionary or rebound prayer.

Area of Strength

Controlled by the old sin nature, both believers and unbelievers may be motivated to perform acts of human good ("**dead works**" in Heb. 6:1). Even though humanly beneficial in support of others, if such acts are inspired by the desire for eternal salvation, forgiveness of sins, or self-aggrandizement, they are unacceptable to God. On the other hand, if motivated under the control of God the Holy Spirit, acts of human kindness toward others such as charity, reform, and humanitarianism are mandated by God — for example, housing the homeless, feeding the hungry, and giving to the poor and needy:

He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the poor. (Prov. 14:21)

He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God. (Prov. 14:31)

If you really keep the royal law of Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself" [*Lev. 19:18*], you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin. (Jas. 2:8-9)

Lacking the integrity of God's Word and the restraining power of the Holy Spirit, good intentions inspiring acts of human good are invariably corrupted by the deceitfulness of the sinful nature and never result in lasting solutions for human problems: for example, "**You will always have the poor among you**" (John 12:8). Only good deeds accomplished under the power and

control of God the Holy Spirit, which distinguishes divine good from human good, have rewardable and lasting spiritual value in heaven:

For no one can lay any foundation other than the One already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this Foundation [*Christ*] using gold, silver, precious stones [*divine good*], [*or*] wood, hay or straw [*human good*], his work will be shown for what it is [*divine or human good*] ... It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives [*divine good*], he will receive his reward [*reference Rev. 2-3*]. If it is burned up [*human good*], he will suffer loss [*of rewards, not his salvation*]; he himself will be saved [*delivered*], but only as one escaping through the flames. (1 Cor. 3:11-15)

During the period of human history known as the Dispensation of the Church,³⁵ which began on the day of Pentecost and will end with the Rapture of the Church, believers are ultimately accountable to Jesus Christ for their acts of divine good or of human good and evil. Following the Rapture, believers will appear before the Evaluation Tribunal³⁶ during which Christ will distinguish between acts of divine good that receive rewards and acts of human good and evil that suffer loss of rewards. Human good and evil were only condemned at the cross to await future judgment by Jesus Christ.

Trend toward Legalism

Legalism represents mankind's attempt through human effort to be worthy of salvation apart from faith alone in Christ alone, or to acquire spirituality apart from the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Motivated by self-righteous arrogance, legalism strives to earn a relationship with God in order to improve upon what He has already accomplished on the cross for the benefit of the human race. Theologically, legalism defines individuals who strive for God's salvation or spirituality by human effort or activity, rather than by reliance upon His divine grace. These individuals are excessively self-satisfied, even boastful, with their moral behavior and/or acts of human good. If unrestrained, this legalistic mental attitude invariably regresses into moral degeneracy. Since God mandates moral behavior for both believers and unbelievers, morality is not required for salvation; nor is spirituality available to believers who become involved in legalistic carnality, scripturally identified as "**wood, hay or straw**" (1 Cor. 3:12).

³⁵ Refer to chapter 14, Dispensation of the Church, page 91.

³⁶ Also known as the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Legalism often encourages strict adherence to the Mosaic Law³⁷ as the method by which salvation or spirituality is attained. However, the Mosaic Law was created to reveal man's innate sinfulness that prevents him from complying with all of the provisions of the Law (Jas. 2:10). Thus, man's inability to fully abide by the Law requires a Savior, a "**spotless lamb**" (1 Pet. 1:19), to free him from satanic control of his soul and reconcile him to the righteousness of God. The person and work of Christ fulfilled that requirement and introduced a new law for Church Age believers that supersedes the Mosaic Law:

There is now no condemnation [judgment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [believers], because through Christ Jesus the [new] law of the [Holy] Spirit of life set me [Apostle Paul] free from the law of sin and [spiritual] death [as revealed by the Mosaic Law]. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son [Christ] in the likeness of sinful man [in His humanity] to be a sin offering [His sacrifice on the cross]. (Rom. 8:1-3)

Because of the sinful nature, complete compliance with the Mosaic Law is unachievable and thereby powerless to liberate mankind from his inherent sinfulness ("**law of sin**") or spiritual death ("**law of death**"). In its place, God established a new law based on Christ's sacrifice ("**sin offering**"), which provides believers with temporal spirituality on earth and eternal life in heaven. Liberation of man from control of his sinful nature is achieved only by faith alone in Christ alone, but the spiritual benefits to the believer of that freedom are realized only as enabled by the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law, so the Spirit fulfills the "**law of the Spirit of life**" in believers.

Trend toward Antinomianism

Antinomianism is defined as "against the law" and is evidenced by lawlessness, lasciviousness, and potentially immoral degeneracy. Hedonism, drug abuse, and sexual activity outside the boundaries of heterosexual marriage exemplify such behavior. Inspired by sins originating within the area of weakness of the sinful nature, the trend toward antinomianism is identified by Christ as "**unclean**" thoughts and actions (Mark 7:20-23). First-century antinomians asserted that once saved by faith in Jesus Christ, believers were no longer required to obey the moral teachings of the Old Testament since a new Law of the Spirit of Life was established to replace the Mosaic Law – to which Paul replies:

Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! (Rom. 6:15).

³⁷ Refer to Appendix B – Mosaic Law, page 157.

The Word of God never grants freedom to sin to the believer but holds him accountable for his sinful behavior (Heb. 12:6). The Corinthian believers failed to understand that Jesus Christ reaffirmed in the New Testament most of the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic Law, which compels obedience to Old Testament morality by New Testament believers.

Lust Patterns

Also inherent in the sinful nature are lust patterns that attempt to persuade the believer to act upon his “**evil desires**” (Rom. 6:12). Lust is a passionate, often insatiable, desire to think or behave in opposition to divine standards of behavior, and activates personal sin, antinomianism, human good and evil, and legalism. Without the Word of God functioning in our souls under the control of the Holy Spirit, we are highly susceptible to these temptations and may even blame God:

When tempted [by the sinful nature], no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire [lust], he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived [volitionally accepted], it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to [temporal] death.³⁸ (Jas. 1:13-15)

Lust patterns are closely associated with the strengths and weaknesses of the sinful nature. If the area of strength controls the soul, lusts are manifested in human good and evil with a dominant trend toward self-righteous arrogance or legalism. If the area of weakness controls the soul, lusts are manifested in personal sins with a dominant trend toward self-indulgence. Exasperated by self-interest, lusts may become compulsive in their exploitation of people:

Power: Desire for influence, authority, or control, often inciting arrogance that attempts to subvert the power or influence of others.

Approbation: Self-promoted yearning for praise, recognition, acceptance, social status, or approval from others.

Hedonism: Desire for pleasure in such sins as sex outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage, drunkenness, and the use of mind-altering substances that diminish one’s ability or desire to comply with establishment or biblical standards.

Crusader: Anti-authoritarian attitude supporting civil disobedience, terrorism, anti-Semitism, socialism, communism, environmentalism, sedition, rebellion, revolution, or globalism.

Criminal: Commission of an act forbidden by law (e.g., robbery) or a duty commanded by law (e.g., paying taxes).

³⁸ Refer to Appendix B – Human Deaths, page 158.

Anger: Desire to harm others with a tendency toward hatred that is often evident in spousal and child abuse, vindictiveness, or revenge.

Ambition: Desire for personal recognition, achievement, or success that encourages inordinate competition with others.

Monetary: Desire to possess or create wealth as one's primary purpose in life, encouraging the desire for another person's property.

Dependent upon the believer's motivation, the excessive growth, possession, or expenditure of money may be either pleasing or displeasing to God. On the one hand, He blesses some individuals with the spiritual gift of giving in order to support the needy, the teaching of the God's Word (pastors and local churches), and the dissemination of the gospel of Christ (evangelists and missionaries).³⁹ Other believers, however, covet wealth in order to satisfy lust patterns that give rise to carnality or evil:

For the love of [lust for] money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith [Bible doctrine] and pierced themselves with many griefs [divine discipline⁴⁰]. (1 Tim. 6:10)

Stimulated by fear, anxiety, or worry concerning such difficulties as poverty, hunger, disappointment, or impending financial disaster, monetary lust can be aggravated by the believer's failure to trust in God's promised provisions throughout his life on earth:

Keep yourselves free from the love of [lust for] money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:5-6)

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. (Matt. 6:24)

Seek first His kingdom [belief in Jesus Christ] and His righteousness, and all these things [including food, shelter, and clothing] will be given to you. (Matt. 6:33)

³⁹ God the Holy Spirit distributes at least one spiritual gift to each believer at salvation that involves a special ability or expertise, which includes pastor-teacher, evangelist, missionary, giving, mercy, helps, and administration (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:7-11). Other spiritual gifts that were existent only previous to the completion of Scripture circa A.D. 96 included apostleship, prophesy, miracles, healing, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

⁴⁰ Refer to *Divine Discipline*, pages 47 and 124-127, for further explanation.

Introduction

We have learned previously that only rebound, or confession alone to God alone, initiates the believer's recovery from his condition of sinfulness and restores him to a condition of spirituality made possible by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This principle of rebound is depicted by the parable of the Prodigal Son in which Christ narrates a fictitious story of two sons and their father who exemplifies God the Father. In this parable (Luke 15:11-32), the two believing sons illustrate either spirituality or carnality, either with or without the fellowship of their father. The prodigal (younger) son initially suffers punishment for his lustful behavior by separation from his father, analogous to divine discipline for the carnal believer alienated from God. Ultimately, however, the prodigal son rebounds from his sinful state and is restored to fellowship with his father. His recovery from sin incites self-righteous sins of jealousy and anger in the older brother that are characteristic of legalistic believers. Even though directed to the unbelieving Pharisees and scribes of that day, the parable of the Prodigal Son serves as a textbook to explain several important biblical concepts to believers of today.

SONS OF GOD

There was a man who had two sons. (Luke 15:11)

Despite both conflict and separation, the relationship between the father and his two sons continues throughout this parable. By analogy, believers are eternally united with Christ at salvation and become sons of God as members of His family. Just as our physical birth cannot be changed, so also we cannot alter our spiritual birth: once a son, always a son, both humanly and spiritually.

God's gift of eternal life secures our relationship with Him that can never be changed or revoked. Residence in the top power sphere enables believers to become recipients of an unchanging relationship with God. Thus, the inclusion of sons in this parable reflects Christ's promise of eternal security for believers:

To those who believed in His [Christ's] name, He [God] gave the authority to become sons of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God [rebirth]. (John 1:12-13)

Our spiritual rebirth as sons of God is further clarified by Christ's discussion with Nicodemus, a high-ranking member of the Jewish ruling council:

"I [Christ] tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water [identification with Christ] and the [Holy] Spirit. Flesh [human body] gives birth to flesh [physical birth], but the [Holy] Spirit gives birth to [the human] spirit [spiritual rebirth at salvation]. You should not be surprised at My saying, 'You must be born again [known scripturally as the second birth].'" (John 3:3-7)

BLESSINGS OF GOD

The younger one said to his father, 'Give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. (Luke 15:12)

The father honored the younger son's request by distributing his estate equally between his two sons. By analogy, God distributes His divine operating assets equally to every believer at the moment of salvation so that all who believe may be empowered to take advantage of equal divine privilege and opportunity. During the dispensation of the Church, these blessings consist of the following divine operating assets that empower the positive believer to live the Christian way of life as he advances to spiritual maturity:

Imputation of God's Righteousness: At the moment of salvation the new believer is reconciled to God by the imputation of His perfect righteousness (Rom. 3:22).

Union with Jesus Christ: Confers an eternal existence that is shared with Christ as an inheritor of His destiny (John 10:28).

Transformed into New Spiritual Species: Empowers the new believer to mature spiritually using his knowledge and application of the Word of God in his life (2 Cor. 5:17).

Commission as Royal Priest: Every believer personally represents himself before God, without intermediaries (1 Pet. 2:9).

Provision of Spiritual Gifts: Allows believers to pursue personal destinies, inside and outside the local church (1 Cor. 12:27-31).

Recipient of Problem-Solving Devices: Enables the believer to confront and successfully resolve problems in his life.

CARNAL BELIEVER

Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country [among Gentiles] and there squandered his wealth in wild [licentious] living. (Luke 15:13)

The distant country is emblematic of a state of carnality wherein the believer ignores his divine operating assets and engages in irresponsible behavior. At the moment we disobey any of God's mandates, we sin and **"fall short of the glory of God"** (Rom. 3:23). Carnality does not initiate a loss of salvation, but rather a loss of fellowship with God the Holy Spirit. Once we are saved, we are always saved; but for as long as we willingly choose to remain sinful, we are displeasing to God, indistinguishable from unbelievers, and incapable of fulfilling His personalized plan for our lives.

DIVINE DISCIPLINE

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine [divine discipline] in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. (Luke 15:14-16)

Indicating the severity of his despair, the prodigal son hungered for cornhusks that are fed to pigs. Resembling divine discipline, the famine was imposed as punishment for his persistent carnality. As sons under the authority of God the Father, carnal believers are disciplined for their disobedience to Him just as human fathers discipline their own children:

Do not make light of the Lord's discipline ... because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son. (Heb. 12:5-6)

Proportionate to the degree to which the carnal believer continues his sinful behavior, God in His grace enforces punishment in three successive stages:⁴¹

Warning Discipline: Initial warning to the Prodigal Son of his carnality — by squandering his inherited wealth in licentious living, he was forewarned of impending divine discipline from God the Father.

Intensified Discipline: Dispensed in relation to the severity of the carnality, the younger son endured a severe famine.

Dying Discipline: Enforced when carnality persists over an extended period of time — had not the prodigal son rebounded, he would not have physically survived the famine.

⁴¹ Refer to Human Suffering for further explanation, pages 124-127.

Carnal believers suffer undesirable consequences for disobeying God's mandates. If they continue in their sinfulness, God intensifies His discipline to encourage their return to spirituality. As believers, we are accountable to God for our behavior, knowing that His perfect justice functioning in tandem with His perfect righteousness is obliged to punish us for our sins and bless us once we recover from those sins.

REBOUND AND SPIRITUALITY

When he came to his senses, he said, 'how many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you [confession of sins]. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men' [act of contrition]. (Luke 15:17-19)

The Prodigal Son finally rebounds from his ongoing carnality, a requirement of all carnal believers who desire reinstatement of their spiritual fellowship with God the Holy Spirit. By acknowledging his personal sins, the Prodigal Son voluntarily chooses to become obedient to the authority of his father and, as a result, is instantly restored to fellowship with him. By analogy, the sinful believer re-establishes his spiritual relationship with God the Holy Spirit by confession alone to God alone.

Endowed by God with the freedom to choose from among different options, believers must constantly cope with either self-judgment or divine discipline: **"But if we judged ourselves [rebound from sin], we would not come under judgment [divine discipline]"** (1 Cor. 11:31). However, rebound does not require contrition, remorse, or guilt, but only the acknowledgment of sins to God the Father, directly and privately. Just as the two sons are always their father's sons, so are believers eternal sons within God's family despite their inherent tendency to commit sin.

To complete the process of rebound, the believer must isolate, or separate from, his past sins in order to avoid other or related sins, forget sins that already have been forgiven, confess the guilt that often accompanies the act of sinning, and continue the advance to spiritual maturity. Otherwise, the spiritual advance is impeded by preoccupation with past sins:

I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it [spiritual maturity]. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win rewards in time and eternity for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:13-14)

GRACE OF GOD

So he [Prodigal Son] got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him [corresponding to God's omniscience] and was filled with compassion for him [corresponding to God's love]; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. (Luke 15:20)

The father joyously responded to the homecoming of his wasteful, reckless son, which is analogous to the compassion of God for carnal believers who rebound from sinfulness. Several attributes of divine essence are revealed in this verse: His *omniscience*, which knows in advance when we sin as well as recover from sin; His *personal love* for believers⁴² despite our sinfulness; His *righteousness* and *justice*, which forgive our sins based on the person and work of Christ on the cross; His *omnipotence*, which provides the capacity for forgiveness; and His *immutability*, which inspires our confidence in the faithfulness of all of His attributes. This divine faithfulness is the definitive expression of God's unsurpassed grace for the human race resulting from the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son on the cross (2 Tim. 2:13).

The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a [signet] ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead [temporal death] and is alive again [in fellowship]; he was lost [out of fellowship] and is found [spiritual]. (Luke 15:21-24)

Rather than trusting in the redemptive process of rebounding from his sins, the younger son needlessly attempted to compensate for his sinful behavior. Conversely, his father hastened to honor his son's restoration to fellowship with provisions that emblematically set apart the spiritual believer:

Best Robe: Experiential righteousness or spiritual growth by obedience to God and His mandates (2 Pet. 3:18).

Signet Ring: Inheritance of divine operating assets, including logistical grace support (Matt. 6:31-33).

Sandals: Symbolic of the Christian "walk," or way of life, as enabled by God the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:4).

Fattened Calf: Fellowship in God's Word by the knowledge and application of divine truth to life (John 6:57).

⁴² God personally loves His own perfect righteousness imputed to believers at salvation.

Just as walking physically involves one step followed by another, so also walking spiritually is accomplished step-by-step, progressively learning and applying God's Word under the power of God the Holy Spirit. The Christian walk, therefore, requires our disciplined obedience to God's authority in order to advance spiritual growth — **“When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble”** (Prov. 4:12).

LEGALISM

So he [older brother] called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come [returned home],’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ The older brother became angry [resulting from jealousy] and refused to go in [rejected rebound]. So his father went out and pleaded with him [to rebound]. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you [expressing self-pity] and never disobeyed your orders [lying]. Yet you never gave me even a small goat so I could celebrate with my friends [self-righteousness]. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home [older son is interfering, judging, and gossiping], you kill the fattened calf for him. (Luke 15:26-30)

At this stage in the parable, the soul status of the two sons has become reversed: the older son has regressed into carnality while the younger son has been restored to spirituality. Instead of rejoicing over his younger brother's recovery from his carnal state, the elder son suffers from mental attitude sins resulting from self-righteous arrogance, envy, and self-pity, which evolve into verbal sins typical of the legalistic believer. The father pleads with his elder son to rebound from his sins, an illustration of the Lord seeking spiritual fellowship with carnal believers:

“Here I am [Christ]. I stand at the door and knock [warning discipline]. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door [rebound], I will come in, I will eat with him, and he will eat with me [divine fellowship].” (Rev. 3:20)

FAMILIAL FELLOWSHIP

My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead [carnal] and is alive again [spiritual]. (Luke 15:31-32)

Despite the self-righteousness of his eldest son, the father maintains his familial fellowship just as God provides for all of His adopted children. Regardless of family conflicts, father-son relationships cannot be rescinded, either humanly or spiritually. For the carnal believer, however, restoration of his fellowship with the Holy Spirit is contingent upon confessional prayer.

Unconditional love of the father intended for his elder son is characteristic of the love required of all believers toward other human beings. Unconditional love originates from the believer's integrity, which is only accomplished by personal love for God, consistent use of the ministries of the Holy Spirit, and increasing knowledge of Bible doctrine:

We [are able to] love because He [God] first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, Whom he has not seen. And He [God] has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:19-21)

Unconditional love toward others does not sanction grudges, resentment, or self-pity, but emulates the love of God for the human race. However, while respecting the lives of others as enabled by God the Holy Spirit, the doctrinal believer avoids participating in legalism or associating with reversionistic believers⁴³ who are negative to God's Word:

There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers. (Prov. 6:16-19)

Summary

The parable of the Prodigal Son serves as a biblical textbook of essential doctrinal principles applicable to present-day believers:

- Believers are eternally united as co-heirs with Christ at salvation and become sons of God as members of His royal family.
- God's gift of eternal life secures the believer's relationship with Him, which can never be changed or revoked.
- God distributes His divine operating assets to believers in order that all may take advantage of equal privilege and opportunity.
- Carnality does not result in a loss of salvation, but rather a loss of spiritual fellowship with God the Holy Spirit.
- God's love of mankind is characteristic of the unconditional love required of all believers toward other human beings.
- God's faithfulness is the ultimate manifestation of His grace for mankind made possible by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

⁴³ Reversionism occurs for the believer when he rejects God's plan, will, and purpose for his life, and falls under the influence and control of Satan's corrupt worldly (cosmic) system (1 Tim. 4:1).

Introduction

Human righteousness (also known as relative righteousness) is motivated by the arrogant belief that God can be pleased, even impressed, with acts of human good by which salvation or His approval may be humanly earned. Accordingly, the self-righteous individual assumes his loyalty to human, rather than divine, standards of goodness justifies an eternal relationship with and blessings from God based on the following human rationales:

- I have lived an exemplary life worthy of God's approval.
- Compared with other individuals, my standards are more virtuous and my good deeds are more numerous.
- It is neither rational nor merciful that an eternal relationship with God is restricted to those who, absent human effort, choose to simply believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
- A benevolent and loving God would never deny a relationship with those of His creation who engage in well-intentioned acts of human goodness, kindness, and generosity.

However, for God to be God, His standards of goodness are infinitely more righteous than man's hopeless attempts to substitute or imitate. As proven scripturally and experientially, man's innate sinful nature inevitably corrupts all well-intentioned human efforts to comply with his own relative standards or with God's absolute standards — **“There is not a righteous man on earth who [continually] does what is right and never sins”** (Eccl. 7:20). Thus, the believer and unbeliever must depend on the following doctrinal rationales that differentiate between human and divine righteousness:

- For God to be God, the perfection of His divine essence cannot be compromised by conforming to imperfect human rationales.
- The impeccable attributes of God's essence sustain a grace plan that is available to and for the benefit of all members of the human race to learn and apply in their lives.
- The humanity of Jesus Christ willingly submitted to spiritual death in order to reconcile man's limitations to God the Father, resulting in divine blessings from an eternal relationship with Him.
- Once saved, the believer may choose to be taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit in order that his righteous acts of divine, rather than human, good serve to glorify God and magnify His Word.

Divine Righteousness

The spiritual antidote to the failings of human righteousness is unfailing trust in and personal commitment to God's grace plan, inspired exclusively for those who volitionally choose to believe in Jesus as the Christ. The following Scripture validates the accessibility of God's magnificent grace to those who non-meritoriously place their faith alone in Christ alone:

Who [God] has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything [human good] we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace [plan of salvation] was given [provided for] us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. (2 Tim. 1:9)

Therefore, the gift of salvation and assurance of eternal life are the result of God's grace as revealed by the person and work of Jesus Christ, not from any contributing effort of man for God or even any effort of man for himself. Since salvation prepares the believer for acts of divine good, he is enabled not from human righteousness but by reliance on divine righteousness made possible by the ministries of the Holy Spirit. God is neither impressed by nor capable of associating with human righteousness. Only His imputation to all believers of His perfect righteousness at the moment of salvation justifies an eternal relationship with Him:

Gentiles, who did not pursue [human] righteousness, have obtained it [divine righteousness], a [an imputed] righteousness that is by faith [in Jesus the Christ]; but Israel, who pursued a law of [perfect] righteousness [Mosaic Law], has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by [human] works. (Rom. 9:30-32)

In addition to the imputation of divine righteousness and eternal life resulting from salvation, the believer in Jesus Christ also becomes the beneficiary of God's logistical grace support during his physical life on earth:

Life Support: Kept alive until God determines the exact moment of physical death. (Ps. 68:19-20)

Temporal Needs: Provided with such necessities of human life as food, drink, shelter, and clothing. (Matt. 6:11, 25-34)

Security Provisions: Protected from the perils and pressures of the devil's world. (Rom. 13:4; Heb. 1:14)

Spiritual Provisions: Empowered to learn and apply Bible doctrine, continuing the advance to spiritual maturity. (Matt. 4:4)

Legalistic Believers

The actions of the Prodigal Son illustrate the soul's trend toward lascivious antinomianism, while the conduct of the eldest son reveals the trend toward self-righteous legalism. Both trends are equally carnal and accountable to God, but self-righteous legalism tends to provoke multiple sins and acts of human good and evil. Whereas lasciviousness is easily observable, legalistic self-righteousness is often concealed behind a façade of reasonableness and respectability, even as it activates a “chain reaction” involving numerous sins (Luke 15:25-30). The legalistic believer fails to understand the concept of divine grace whereby the Father conceived, the Son executed, and the Holy Spirit empowered the perfect plan of God for the human race. That which has already been provided by the triune Godhead rejects all self-righteous human attempts to improve upon divinely inspired grace: **“If by [God’s] grace, then it is no longer by works [human effort]; if it were, grace would no longer be grace”** (Rom. 11:6).

In contrast, the legalistic believer believes his own good works merit God’s approval; and if His blessings are not forthcoming, God is often blamed for unfairness. The legalistic believer even attempts to validate his works by an assertion of moral arrogance — *“I am moral, therefore I am spiritual”* — rather than abide by God’s perfect righteousness that allows him to conclude: *“I am spiritual, therefore I am moral.”* The Word of God repeatedly rebukes the self-promoted, narcissistic arrogance of humanly conceived self-righteousness: **“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled”** (Matt. 23:12).

Legalistic Unbelievers

Jewish unbelievers, akin to the Pharisees and scribes, exhibited legalistic self-righteousness by disputing the deity and teachings of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees were influential members of the Jewish ruling body whose meticulous efforts to abide by the tenets of the Mosaic Law⁴⁴ precluded their acceptance of Jesus the Christ as their Jewish Messiah — that is, a works-oriented, rather than grace-oriented, salvific process similar to the self-righteous legalism practiced by many religious denominations today. Jesus Christ reprimands the Pharisees and scribes as arrogant, legalistic interpreters of the Law:

“Everything they [Pharisees and scribes] do is done for men to see ... They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to have men call them ‘Rabbi’ [teacher]. But there is only one Master and you are all brothers [in Christ].” (Matt. 23:5-10)

⁴⁴ Refer to Appendix B – Mosaic Law, page 157.

In later verses of the Book of Matthew, Christ pronounces “*seven woes*” upon the Pharisees and scribes for their hypocritical unbelief:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law [*scribes*] and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.” (Matt. 23:13)

“You are like white-washed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” (Matt. 23:27-28)

The Pharisees and scribes believed they could impress God with their “*holier-than-thou*,” ritualistic observance of the Mosaic Law. Their souls, however, were spiritually dead and forever alienated from God, having never accepted Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Unerring compliance with the Mosaic Law was not only humanly impossible (Jas 2:10), but it was never divinely mandated for either salvation or spirituality. Instead, the Law was intended to reveal man’s need for a Messiah-Savior to enable his compliance with God’s perfect righteousness. As a result, the Mosaic Law validates the significance of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross by which man is reconciled to God. Only faith alone in Christ alone, free of human legalism, initiates an irrevocable, eternal relationship with Him.

Even though the humanity of Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law during His life on earth, He did not reaffirm the legalistic Jewish practice of income taxation (or tithing – Mal. 3:10) in the New Testament for Church Age believers. Instead, in harmony with God’s grace plan for believers, Old Testament tithing was replaced with a system of grace giving:

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart [*soul*] to give [*spiritually motivated*], not reluctantly or under compulsion [*pressure or emotion*], for God loves a cheerful [*grace-oriented*] giver. (2 Cor. 9:7)

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has [*financial resources*], not according to what he does not have (2 Cor. 8:12).

Grace giving is acceptable to God only as motivated by the Holy Spirit and not as obligated by emotional commitment, personal guilt, atonement for sin, or desire for approval. Furthermore, the amount and frequency of grace giving should not be determined by others, but individually and privately in proportion to one’s financial ability to give.

Wedding Banquet

This parable foretells the rejection of Jesus Christ by Israel as their Messiah and the concurrent acceptance of Him by the Gentiles as their Savior. Jews of all generations are likened to those invited to a wedding banquet organized by a king in honor of his son. Only a few accept the invitation, analogous to the relatively few people who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a king [God the Father] who prepared a wedding banquet for his son [Jesus Christ]. He sent his servants [judges, priests, prophets] to those [Jews] who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come [to accept Christ as Messiah], but they refused to come [continued in their unbelief].”
(Matt. 22:2-3)

The “**kingdom of heaven**” refers to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ that is celebrated by a wedding banquet in Jerusalem honoring Christ, as the groom, and the Church, as His bride. Although in God’s grace all are invited, only believers in His Son are honored at this banquet.

“Then he sent some more servants [John the Baptist and disciples] and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ But they paid no attention and went off — one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city [Jerusalem in A.D. 70].” (Matt. 22:4-7)

Many “*heroes of faith*” in the Old Testament were mistreated or murdered by their fellow Jews (Heb. 11). Because of its repeated rejection of Jesus as the Messiah-Christ, Israel was eliminated as God’s client nation and its population was dispersed among the nations of the world:

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come [unbelieving Jews]. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find [Gentiles].’ So the servants [144,000 Jewish evangelists in the Tribulation] went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.” (Matt. 22:8-10)

Due to the rejection by a majority of Jews of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, 144,000 Jewish evangelists introduced His gospel to Gentiles throughout the world during the dispensation of the Tribulation.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed an unbeliever who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth [baptism of fire for Israel].’ For many are invited, but few respond to the gospel of Christ.” (Matt. 22:11-14)

The wedding clothes symbolize the imputation of God’s righteousness to believers upon accepting Jesus Christ as Savior (2 Cor. 5:21), which was absent in the unbelieving man who attended the banquet uninvited. This analogy was specifically directed to the unbelieving Pharisees and scribes who considered their own self-righteousness as acceptable to God for both salvation and spirituality. Thus, the “*baptism of fire*” for Israel is foretold as occurring at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ,⁴⁵ at which time unbelieving Jews are removed from the earth and temporarily transferred to the Torments section of Hades.⁴⁶ At the end of human history, all Jewish unbelievers are condemned eternally to the Lake of Fire (Ezek. 20:32-38).⁴⁷

God’s Word is impeccable and immutable — as a result, His divine righteousness cannot associate with the corrupted nature of human righteousness. Accordingly, human works cannot earn salvation nor can human merit earn God’s approbation and blessings. Once saved, man’s divine blessings do not result from God’s favorable assessment of his sincerity, personality, intelligence, personal sacrifice, tithing, or emotionalism. Repeated throughout Scripture, the Christian way of life is possible only by faith alone in Christ alone:

If believers would only decide to take full advantage of God’s grace, integrity, and faithfulness, then living the Christian way of life would succeed beyond their expectations by providing them with inner tranquility and happiness while glorifying their Savior, Jesus Christ.

⁴⁵ Jesus Christ returns to the earth at the Second Advent to rule the human race for 1,000 years in what is known as the “Kingdom of Heaven” or “Millennial Reign of Christ.”

⁴⁶ Temporary abode for unbelievers at physical death until later sentenced to the Lake of Fire at the end of human history.

⁴⁷ Gentile unbelievers will also be removed from the earth and condemned to the Lake of Fire at the Second Advent of Christ (Matt. 25:31-46) — “The actual casting of them into the Lake of Fire is deferred until the hour described in Rev. 20:11-15” (Lewis Sperry Shafer, *Christology*, vol. 5 of *Systematic Theology* [Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948], 140).

Introduction

Bible doctrine is the published version of God's infinite wisdom pertaining to His plan and policy for the human race.⁴⁸ As empowered by the Holy Spirit, God desires that we persist in our study of His Word to enable the comprehension of His will and purpose for our existence. Also referred to as doctrine, Scripture, truth, Word of God, or mind of Christ, Bible doctrine must be learned and accumulated in our souls as biblical principles for later recall and use in life. Following salvation, the most important responsibility of believers is God's mandate to **"grow in the grace and knowledge [doctrine] of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"** (2 Pet. 3:18). Unless we comply with this admonition, we are incapable of fulfilling our personal destinies within His plan; and, as believers, we become indistinguishable from unbelievers. Advances by the believer in his spiritual life are not unlike the progress in personal competency required of the professional, student, employer, employee, or any individual seeking to improve his performance.

Without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, we persist in our sinfulness and separation from fellowship with Him. The sinful nature becomes Satan's inside agent whereby he is able to gain control of our thoughts and actions. Only the inculcation of the immutable principles of doctrine, as facilitated by the ministries of the Holy Spirit, can prevent the invasion of the believer's soul by satanic deception. As Christ stated, **"You are in error [have been deceived] because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God"** (Matt. 22:29). Among many scriptural references, the Apostle Paul prayed for the Christian church in Colossae to advance in their knowledge of doctrine for application in their lives:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding [Bible study]. (Col. 1:9)

Following salvation, then, believers are required to faithfully learn and apply Bible doctrine so that they might consistently glorify God in their advance to spiritual maturity. All that is required of the believer is his positive volition toward the Word, a willingness to learn biblical truth, and the courage to apply that truth in his life. The spiritual advance is made possible only by

⁴⁸ Refer to Appendix B – Authenticity of the Bible, page 154.

our perseverance in learning and applying Bible doctrine; we cannot live the Christian way of life devoid of knowledge of God and His will and purpose for our lives. Doctrine resident in our souls empowers us with problem-solving knowledge to resolve life's inevitable difficulties:

For I [Paul] have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him [knowledge of and occupation with Christ] Who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:11-13)

Doctrinal Worship

Consistent study and application of the Word of God is the most important function of divine worship. While singing and praying are essential forms of worship, learning the wisdom of doctrine is the essential responsibility of the believer in his worship of God. Faithful assimilation and application of this wisdom to life ultimately culminates in spiritual maturity, occupation with Christ, and maximum glorification of God and His Word:

I, myself [King David], will worship toward the temple of Your [God's] holiness and I will be motivated to praise Your Person because of Your grace and Your doctrines. You [God the Father] have magnified Your doctrinal teachings above Your reputation. (Ps. 138:2, CTL)

Thus, doctrine is more important to the believer than who and what is God, for we cannot know God apart from knowing His Word. For that reason, God has made possible our knowledge of Him by biblical principles found only in Scripture. Pastor-teachers with the spiritual gift for teaching doctrine to their congregations must faithfully and diligently study God's Word in order to become proficient in accurately communicating doctrinal concepts:

Isagogics: Interpretation of Scripture in its historical context, allowing for the human author's intent and personality.

Categories: Merger and correlation of all relevant doctrines according to its subject matter to facilitate comprehension.

Exegesis: Grammatical and etymological interpretation of the Bible from its original languages, primarily Hebrew in the Old Testament and Koine Greek in the New Testament.

For believers wishing to take full advantage of their Christian way of life, nothing is more worthy of their worship than God's infinite wisdom, which is the all-powerful, all-knowing, forever-righteous, and never-changing Truth

of the universe. If believers fail to understand His divine system of learning, His mandates, His problem-solving devices, and their own responsibilities within His plan, they are powerless to advance spiritually or benefit from divine blessings in both time and eternity. God's divine purpose for our lives is fulfilled only by our knowledge and application of His Word.

Doctrinal Personification

Proverbs 8 serves to illustrate a personification of Bible doctrine wherein the divine wisdom inherent in God's Word converses directly with the reader of these verses. The writer employs this literary technique to emphasize the singular importance of doctrine, following salvation, in the life of the believer:

Listen to [heed] My instructions [doctrine personified] and be wise; do not ignore it. (Prov. 8:33)

Blessed is the man [happiness to the man] who listens to Me [doctrine], watching daily at My gates, waiting at My doorway. (Prov. 8:34)

For whoever finds Me [doctrine] finds [the capacity for] life and receives favor [grace blessings and rewards] from the Lord. (Prov. 8:35)

But whoever fails to find Me [he who sins against Me] harms [injures] himself; all who hate Me love death [the sin unto death]. (Prov. 8:36)

Since God has accomplished all that is required for our biblical edification, the believer is obliged only to demonstrate his positive volition toward God's Word, his consistency in rebound, and the courage to use doctrine in his life. Those who do so become the beneficiaries of grace blessings and the divine capacity for life; those who do not are subject to divine punishment.

Other verses in Proverbs ascribe the attributes of righteousness and justice to the essence of God's wisdom:

Listen, for I [doctrine] have worthy things [doctrine] to say; I open My lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for My lips detest wickedness. All the words of My mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning [doctrinal believers] all of My words are right; They are faultless to those who have knowledge of My wisdom. (Prov. 8:6-9)

Doctrinal Communication

Subject to the divine authority of their spiritual gift of communication, pastor-teachers are selected by God to teach doctrine to members of their

local church. Consistent with that objective, pastor-teachers must use the power of God the Holy Spirit to faithfully study and accurately interpret the Bible from its original biblical languages, and educate their congregations by explaining their translations word-by-word, line-by-line, precept-on-precept, and doctrine-upon-doctrine:

I [Paul] have become its [the Church's] servant by the commission God gave me to present to you [the local church] the Word of God in its entirety — the mystery⁴⁹ that has been kept hidden [Bible doctrine previously unknown] for ages and generations [dispensations], but is now disclosed to the saints [believers of the Church Age].
(Col. 1:25-26)

Another reference for this communicative gift and the responsibility of the pastor-teacher is found in the Book of Ephesians:

It was He [Christ] Who gave some [spiritual gift] to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people [believers] for works of service [divine good], so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge [doctrine] of the Son of God and become [spiritually] mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)

Doctrinal Advantages

Available for future recall and application to life's experiences under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit, doctrine learned and accumulated in the believer's soul produces changes in his viewpoint, attitude, and behavior that are pleasing to God. The greater his knowledge and integration of doctrinal principles, the more successful the believer in coping with life's inevitable stress originating from his sinful nature; and the more credible his witness to unbelievers and other believers as an ambassador for our Lord and Savior — **"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us"** (2 Cor. 5:20).

Whenever stress occurs, God has already provided for its solution. For that reason, the believer regards life's pressures as occasions to apply doctrine and grow spiritually. In so doing, he honors God and His Word, serves as an effective ambassador for Jesus Christ, and receives divine blessings in time.

⁴⁹ Coincident with the insertion into human history of the Dispensation of the Church, previously undisclosed divine thought is identified in Paul's writings as the "*mystery*," which is more fully explained in chapters 14 and 15, pages 91 and 99, respectively.

Several advantages accrue to the exclusive benefit of the doctrinal, grace-oriented believer who is advancing in the plan of God:

Confidence in Bible doctrine, which develops personal courage as the believer confronts the inevitable pressures and challenges in his life:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised [blessings and awards]. (Heb. 10:35-36)

Divine viewpoint, which transcends the finite limitations of human judgment and emulates the thinking of God:

The weapons we [believers] fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they [believer's weapons] have divine power to demolish strongholds [satanic doctrines, human viewpoint]. We demolish arguments and every pretension [arrogance] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

Divine guidance, which is available only from knowledge of God's Word under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. God cannot provide guidance apart from our knowledge of His Word:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world [human viewpoint], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [renovation of your thoughts]. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom. 12:2)

Occupation with Christ, which identifies the spiritually advanced believer who is empowered by the Holy Spirit to maximally glorify God and magnify His Word in the hostile environment of the devil's world:

Make my [Apostle Paul's] joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love [as exhibited by God], being one in spirit [unity of the Church] and purpose [glorification of God]. (Phil. 2:2)

Occupation with Christ

Some believers become discouraged, lacking in confidence for their future, by unrealistic expectations for Christian influence in their lives. They expect God will resolve all of their problems, either directly or in response to their prayers. On the contrary, God in His grace has provided all believers with problem-solving methods that will endure or resolve their difficulties without the need for human intervention from Him. The believer is confronted with no fewer

problems than the unbeliever; however, God blesses the believer with divinely provided abilities that uniquely empower him to successfully confront life's unavoidable difficulties.

Occupation with Jesus Christ is the definitive problem-solving process that empowers the spiritually mature believer to represent Him in the devil's world with a grace-oriented mental attitude, genuine self-assurance, and maximum doctrine in his soul. When occupied with Christ, the mature believer is totally absorbed with the mind of Christ; and, by example, he reveals to the world the effectiveness and faithfulness of God's wisdom and grace. The relevance of Bible doctrine in his life becomes more real to him than the worldly realities he confronts, confident that:

No temptation [testing] will afflict you except what is common to [the fallen condition of] man. And God is faithful; He will not let you [positive believer] be tempted [tested] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted [tested], He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it [endure the pressure].
(1 Cor. 10:13)

Human Weakness

All human beings encounter difficulties in their lives that are common to the fallen human condition; that is, problems do not exist for some that have not previously existed for others. Just as with the Prodigal Son, God desires that all believers learn from their mistakes, acknowledge their sins, and continue their advance to life's foremost objective of spiritual maturity. Among the realities common to man are human weaknesses and limitations that can only be overcome by believers occupied with Jesus Christ:

Over-emphasis on self, which often results from perceptions of unjust treatment by people, organizations, and/or circumstances. Acquiescing to life's pressures, the believer is challenged by such sins as frustration, bitterness, vindictiveness, or implacability. Even as Jesus Christ used divine problem-solving devices to endure His unjust treatment, so also the believer must employ these same methods to resolve or endure his own difficulties. Arrogant is the believer who values his own self more highly than the Word of God:

For by the grace given me [Paul] I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought [arrogance], but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith [thinking based on doctrine] God has given you. (Rom. 12:3)

Eyes on people, referring to human viewpoint, is in opposition to the biblical mandate that the believer's eyes are to be focused solely on divine viewpoint. Unfailing fellowship with Christ is essential to living the Christian way of life. When the believer relies on human judgment for his happiness, he is always frustrated and controlled by his sinful nature. However, when he trusts in his knowledge and application of God's Word, his eyes become fixed on Jesus Christ:

Let us fix [focus] our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. (Heb. 12:2)

Eyes on wealth and possessions, which is often revealed in the mental attitude sins of jealousy, envy, selfish ambition, or monetary lust. The jealous individual covets the possessions or advantages of others, whereas the envious person not only covets what he does not possess, but he conspires to ensure that others do not possess them:

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (Jas. 3:16)

Divine Inspiration

Descriptive of the process by which the human authors of Scripture were divinely influenced, the principle of divine inspiration may be summarized:

*God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture, that without waiving their human intelligence, talent, vocabulary, individuality, literary style, personality, personal feelings, or any other human factor, His complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship.*⁵⁰

The following verse states that the human writers of Scripture were “**carried along under [directed by] the agency [authority] of the Holy Spirit,**” which rejects any human expression of opinions, ideas, or predictions:

No prophecy of Scripture originates from one's own opinion [human interpretation]. No prophecy resulted from the purpose and design of mankind; but holy men of God [writers of Scripture] communicated as they were carried along under the agency of the Holy Spirit. But there were also false prophets just as there will be false teachers among you. (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Pet. 2:1)

⁵⁰ Thieme, *Canonicity*, 5.

Consequently, the positive believer is assured of the divine origin and accuracy of Scripture as interpreted from the original biblical languages, and is the beneficiary of this faithful instruction in God’s Word:

All Scripture [both Old and New Testaments] is God-breathed [divinely inspired] and becomes beneficial for the teaching of doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (2 Tim. 3:16)

Teaching of Doctrine: Enabled by the Holy Spirit, the pastor develops and integrates doctrinal concepts that are communicated to his congregation.

Reproof: Legal term for the conviction of misconduct by scriptural evidence that encourages the accused to admit to the truth of his transgressions.

Correction: Change in thinking resulting from reproof or the use of divine discipline.

Instruction in Righteousness: Biblical training that makes possible doctrinal integrity of the soul.

Volitional Challenges

Using positive volition in the search for absolute truth and inner happiness, the most important decisions in a individual’s lifetime begins with belief in Jesus Christ as personal Savior (salvation/eternal life), followed by the study of divine knowledge (edification), the confident and courageous use of that divine wisdom in one’s life and circumstances (application), resulting in increased progress toward life’s ultimate goal of spiritual maturity (occupation with and glorification of Jesus Christ):

Volitional Challenge	Positive Volition	Negative Volition
Gospel of Jesus Christ	<i>Faith alone in Christ alone</i>	<i>Remain in unbelief</i>
Bible Class Attendance*	<i>Attend and concentrate</i>	<i>Choose to avoid</i>
Doctrine Taught	<i>Accept as absolute truth</i>	<i>Reject as absolute truth</i>
Doctrine Retained	<i>Apply to life & circumstances</i>	<i>Refuse to apply</i>

* Or by publications and electronic devices

Textual Criticism

Only the interpretation of God's Word from the original biblical languages reveals the truth of divine wisdom for mankind. Known as the science of *Textual Criticism*, biblical manuscripts and textual traditions are studied to reconstruct as closely as possible the original biblical text.⁵¹ Accordingly, the divine system of learning begins with the interpretative ability of the pastor-teacher and his diligence and accuracy in restoring the original text from existing manuscripts. If Scripture is correctly interpreted and communicated, his congregation enhances its discernment of and confidence in the infallibility of the Bible. Unfortunately, His Word is too often interpreted allegorically, rather than literally, from which specious religions and sects have evolved.

Grace System for Perception

The believer cannot correctly serve God without applying what he has learned, and he obviously cannot apply what he has not learned. Therefore, his lifelong mission is to learn God's Word by the integration of doctrine in his soul using God's prescribed system of learning. This system may be identified as the "*Grace System for Perception*,"⁵² the divinely inspired process by which the positive believer learns doctrine that is otherwise humanly incomprehensible:

The man without the [Holy] Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14)

This system of learning functions only as enabled by the Holy Spirit and as communicated by pastors in local churches. Lacking this system of learning, the believer is unable to learn and apply divine knowledge regardless of his native intelligence or human maturity. The positive believer, empowered by the ministries of God the Holy Spirit, converts knowledge of human origin [γνώσις (*gnōsis*)] to knowledge of divine origin [ἐπίγνωσις (*epígnōsis*)].⁵³ This faith-based conversion enables the believer to comprehend what God intended he should learn, accumulate, and apply to his life and circumstances as only revealed in His Word.

⁵¹ Refer to Appendix B – Authenticity of the Bible, page 154.

⁵² Adapted from publications of R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries.

⁵³ "*Epígnōsis*" is a Koine Greek word coined by the Apostle Paul to indicate the superiority of divine knowledge over the "*gnōsis*" knowledge of human origin that was prevalent in his day.

Divine Knowledge

Enabled by the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gift of the pastor-teacher, this divine system of learning for the believer is the focus of Paul's writings:

My message [λόγος (*lógos*)] and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words [human knowledge], but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power [divine knowledge], so that your faith might not rest on men's [human] wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Cor. 2:4-5)

Paul advises the Corinthian church that the source of his message is divine, not human. In the Book of 1 Corinthians, the Greek word *lógos* is properly interpreted as the divinely inspired content of the pastor-teacher's message, and not as used by cults of his day to define their alleged divine knowledge of human derivation. In effect, Paul redefines the familiar vocabulary of his time to declare the superiority of the divinely inspired *lógos* over the use of *lógos* of human origin. Since *lógos* also refers scripturally to Jesus Christ (John 1:1), Paul uses this word to convey doctrines concerning Christ as the unique God-Man to those who were supporters of false teachings. Cults that existed in Paul's day are analogous to belief-systems today that concentrate on human-centered efforts to earn spirituality, eternal life, or otherwise the approval of their deity.

Paul's use of "**wise and persuasive words**" expresses his characterization of the principal religious and philosophical beliefs of the first century A.D.:

Stoicism: A philosophy asserting the belief that the source of order in life was *lógos*, or knowledge inherent in the essence of all human beings. Stoicism claimed that once learned, this intrinsic knowledge inspired rational thought that evolved into wisdom [σοφία (*sophía*)]. As a result, the indwelling *lógos* became the proclaimed arbitrator between God and mankind and the process by which the conception of an alleged divinity could be rationally understood.

Epicureanism: A philosophy affirming that the foremost objective in life is the pursuit of pleasure, or freedom from difficulty or pain. Epicureans denied the existence of deity or the concept of right and wrong, thereby motivating a frantic search for happiness by whatever means believed to be in the individual's best interest.

Gnosticism: A philosophy that claimed a superior knowledge of divine thought that was revealed only to a select few. This *gnōsis* of divine secrets and mysteries was alleged to have been learned from special revelations, the source of which was "*The One*" who was known only to the Gnostics.

Human Spirit

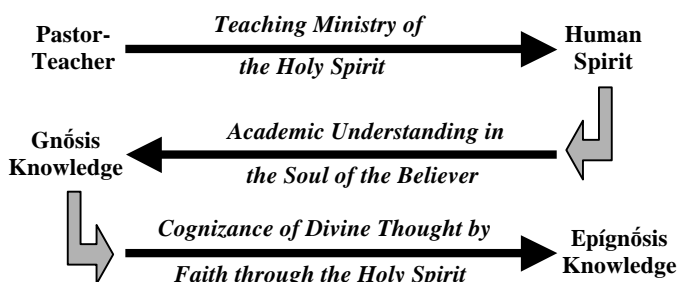
Continuing his commentary in the Book of 1 Corinthians, Paul further explains the divine system of learning that is accessible only by the believer who has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to understand and apply divine thought:

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard [*empiricism*], no mind has conceived [*rationalism*] what God has prepared for those who love Him” (Isa. 64:4) — but God has revealed it [*divine wisdom*] to us by His [*Holy*] Spirit. The [*human*] spirit searches all things, even the deep things [*mystery doctrines*]⁵⁴ of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man [*human systems of thought*] except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the [*Holy*] Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the [*human*] spirit who is from [*created by*] God, that we may understand what [*divine wisdom*] God has freely given us. (1 Cor. 2:9-12)

Paul introduces the concept of the human spirit⁵⁵ in these verses as essential to the divine system of learning. God creates in the new believer at salvation a human spirit to which eternal life is imputed and with which God the Holy Spirit enables the comprehension of divine knowledge. Thus, only believers acquire human spirits, enabling them to be reborn as a new, trichotomous, spiritual species in the eternal family of God:

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal [*spiritually reborn with a human spirit*] by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:4-5)

The divine system of learning may be graphically depicted as follows:



⁵⁴ Refer to chapter 15, Mystery Doctrines, page 99.

⁵⁵ The important role of the human spirit in Christianity is revealed in numerous scriptures, among which are: Job 32:8; 1 Cor. 2:12; Heb. 4:12; Rom. 8:16; and John 14:26.

Divine Enablement

God's grace system of learning is comprised of six successive stages of divine enablement that reveal His grace plan to the human race:

Revelation: The Word of God as revealed to individuals in the Old Testament (primarily prophets) and New Testament (primarily apostles).

Inspiration: Using their own personalities, writing styles, and vocabulary, the authors of Scripture were divinely inspired to translate divine revelation into the written Word as enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Interpretation: Spiritual gift of the pastor-teacher that allows him to comprehend and translate the divinely inspired writings of Scripture.

Communication: Scriptural translations by the pastor-teacher that are clearly, consistently, and accurately conveyed to his congregation.

Illumination: *Gnōsis* understanding of God's Word that is accepted by the positive believer as divine truth and is accumulated in his soul as *epígnōsis* knowledge for future recall and application.

Animation: Positive believer who is assisted in his spiritual advance by the deployment of divine problem-solving devices in his life.⁵⁶

Accordingly, the believer learns divine knowledge only as enabled by the Holy Spirit and applies that knowledge to life only as empowered by Him. *Gnōsis* knowledge has no spiritual benefit; only *epígnōsis* wisdom is usable by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the believer in his Christian walk. The believer's faith should always be directed toward divine wisdom and never to the inferior wisdom of men:

My [Paul's] message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive [human] words, but with a demonstration of the [Holy] Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's [inferior] wisdom, but on God's power [of God's wisdom]." We do, however, speak a [divine] message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age. (1 Cor. 2:4-6)

Overpowering the satanically controlled sinful nature in the believer, God's indwelling power is activated in believer's soul by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, the pseudo-sciences of philosophy and psychology are powerless to permanently resolve human problems since they fail to recognize man's inborn sinful nature as the source of corruption and unhappiness. Only the omnipotence of God can effectively control man's

⁵⁶ Refer to chapter 15, Mystery Doctrines, page 103, for a listing of problem-solving devices. For further explanation, refer to the Web site of Joe Griffin Media Ministries.

sinfulness, and only His grace enables the believer to discern divine truth from human evil.

Doctrine in the believer's soul is usable by the Holy Spirit only in proportion to the amount of divine knowledge learned. The believer with a larger inventory of doctrines allows the Holy Spirit to resolve a greater number of problems. The learning process is necessarily gradual and cumulative (line-by-line, precept-on-precept, and doctrine-upon-doctrine), and is dependent upon the believer's faithful utilization of the divine system of learning. Accordingly, the believer's objective is to maximize his knowledge of divine truth for recall and use by the Holy Spirit. In confronting life's exigencies, the Holy Spirit cannot use doctrine the believer has not yet learned nor teach doctrine the pastor-teacher has not yet communicated to his congregation.

Experiential Knowledge

Whenever the believer utilizes doctrine, especially in stressful situations, he experiences personal success in overcoming problems that further reinforces his faith in the truthfulness and faithfulness of God's Word. Whereas learning Bible doctrine is initially accomplished by a faith-based system of education, faith and trust in God is additionally authenticated by personal success in using His problem-solving devices.⁵⁷ Therefore, experiential Christianity increases the believer's confidence and courage to make use of doctrine and accelerates his advance to spiritual maturity. These experiences represent individual, real-life successes that not only add "*spiritual muscle*" to his faith, but also enhance his Christian witness among those believers and unbelievers who have been deceived by false religions or human secularism.

Doctrinal knowledge encourages the believer to claim biblical promises and develop doctrinal rationales that allow him to endure any pressure, regardless of its source. For example, he learns from doctrine, as well as from personal experience, that God is just and faithful; God's Word is immutable; God's Word may be successfully employed in his life; God does not permit testing beyond one's ability to endure; and, as a concluding rationale, "**If God is for us, who can be against us?**" (Rom. 8:31):

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted [trials of life], He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up [endure] under it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

The Greek word for "*trials*," *πειρασμός* (*peirasmós*), defines divine testing with a beneficial purpose or effect; that is, God does not remove or reduce

⁵⁷ Refer to chapter 15, Problem-Solving Devices, page 103.

the severity of the testing, but rather challenges the believer's capacity to overcome or endure any testing by his reliance on doctrinal recall. Personal success achieved by testing the believer's faith provides experiential proof that future pressures may be endured with composure and confidence. If the believer never experiences tests of his faith, he will never complete his advance to spiritual maturity. The Apostle Peter offers further validation of the beneficial effects of Christian suffering⁵⁸ that serve to glorify Jesus even as the believer is encouraged to continue his spiritual advance to maturity:

We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope *[confidence]* (Rom. 5:3-4).

Summary

Just as the humanity of Jesus Christ suffered during the Incarnation, so also the advancing believer, using the power of the Holy Spirit, must endure his own trials and tribulations with the same spiritual maturity of mental attitude that was exhibited by Christ. In so doing, the believer advances in God's plan for his life, becomes a recipient of divine blessings in time and eternity, serves as an effective witness for the absent Savior in the devil's world, and eternally shares in the divine inheritance possessed by Christ.⁵⁹

Therefore, the consistent use of the divine system of learning by believers is intended to accelerate their advance to spiritual maturity:

All Scripture is God-breathed *[inspired]* **and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be perfect** *[become spiritually mature]*, **completely equipped** *[trained]* **unto all good works** *[divine good]*. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

This advance to spiritual maturity, life's most important objective for the believer, may be summarized as follows:

Attendance of the believer within a local church
+ Pastor-teacher with spiritual gift of communication
+ Positive volition of believer toward the Word of God
+ Filling and teaching ministries of the Holy Spirit
+ Consistent assimilation and application of doctrine
= Accelerated advance toward spiritual maturity

⁵⁸ Refer to chapter 17, Human Suffering, page 123.

⁵⁹ Refer to Appendix B – Union with Christ, page 159.

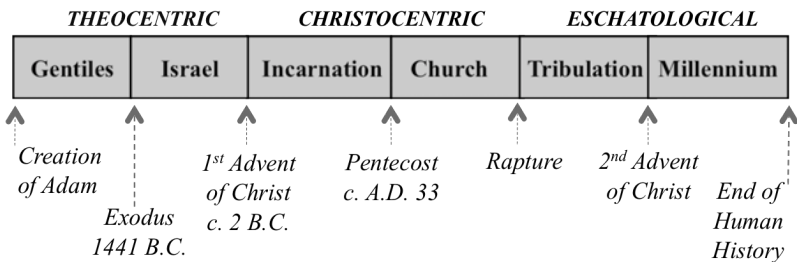
Introduction

Dispensations (or Ages) are discrete periods of human history⁶⁰ during which God the Father manages His grace plan for the human race by the delegation of divine administrative authority to specific human representatives: “**Times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority**” (Acts 1:7). Each succeeding dispensation is differentiated by the introduction of new divine mandates accompanied by new doctrines required to fulfill those mandates, newly assigned human authorities to administer the unfolding of God’s grace plan for mankind, and new strategies by Satan to prevent the future course of human history culminating in his eternal condemnation to the Lake of Fire. This dispensational timeline is grouped into three categories, each consisting of two dispensations, which are graphically depicted below:

Theocentric [God-centered], which began with the creation of Adam and ended with the virgin birth (or First Advent) of Christ.

Christocentric [Christ-centered], which began with the virgin birth of Christ and ends with the Resurrection or Rapture of the Church.

Eschatological [Prophecies as yet to be fulfilled], which take place following the Rapture and terminate with the end of human history.



Consistent with Scripture, the entirety of human history is comprised of six distinctive dispensations. In each period, God delegates the responsibility of safeguarding and disseminating His Word to specific individuals or groups. Although the continuity of God’s will and purpose for mankind persists from period-to-period, failure of His delegated representatives to accomplish their objectives brings about divine judgment followed by a new dispensational

⁶⁰ Overview of “Dispensational History” has been adapted from publications and diagrams of R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries.

Era of Negative Volition

Initiated by the sins of Adam and Ishah, this period began with the fall of man⁶⁴ and ended with the advent of Abraham (Gen. 3:6-12:1). Deceived by Satan, both the man and woman disobeyed God's mandate not to eat the fruit from the **"tree of the knowledge of good and evil"** (Gen. 2:16-17), which expressed their negative volition toward Him. Both violated the divine institution of marriage since Ishah ignored the delegated authority of her husband and Adam failed to exercise his delegated authority over her. Therefore, they lost their *"innocence,"* the condition of sinless perfection, which resulted in the loss of their human spirits⁶⁵ and the simultaneous acquisition of sinful natures. No longer in a state of perfection, they were expelled by God from the Garden of Eden. Thereafter, the human race was perpetuated by procreation with inherited sinful natures (the humanity of Jesus Christ as the only exception) and held responsible for personal decisions concerning their compliance with divine mandates (Gen. 3:11-19).

Disobedience to God's mandates by man's original parents demonstrates the evil influence on human volition of satanic deceit and enticement that continues throughout history. Only the sovereign power of God's grace evidenced by the redemptive sacrifice of Christ on the cross can prevail over man's vulnerability to the seductive genius of Satan: **"My [Christ's] grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in [your] weakness"** (2 Cor. 12:9).

During this era, the divine institution of the family was established with God's delegated authority of parents over their own children, and the reaffirmation of the husband's authority over his wife (Gen. 3:16). Since written Scripture did not exist, Scripture was communicated through dreams, visions, angelic appearances, and theophanies. God's delegated spiritual authority, functioning within a family priesthood,⁶⁶ was assigned to the male head of the family who conveyed God's Word both orally and ritualistically. The gospel message of Christ existed as a future Messiah who was revealed orally and visually in their animal sacrifices to God (Gen. 3:15).

Except for Adam and Ishah and the humanity of Jesus Christ, all human beings throughout history are born spiritually dead and dichotomous — that is, body and soul but without a human spirit. True in all dispensations, new believers in Jesus as the Christ become trichotomous by acquiring God's imputation at salvation of a human spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). This spiritual renovation empowers the new believer to benefit from an eternal relationship with Him (1 Cor. 2:12-14).

⁶⁴ Refer to chapter 5, The Fall of Man, page 24.

⁶⁵ Refer to page 68 for further explanation.

⁶⁶ God's delegation of spiritual authority differs among dispensations: the family priesthood for the Gentiles; Levitical and family priesthoods for Israel; and the universal priesthood for believers during the dispensation of the Church.

Also during this era of negative volition, widespread evil existed (Gen. 6:1-7), which prompted God's intervention into human history to protect the human race from destroying itself:

Angelic Infiltration: In a failed attempt to prevent the then future birth of the humanity of Christ, Satan's fallen angels procreated with human women, producing a super-human hybrid race⁶⁷ (Gen. 6:1-4).

Universal Flood: For one hundred and fifty days (Gen. 7:24), the universal flood manifested God's disciplinary intervention into human history to cleanse the world of the evil committed during the angelic infiltration, sparing only the eight members of Noah's family who had remained faithful to God's grace plan (Gen. 6:5-8:14).

Human Government: Civil authority over citizens was delegated to the descendants of Noah to restrain personal sins and provide for orderly interactions between human beings (Gen. 8:15-10:32).

Nationalism: Self-government was established among distinct and disbursed nations in order to restrain the concentration, and thus the corruption, of centralized power in human government that occurred with the construction of the "**Tower of Babel**"⁶⁸ (Gen. 11:1-9). Prior thereto, the entire human race consisted of only one culture and one language, which encouraged the natural human tendency to trust in their own native intelligence and personal achievements rather than in the grace plan of God. As a result, God created the boundaries of national entities throughout the world, each with their own indigenous language, so as to restrict the oppressive influence of despotic leaders lusting for power over other human beings.

Noahic Covenant: Along with the institution of government, God's covenant with Noah included the protection of the sanctity of human life and the addition of animal flesh to the pre-flood vegetarian diet.⁶⁹

Era of Jewish Patriarchs

The era of Jewish patriarchs was a transitional period in history that began with Abraham as the father of the Jewish race and ended with Moses as the father of the Jewish nation. God's four divine establishment institutions were maintained during this period, and His delegated spiritual authority was assigned to the patriarch of each household who was solely accountable for communicating God's grace plan from divine revelation to his family unit.

⁶⁷ Imprisoned in Tartarus, division of Hades (footnote #123), and finally cast into the Lake of Fire.

⁶⁸ Tower of Babel represented man's arrogant and evil attempt to establish an authoritarian, worldwide government in opposition to God's authority and plan for the human race.

⁶⁹ "**Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I [God] gave you the green plants, I now give you everything [to eat]**" (Gen. 9:3).

Abram was a Gentile by birth from Ur of Chaldea (currently Southern Iraq) who later in life, along with his Jewish descendants, became the beneficiary of two unconditional and eternal promises from God: the ***Abrahamic*** and ***Palestinian Covenants*** that identify the Jews as God's chosen people and the land to be inherited by the Jewish nation.⁷⁰

The Lord had said to Abram [then seventy-five years old], “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you [Canaan]. I [God] will make you into a great nation [Israel] and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you [the Jews], and whoever curses you [the Jews] I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 12:1-3)

The Lord said to Abram ... “Lift up your eyes from where you are [Canaan] and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.” (Gen. 13:14-15)

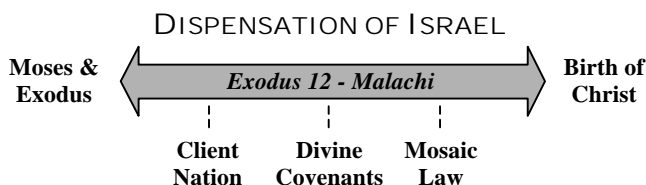
God genetically transformed Abram at the age of ninety-nine into history's first Jew and renamed him Abraham who became the father of the Jewish race. Included among the Jewish patriarchs who believed in the Messiah, Abraham was succeeded by his son Isaac (history's first natural born Jew) and his grandson Jacob (renamed Israel) whose twelve sons were the forefathers of the original twelve tribes that established the new Israeli nation (1 Chr. 2:1-2). Therefore, the Jewish lineage of the humanity of Christ originated with Abraham and his progeny Isaac and Jacob. Their generations are chronicled in Matt. 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38.

Preceding the birth of Isaac, Abram's wife Sarai⁷¹ was sexually infertile and persuaded him to produce a child with Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant. This union resulted in an illegitimate son, Ishmael, a Semitic Gentile who later became the father of the twelve tribes of Arabia (Gen. 25:12-16). Ishmael and his progeny were Gentiles who did not believe in the reality of a Jewish Messiah-Savior. Later in human history, the descendants of Ishmael were satanically persuaded to establish the counterfeit religion of Islam. The enmity between the Jewish offspring of Abraham through Isaac and the Gentile offspring of Abram through Ishmael has persisted throughout history to this very day (Gal. 4:29).

⁷⁰ Approximately the land between the Nile River in Egypt to the west (including parts of Sudan and Ethiopia), the Tigris-Euphrates valley to the east, parts of present-day Turkey and Syria to the north, and the Arabian Sea to the south.

⁷¹ When Abram was renamed Abraham, Sarai was renamed Sarah, mother of Isaac (Gen.17:15).

The era of the Jewish Patriarchs represented a transitional period of human history during which God prepared the twelve tribes of Israel for nationhood under His direct governing authority. During the last 400 or so years of this era, the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt until they were empowered by God under the leadership of Moses to leave Egypt in a nationwide migration known as the “*Exodus*” (Exod. 7:1-12:42). Thus, in the year 1441 B.C., the Jews were freed from their slavery in Egypt, and God fulfilled His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by guiding them to the Promised Land of Canaan. However, eternal fulfillment of the promised covenants will not occur until the dispensation of the Millennium due to Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah during His earthly ministry.



Client Nation

Beginning with the exodus of the Jews from Egypt in 1441 B.C. and ending with the virgin birth of Jesus Christ circa 2 B.C., Israel served as God’s first client nation with national responsibility for safeguarding and disseminating His Word throughout the world (Exod.12-Mal.). Initially established as a theocracy governed by God, Israel was later permitted by Him to create its own human government under which the nation alternated between periods of success (*divine blessing*) and failure (*divine discipline*). During this dispensation, the four divine institutions continued in effect with emphasis on the establishment of a military force capable of protecting the new of Israel from predator nations.

As a client nation under God’s authority, Israel was divinely empowered to administer the development, preservation, education, and dissemination of His Word throughout the known world. Development of Scripture occurred progressively from divinely inspired revelation to and communication by the Jewish prophets. Preservation of Scripture was the responsibility of the Levitical priesthood, which ensured and protected accurate copies of the original biblical manuscripts. The Levitical priests were also accountable for the teaching of Scripture to those who demonstrated an interest in learning and applying the Word of God. The dissemination of Scripture required missionaries to distribute God’s Word to unbelieving nations. Therefore, the nationhood of Israel was created as God’s replacement for the Gentiles, who during their dispensation failed in their role as His delegated authority.

Divine Covenants

As previously noted, the first two divine covenants were promised to Abram and his Jewish descendants during the age of the Gentiles: **Abrahamic** that recognized the Jews as God's chosen people (Gen 12:1-3), and **Palestinian** that defined the boundaries of the land to be eventually inhabited (Gen. 15:18). During the dispensation of the Jewish nation, two more unconditional covenants were promised to Israel as a national entity:

Davidic Covenant: Designated the ruling Jewish dynasty as from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and house of David (2 Sam. 7:8-16), from which originated the human and kingly lineages of the Messiah.

New Covenant: Restores client nation status for Israel and fulfills their divine covenants at the Second Advent of Christ (Jer. 31:31-34).

Mosaic Law

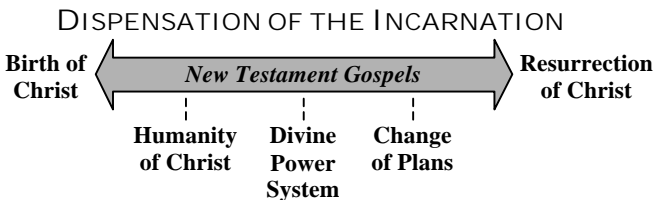
Shortly after Moses guided the Jews out of Egypt, God provided him with the three codices of the Mosaic Law⁷² that established a legal system to govern their individual and national affairs (Exod. 19-31):

Codex I: Moral law that includes the Ten Commandments;

Codex II: Spiritual code in which the Messiah is symbolically and ritualistically revealed; and

Codex III: Social and civil code that protected Jewish life.

However, due to man's inborn sinful nature, total compliance with these codices was not only unattainable but also not required for either salvation or spirituality. In God's grace, the Mosaic Law was provided to convince the Jews they were physically born as sinners innately incapable of fulfilling all attributes of the Law, thereby requiring the Messiah-Savior to free them from the unrestrained power and evil of the sinful nature and establish an eternal relationship with Him.



Despite repeated cycles of discipline, the nation of Israel ultimately failed to fulfill its divine obligations as God's client nation, which prompted the historic entry into human history of the unique person of the universe, Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of God's grace salvation plan (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts).

⁷² Refer to Appendix B – Mosaic Law, page 157.

Beginning with His virgin birth circa 2 B.C. and concluding with His resurrection circa A.D. 33,⁷³ this new dispensation identifies the redemptive role of Jesus Christ as the promised Jewish Messiah. Following His resurrection, the Jews were graciously offered an additional forty years to accept Jesus the Christ as their Messiah. However, having rejected Him, Israel lost its client nation status in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Jews were dispersed throughout the nations of the world under God's fifth cycle of national discipline.⁷⁴ Had a majority of the Jews accepted Christ as their Messiah, He would have established His millennial kingdom following the dispensation of the Tribulation and fulfilled His divine covenants with Israel.

Humanity of Christ

Upon His virgin birth, the deity of Christ was united with His humanity to initiate God's plan of salvation as the God-Man Savior. As the mediator between God and man, Christ was uniquely qualified since He was both undiminished deity and sinless humanity in one person forever. Coinciding with His First Advent, the divine revelations of previous dispensational periods were exchanged for Christ Himself; the *written Word* of the Old Testament became the *living Word* of the New Testament: "**The Word [Christ] became flesh and made His dwelling among us**" (John 1:14).

From His mother Mary, the Jewish ancestry of Jesus Christ's humanity originated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and continued within the tribe of Judah through David and his son Nathan (Luke 3:23-31). At Jesus Christ's physical birth, God simultaneously imputed soul life to His sinless biological life,⁷⁵ thereby creating human life that was united with His pre-existing deity in hypostatic union (see page 18). With reference to human beings, sinful **biological life** created from procreation is combined with **soul life** imputed by God at physical birth to create **human life**. Consequently, man is capable of creating biological life, but only God can create human life resulting from His imputation of the soul to biological life at the moment of physical birth.

⁷³ Dates of the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ are further explained on the Web site of Joe Griffin Media Ministries, *Concept of Freedom by the Founding Fathers*, lessons 64-77.

⁷⁴ Whenever a client nation to God fails in its responsibilities, divine punishment is successively intensified through five cycles of national discipline including social disintegration, economic collapse, and political chaos. The fifth cycle results in military conquest by a foreign power with loss of national sovereignty (Lev. 26:14-39). See also Appendix B – *Cycles of Civilization*, page 162.

⁷⁵ Since Mary was impregnated with uncontaminated male chromosomes provided miraculously by God the Holy Spirit, her husband Joseph was not the birth father of Jesus Christ (see page 80); rather, he represents the kingship lineage of Jesus Christ through David and his son Solomon (Matt. 1:1-16). Mary was the birth mother of Christ's humanity through David's son Nathan (Luke 3:31), not of His deity that has forever existed having no beginning or ending. She later gave birth by Joseph to at least six other children (Matt. 13:55-56).

The biological life of the human species is formed mediately through the agency of procreation and subsequent gestation. Conversely, the soul life of the species is created immediately by God and united to biological life at the moment of physical birth, resulting in human life. Upon His creation of Adam, the Lord established this cycle from procreation to human life:

Then the Lord formed [צָרַךְ (*yatsar*)] **man of dust from the ground** [*chemicals of the earth*], **and breathed into his nostrils the breath** [נְשָׁמָה (*n^eshamah*): *divine act of uniting soul with body*] **of life** [plural of חַיָּה (*chayyah*): *biological and soul lives*]; **and man became a living being** [*human life*]. (Gen. 2:7, NASB)

This sequence leading to the creation of human life is repeated in biblical descriptions of physical birth by the Hebrew term מִבֶּטֶן (*mibeten*) — “*out from the womb*” — in such verses as Ps. 22:9-10 and Isa. 44:2,24; Isa. 49:1,5.

Jesus Christ was self-sustaining in His deity prior to His momentous entry into human history. However, eschewing His divine attributes during His earthly ministry, He voluntarily submitted to His Father’s authority by relying solely on His human essence as the prophesied God-man Savior in fulfillment of God the Father’s salvation plan:

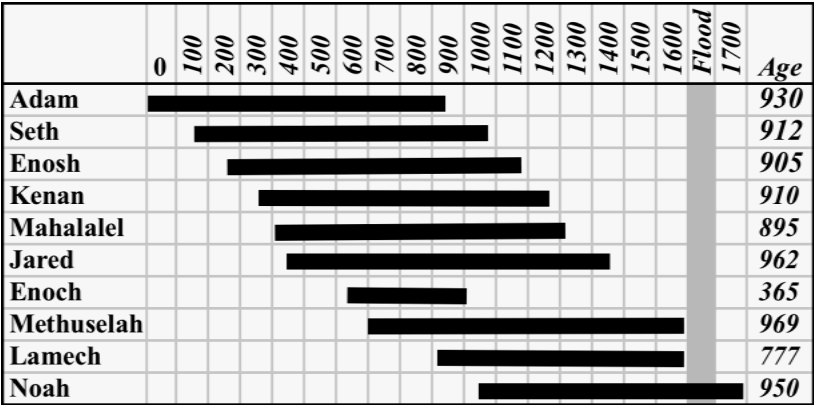
When Christ came into the world, He said [*speaking from His deity*]: **“Sacrifice and offering You [Father] did not desire, but a [human] body You prepared for Me...I have come to do Your will** [*to fulfill God’s salvation plan for mankind*].” (Heb. 10:5-7)

As prophesied in the Davidic Covenant, Christ fulfilled God’s promise to the Jewish King David as the descendant Son from the tribe of Judah, family of David. The Apostle Peter affirmed Jesus Christ’s Davidic lineage and future resurrection before his fellow Jews in Jerusalem:

But he [David] was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that He would place one of his [David’s] descendants [Christ] on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he [David] spoke of the resurrection of the Christ [or Messiah⁷⁶], that He was not abandoned to the grave, nor did His body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life [*resurrected three-days following His physical death on the cross*], **and we are all witnesses of the fact.** (Acts 2:30-32)

⁷⁶ The names “Christ” in the Greek and “Messiah” in the Hebrew both mean “*The Anointed One*.”

Ancestral Line of Christ



This chart is compiled from verses in Genesis, chapters 5-9, and reflects the life spans of Adam and his descendants through Noah and the Flood. From these lineages, the line of Jesus Christ’s humanity may be identified:

- The lifespan depicted for Adam began with his “fall” in the Garden, at which time he was genetically altered to include a sinful nature that is passed on to all future descendants. The elapse of time from his sinless creation by God to his “Fall” from perfection in the Garden is unknown.
- Due to the longevity of these patriarchs who lived prior to the Flood, all but Adam and Enoch were contemporaries of Noah. Direct contact with his forefathers enabled Noah to personally gain knowledge of the origins of life on earth and the earliest concepts of Christian theology, which he and his sons conveyed to their post-flood descendants. Moses, writer of the five-book Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy), was a later beneficiary of this ancestral knowledge.
- Except for Noah and his immediate family, Adam through Lamech (Noah’s father) died prior to the Flood. Surviving the worldwide Flood were only eight human beings: Noah and his three sons, accompanied by their wives. Noah’s son, Shem, became the father of the Semitic peoples and the direct line through Abraham and David to the birth of Christ.

From Shem to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ circa 2 B.C., the ancestral line of His true humanity continues with the following scriptural references:

- Semitic Line:** Shem to Abram (Gen. 11:10-30).
- Jewish Line:** Abraham to David (1 Chr. 1:34; 1 Chr. 2:3-15).
- Davidic Line:** David to Joseph, through his son Solomon (Matt. 1:6-16).
David to Mary, through his son Nathan (Luke 3:23-31).

Divine Power System

During the Incarnation, Christ in His humanity successfully demonstrated a prototype system free from the evil influence and corruption that had plagued Satan's world since the original sin of Adam. The Lord voluntarily chose to abstain from use of His attributes of deity to demonstrate the effectiveness of this "Divine Power System" to combat satanic pressure if used in the lives of human beings. As man's archetype for living the Christian way of life, Jesus Christ successfully utilized *eight divinely empowered functions* within this system throughout His earthly ministry, including His sacrifice on the cross.

(1) Power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit indwelt Jesus at His physical birth as prophesied in the Book of Isaiah and quoted in the New Testament:

Here is My [Father's] servant [Christ], Whom I uphold, My chosen One in Whom I delight; I will put My [Holy] Spirit on Him and He will bring justice to the nations. (Isa. 42:1) ... **The [Holy] Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him [Christ].** (Matt. 12:18)

During His ministry on earth, the power of God the Holy Spirit sustained the Son of God in His human condition of impeccability (Heb. 9:13-14) — He Himself spoke of this power in His fulfillment of God's plan of salvation:

"The [Holy] Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He [God] has anointed Me to preach good news [of the gospel] to the poor [unbelievers]. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners [redemption for those enslaved in sin] and recovery of sight for the blind [unbelievers unable to see divine truth], to release the oppressed [under the tyranny of religion and/or legalism], to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor [First Advent of Christ]." (Luke 4:18-19)

(2) Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth progressed rapidly for Jesus under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. As a youth of only twelve years, His knowledge of and proficiency in God's Word amazed His Jewish elders in the temple:

After three days they [Joseph and Mary] found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers [of the Law], listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers. (Luke 2:46-47)

Doctrinal knowledge empowers the positive believer to think and act from a divine perspective, which enables spiritual growth and the production of divine good. How and what we think determines the outcome of our decisions and actions that are either pleasing or displeasing to God:

The Word of God is alive and powerful ... It [God's Word] judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart [mind]. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account.
(Heb. 4:12-13)

God blesses divine viewpoint in the minds of mature believers. Hence, that which is rewarded in time and eternity is how and what the believer thinks: namely, the amount of Bible doctrine resident in his soul and the extent to which it is applied to life and circumstances.

(3) *Genuine Humility*

Jesus Christ developed genuine humility subject to the structured respect for and obedience to parental authority within the divine institution of the family. A further example of His deference to authority is evidenced by His prayer request to the Father just prior to His arrest by the Romans in the Garden of Gethsemane:

He [Christ] fell with His face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup [symbolic of His identification with the sins of the world] be taken from Me. Yet, not as I will, but as You will." (Matt. 26:39)

The absence of arrogance defines *genuine humility*, whereas an attitude of self-importance requiring the imposition of authority represents *enforced humility*. In His parable of the "*Ambitious Guest*" (Luke 14:7-11), Christ identifies the absence of arrogance in the person who is invited to a banquet and chooses not to sit at the special place of honor: "**For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted**" (Matt. 23:12).

As practiced by some religions, obedience to God's authority is correlated with divine pressure or vengeance, whereas the proper motivation should be focused on the expectation of divine blessings from an attitude of genuine humility. A humble person is a teachable person who is able to learn doctrine under the authority of the Father and teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

(4) *Spiritual Maturity*

Jesus Christ attained spiritual maturity at age twelve (Luke 2:42-47) not as a result of the use of His divine attributes, but from His knowledge of God's Word acquired under the enabling mentorship of the Holy Spirit. During the

years of His youth preceding His public ministry, Christ in His humanity studied and became proficient in His knowledge of Old Testament Scripture:

The Jews were amazed and asked, “How did this Man [Christ] get such learning without having studied?” Jesus answered, “My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him [the Father] Who sent Me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but He who works for the honor of the One Who sent Him is a man of truth” (John 7:15-18)

(5) *Personal Love for God*

As the virtuous object of Christ’s personal love, God the Father exemplifies the absolute perfection of divine integrity and wisdom:

“But the world must know that I [Christ] [personally] love [God] the Father and that I do exactly what My Father has commanded Me.” (John 14:31)

Christ’s obedience to His Father’s mandates was inspired by His personal love for Him. Similarly, the believer’s faith in God’s divine essence inspires genuine humility that is motivated by personal love for Him: **“We [are able to] love [only] because He [the Father] first loved us” (1 John 4:19).** Therefore, the love of God for the believer is the source of the believer’s personal love for Him:

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)

God’s love for the human race is expressed by His matchless grace, and is revealed in Christ as our Lord and Savior and the Holy Spirit as our Teacher and Mentor. Knowing that God personifies the perfection of love and forever honors His Word, we are able to personally love Him and obey His mandates.

(6) *Unconditional Love for Man*

Unconditional love by the believer for mankind was demonstrated by Christ’s fulfillment of His Father’s grace plan of salvation. Jesus Christ expressed His love unconditionally by ignoring human imperfection, enduring the cross in payment for the sins of mankind, and offering His saving grace to every member of the human race: **“Live a life of [unconditional] love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2).**

Just as Christ loves believers, so also believers must unconditionally love one another, **“for all [human beings] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (Rom. 3:23). Unconditional love for one another is made possible by the believer’s personal love for God:

“‘Love [personally] the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’...‘Love [unconditionally] your neighbor [fellow man] as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31)

Another expression of Christ’s unconditional love for man will occur at the Rapture of the Church when all believers⁷⁷ will receive their resurrection bodies. Hence, the following doctrinal principles are reaffirmed by Him: once saved, always saved; and once a member of God’s eternal family, always a member of His eternal family:

Who shall separate us from the [unconditional] love of Christ? For I [Apostle Paul] am convinced that neither death nor life, neither [elect] angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:35-39)

Nevertheless, to spiritually advancing believers, Christ offers His personal love in response to their faithful obedience to His mandates and consistent use of rebound. Confirmed in John’s gospel, Christ correlates love for Him with obedience to Him, which is only achieved by knowledge of His Word:

“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey My commands, you remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father’s commands and remain in His love.” (John 15:9-10)

When the believer confesses his known sins, the triune Godhead is able to love him personally as long as he remains in his spiritual condition. Obedience to God’s Word expresses the believer’s personal love for Him, which assures him of divine blessings in time and eternity.

God’s love will also be expressed at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ to those believers who fulfill God’s plan during their earthly lives. During what may be depicted as the *“Royal Award Ceremonies,”* eternal blessings from God will be awarded to spiritually mature believers as *“Nike Awards,”* a

⁷⁷ Believers who die physically during the Tribulation and Millennium will receive their resurrection bodies at the end of their respective dispensation.

modern-day derivation from the Greek τῷ νικῶντι (*tōi nikōnti*) or “to him who overcomes.”⁷⁸ These awards provide additional motivation for believers to advance spiritually in the plan of God.

In the English and Greek, the word “love” is a transitive verb that requires both a subject and an object: the subject is the one who loves and the object is the one loved. Therefore, personal love places emphasis on the qualities of the object, and unconditional love places emphasis on the virtue and integrity of the believer (or subject) who loves:

Personal Love	Unconditional Love
Emphasizes the object	Emphasizes the subject
Qualities of object	Integrity of subject
Personal acquaintance	No personal acquaintance
Directed toward few	Directed toward all
Conditional	Unconditional
Virtue dependent	Virtuous
Optional	Mandatory

(7) Satanic Testing

Jesus Christ employed the ministries of the Holy Spirit to overcome satanic tests of His faith while in obedience to the Father’s plan for His life. In His humanity, Jesus Christ’s ability to triumph over evil demonstrates the power of God the Holy Spirit and, therefore, the effectiveness of the divine power system for the believer who also will be satanically tested during his life:

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me [Christ] first. If you belonged to the world [human viewpoint], it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” (John 15:18-19)

For forty days in the desert Christ was severely tempted by Satan himself who frantically attempted, without success, to discourage Him from fulfilling His substitutionary role in the salvation plan of God:

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the [Holy] Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them He was hungry ... Jesus answered, “It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.” (Luke 4:1-2; Luke 4:8)

⁷⁸ Refer to *Who Loves You?*, Joe Hunt, ed. Joe Griffin (St. Charles: Joe Griffin Media Ministries, 2006), 35-43.

(8) Maximum Happiness

Jesus Christ in His humanity achieved maximum happiness by His faithful obedience to and application of divine thought within the prototype divine power system. Similarly, the believer may also use this same power system to duplicate the inner soul happiness and tranquility exhibited by Him:

“If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy [happiness] may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:10-11)

The following two divinely empowered functions within this power system sustained Jesus Christ during His intense suffering on the cross: the enabling power of God the Holy Spirit for the recall and use of doctrine pertinent to His situation, and His perfect inner happiness having endured the sacrificial penalty He paid for all the sins of mankind. Accordingly, the believer should focus solely on Jesus Christ and His Word as the source of his happiness on earth and future rewards in heaven:

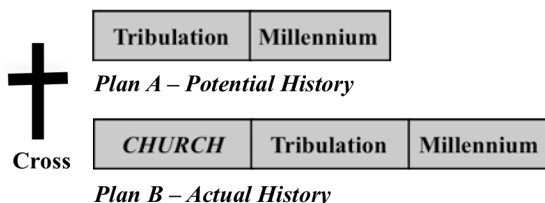
Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes [concentrate] on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy [inner happiness] set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame [unembarrassed], and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1-2)

True happiness, therefore, resides in the soul of the believer who confronts the pressures problems, and challenges of life with maximum use of God’s Word as empowered by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the situation, event, or surroundings, the attributes of soul happiness, stability, and tranquility are always available to the positive believer should he decide to live life by his application of the divine power system.

Jesus Christ’s demonstration of the effectiveness of the divine power system enabled Him to glorify God the Father by fulfilling His earthly assignment, while introducing the prototype example of the Christian way of life. His intercessory prayer to God the Father immediately prior to His arrest and crucifixion validates His redemptive role on behalf of mankind:

“I have brought You [Father] glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do [in His humanity]. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You [in His deity] before the world began.” (John 17:4-5)

Change of Plans



During the Incarnation, Christ revealed Himself to man with reference to two sequences of events. Under *Plan A – Potential History*, Christ would have revealed Himself to Israel as the promised Messiah, the prophesied Son of David. Had Plan A been fully implemented, He would have been crucified by the Romans for inciting a rebellion against the Roman Caesar, followed by His resurrection and ascension before returning to earth seven years later to establish His 1,000-year millennial kingdom. However, obliged by Israel's persistent rejection of Him as the Jewish Messiah, ***Jesus Christ replaced the potentiality of Plan A with the actuality of Plan B***, whereby:

- God inserted the new Church dispensation into human history, and Israel lost its client nation status to Gentile nations.
- Mystery doctrines for the Church Age were introduced by Christ and further explained in the Epistles.
- New Testament Epistles and the Book of Revelation were written.
- Tribulational and millennial dispensations were postponed.

During this latter phase of the Incarnation, Christ redirected His teachings to the Gentiles who had acknowledged Him as their Lord and Savior, and began to represent Himself to these new believers as the Head of the Church of the royal family of God. Acquiescing to Jewish demands, the Romans crucified Christ for the crime of blasphemy, following which He was resurrected and, forty days later, ascended into heaven.

Rejection of Christ

Prophecies during previous dispensations foretold the future arrival on earth of the Messiah to present God's grace plan of salvation to the human race and establish the kingdom of God on David's throne in Jerusalem. Thereafter, divine revelation to man was to assume the form of Jesus Christ Himself:

In the past [dispensations] God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days [Incarnation] He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, and through Whom He made the universe ... The Son is the exact representation of His Father's essence. (Heb. 1:1-3)

At the approximate age of thirty, Jesus Christ's public ministry began when John the Baptist introduced His Messiahship and kingdom reign to Israel:

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he [John] who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah [Isa. 40:3]: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord [Christ], make straight paths for Him.'" (Matt. 3:1-3)

Initially focused on establishing His kingdom reign over Israel, Christ detailed His political and social policy for the Jews in what is known as the "*Sermon on the Mount*" (Matt. 5-7). Had a majority of Jews accepted His Messiahship, He would have fulfilled the divine covenants previously promised and Israel would have retained its client nation status under God. The birth and earthly ministry of our Lord fulfilled over thirty prophecies in the Old Testament, but Israel failed to accept Him as her longed-for Messiah. On the contrary, the Jews longed for a King of Israel to free them from Roman subjugation, the result of which would then qualify this King as their prophesied Messiah. However, the reverse was prophesied: the Jews were to recognize and accept Christ as their Messiah to free them from the power of personal sin, after which His kingship reign over Israel would be established to liberate them from Roman rule. Until Jesus Christ was persuaded of His acceptance as their Jewish Messiah, He refrained from establishing His millennial kingdom and fulfilling their promised covenants. Confronting Israel's continued lack of faith in Him, Jesus Christ, throughout the Gospel of John, patiently waited for a Jewish change of mind — **"My hour [spiritual death on the cross] has not yet come"** (John 2:4; 7:6,30).

In spite of His performance of miracles, healing of the sick, and unsurpassed knowledge of Old Testament Scripture, a majority of the Jewish people rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Hence, the *potentiality of Plan A inevitably evolved into the actuality of Plan B*. Their rejection of His claims of Messiah is evidenced by His lectures in the Jewish temple:

"Yes, you know Me [Jesus the Christ], and you know where I am from. I am not here on My own, but He [My Father] Who sent Me is true. You do not know Him, but I know Him because I am from Him and He sent Me." (John 7:28-29)

"I am the Light of the world [the prophesied Messiah]. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness [Satan's worldly system], but will have the Light of life [Christian way of life]." (John 8:12)

Ignorance of the Word

The Scriptures conclusively confirm the biblical principle that without first accepting Jesus as the Messiah-Savior, knowledge of God and His grace plan for the human race is not possible (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, the legalistic Pharisees who did not know or accept Jesus as the Christ were ignorant of the Father and His Word, which they professed to know and represent:

“The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, Who sent Him.”⁷⁹ (John 5:22-23)

“If God were your [*Pharisees*'] Father, you would love Me, for I came from God and now am here ... Why is My language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.” (John 8:42-44)

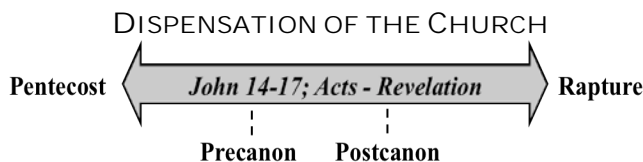
The Hour Has Come

While a majority of the Jewish people renounced Christ as their Messiah, an increasing number of Gentiles responded positively to His assertions of Messiah-Savior as prophesied in God's Word. These two events combined to activate the redemptive role of Jesus Christ on behalf of mankind, to be followed by God's insertion into human history of the new dispensation of the Church. Israel's continuing negative response to Jesus as the Christ had become irredeemable, and God selected the Gentiles as His new spiritual authority by which human history would be administered:

There were some Greeks [*Gentiles*] among those who went up to worship at the Feast [*of Tabernacles*]. They came to Philip with a request ... “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified [*crucified*].” (John 12:20-23)

In the Book of John, chapter 14, Christ began to introduce His disciples to the new dispensational doctrines of the Church that had never before been revealed to Old Testament writers. On the day of Pentecost circa A.D. 33, God once again changed dispensational history from the Jewish nation of Israel to the Gentile nations of the universal Church.

⁷⁹ Dishonoring the Father is revealed in the Ten Commandments: **“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them”** (Exod. 20:4-5).



Dispensational Beginning

Ten days following Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven circa A.D. 33, the previously unrevealed dispensation of the universal Church began on the day of Pentecost. This dispensation has been divinely foretold to terminate with the Rapture of the Church at an unspecified time in the future. Pentecost was the Jewish harvest festival that was celebrated fifty days subsequent to their annual Passover commemoration, an interval of time identical to the number of days preceding the introduction of the new dispensation.

During His forty-day, post-resurrection ministry, Jesus Christ commanded the apostles to await the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit that would occur on the day of Pentecost, and making use of its divine power, they were instructed to evangelize both Jews and Gentiles throughout the world:

“You [apostles] will receive [divine] power when the Holy Spirit comes on [indwells] you; and you will be My witnesses [evangelists] in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Uniquely identified with Jesus Christ during the Church Age, every believer is a new spiritual species as a member of God's royal family. Unavailable in prior dispensations, the Church Age believer is empowered by God the Holy Spirit⁸⁰ to duplicate Christ's use of the divine power system during His Incarnation. Additionally, the royal priesthood of believers replaced the specialized Levitical priesthood of Israel, God's delegation of administrative authority was reassigned to Gentile nations, Church Age believers became the beneficiaries of spiritual advantages defining a unique relationship with God, and divine policy for believers was revealed by doctrines unknown to the writers of the Old Testament (Eph. 3:1-5). These new doctrines, known as “*mystery doctrines*,” were introduced by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John (chapters 14-17) and are further explained in the New Testament Epistles. These mystery doctrines are more fully explained in the following chapter of this overview, with emphasis on their distinctive expression of the Christian way of life for Church Age believers.

⁸⁰ Selected Old Testament believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit for specific responsibilities known as “endowment,” a temporary endowment of divine power unlike the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit of Church Age believers (Gen. 41:38; Exod. 31:2-5; Dan. 4:8).

Dispensational Eras

The dispensation of the Church consists of two eras that are distinguished by either the partial or total completion of the written canon of Scripture, and the temporary or permanent distribution of spiritual gifts by God the Holy Spirit to the apostles and, ultimately, to Church Age believers.

Pre canon Era

The pre canon era was the period of sixty-seven years between Pentecost and completion of the Book of Revelation by the Apostle John circa A.D. 96. This period is chronicled in the Book of Acts by Luke, the first historian of the Church Age. Luke provides details of the distribution by God the Holy Spirit of *temporary spiritual gifts* to the apostles, which resulted in the dissemination of mystery doctrines throughout the world, the creation of local churches, and the warning to Israel of impending national discipline.⁸¹ These spiritual gifts included apostleship, prophecy, miracles, healings, and tongues⁸² (1 Cor. 12-14). With the Bible's completion, these gifts fulfilled their evangelistic purpose and ceased to exist (1 Cor. 13:8; Phil. 2:27).

Post canon Era

The post canon era consists of an unknown period of time between the completion of the Bible by the Apostle John and the yet future Rapture of the Church. During this era, God the Holy Spirit distributes *permanent spiritual gifts* to believers consisting of: pastor-teacher, evangelist, service, helps, mercy, leadership, and giving (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:7-11). These spiritual gifts replace the spectacular expressions of divine power available during the pre canon era, and emphasize the responsibility of individual believers within local churches to learn and apply Bible doctrine. Never before in human history have believers, each functioning as his own royal priest before God, have access to as much divine power and as many divine operating assets as are available during the Church dispensation. The believer-priest is now personally accountable to God for doctrine in his soul.

Dispensational Ending

The Rapture of the Church identifies that future event in human history when the souls and human spirits of Church Age believers who have either died or

⁸¹ Because of its repeated rejection of Christ, Israel was eliminated as a client nation of God under the fifth cycle of national discipline when the Roman legions burned Jerusalem in A.D. 70, forcing the Jews to be dispersed throughout the world, a national relocation known as the "*Diaspora*."

⁸² Speaking in tongues refers to the divinely empowered ability to speak in Gentile languages unknown to the speakers themselves. Prophesied in Isa. 28:11, this temporary spiritual gift was a forewarning of Israel's failure as a client nation to disseminate the gospel among Gentile nations, and the resultant national discipline that would subsequently occur.

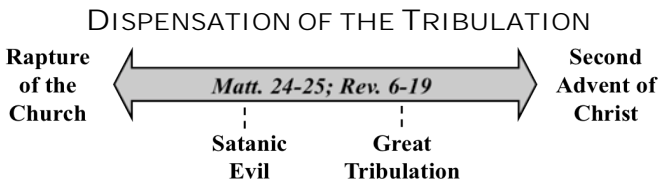
are currently alive will be **“caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”** (1 Thess. 4:16). No other prophecy is revealed in Scripture that must be fulfilled prior to this event; thus, the Rapture cannot be humanly predicted and may occur at any time. As a result, the believer needs to live his life as if the Rapture would occur tomorrow, while learning and applying doctrine as if the Rapture would not occur for another thousand years.

Replacing the believer's physical body that has been corrupted from birth by the sinful nature, his resurrection body will be imperishable not dissimilar to the resurrection body of Christ (1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2). Concluding his revelation to the Corinthian church, Paul reveals more information on the mystery of the Rapture that will signal the end of the Church Age:

Listen, I tell you a mystery [doctrine]: We will not all sleep [physically die], but we will all be changed [at the Rapture] – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet ... The dead [believers who die during the Church Age] will be raised imperishable [receive resurrection bodies], and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal [believers alive at the Rapture] with immortality. (1 Cor. 15:51-53)

Paul uses the Rapture prophecy to encourage Church Age believers with the expectation of an eternal life with Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 4:17-18), whereby they will be spared the violent power struggle that will characterize the seven-year Tribulation during which only unbelievers will initially populate the earth:

“Since you [believers] have kept My command to endure patiently, I [Christ] will also keep you [guard with a wall of fire] from the hour of trial [historical disaster of the Tribulation] that is going to come upon the whole [inhabited] world to test those [unbelievers] who live on the earth.” (Rev. 3:10)



This dispensation is prophesied throughout the Old Testament and in the New Testament books of Matthew and Revelation. In Daniel's prophecy written during the sixth century B.C., Jesus Christ's millennial kingdom was anticipated without his prior knowledge of God's then future insertion of the Church Age into human history. Therefore, the final seven years of his prophecy representing the Tribulation was deferred until after the Rapture, thereby completing the final seven years of the Age of Israel (Neh. 2:1-8 and Dan. 9:24-27).

Satanic Evil

Since the Rapture relocates all believers to heaven, only unbelievers will initially inhabit the earth at the beginning of the Tribulation. As all believers ascend into heaven, the restraining ministries of God the Holy Spirit will be removed from the earth and the corruptive consequences of satanic evil will proliferate in the minds and actions of the unbelievers left behind. Although evil also exists during the Church Age, the Holy Spirit serves to restrain both its occurrence and severity. During the Tribulation, however, satanically inspired evil is rampant and unconstrained:

For the secret power of lawlessness [*satanic evil*] is already at work [*during the Church Age*]; but the One [*Holy Spirit*] Who now holds it back [*restrains evil*] will continue to do so till He [*Holy Spirit*] is taken out of the way [*removed at the Rapture*]. (2 Thess. 2:7)

Unimpeded by God the Holy Spirit, Satan and his fallen angels will greatly increase their efforts to finally eliminate the Jewish race from human history, thereby preventing the Second Advent of Christ and His millennial reign on earth. God's essence, however, assures the fulfillment of His unconditional covenants with Israel, which includes divine approval of those who protect and provide refuge for the Jewish race:

I [*God*] will make you [*Abraham*] into a great nation and I will bless you ... I will bless those who bless you [*pro-Semitism*], and whoever curses you I will curse [*anti-Semitism*]; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Gen. 12:2-3)⁸⁴

The first three years of the Tribulation will experience relative peace and prosperity since Satan and his angelic and human emissaries will manipulate world politics and religion in an unrestrained, frantic attempt to prove that he is as omnipotent as God (Isa. 14:13-14). Because of his incompetence and

⁸⁴ This divine pledge to bless those who bless the Jews and curse those who curse them assures divine protection for the survival of believing and unbelieving Jews throughout human history, including the Tribulation, and the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenants with the Jewish people.

arrogance, Satan's evil efforts will not succeed. Neither angels nor men are capable of altering the prophetic events of human history or of emulating the perfection of Jesus Christ's millennial reign:

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Phil. 2:10-11)

Great Tribulation

Approximately three and one-half years following the Rapture, God will expel Satan and his fallen angels⁸⁵ from heaven and cast them to earth:

There was war in heaven. [Archangel] Michael [*“protector of Israel”*] and his [elect] angels fought against the dragon [Satan], and the dragon and his [fallen] angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they [Satan and fallen angels] lost their place in heaven ... He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Rev. 12:7-9)

Therefore, the second half of the Tribulation, known as the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14), will witness unprecedented disaster and violence as Satan struggles to prevent the Second Advent of Christ by eliminating the Jews from history. Satan arrogantly believes he is capable of preventing the fulfillment of God's unconditional covenants with regenerate Israel, which, if successful, would nullify Christ's Second Advent and His millennial reign on earth, and prove God's character to be imperfect. During this period, Satan and his emissaries persuasively promote the centralization of governmental power to prevent the destruction of the human race by infectious diseases, nuclear devastation, climate change, and/or environmental contamination. Despite Satan's genius, God's omnipotence will not allow his strategy to succeed; for God to be God, His promises to and grace plan for mankind must be fulfilled. Even if the Rapture should occur today, mankind has been assured of an additional 1,007 years — the seven-year Tribulation followed by 1,000 years of Christ's Millennium reign — before God destroys the existing universe and creates a new universe for the Eternal State (Rev. 21).

Even though a client nation will not exist, unbelievers will be evangelized by the gospel of Christ more intensely than during any previous dispensation. Risking martyrdom, 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:4-8), assisted by elect angels (Rev. 14:6-7), will present the gospel throughout the world. When Satan's authority is challenged under the pressure of an increasing number of

⁸⁵ Distinguished from elect angels, fallen angels comprise one-third of the angelic creation that joined Satan in his rebellion against God's authority (Isa. 14:14). Also identified as demons, they are capable of demon possession of unbelievers and beasts and demon influence over believers.

Perfect World Government: Jesus Christ will reign unopposed on earth as the Lord of lords and King of kings.

Universal Knowledge of God: False doctrine will be abolished and communication and worship of Truth will be omnipresent.

Human Longevity: Major increases in human life expectancy will occur and infant mortalities will be eliminated, resulting in the repopulation of the earth.

Perfect Justice: Worldwide perfect justice will prevail under the overruling authority of Christ's benevolent dictatorship.

Additionally, God will imprison Satan and his fallen angels: **"He [God] threw him [Satan] into the Abyss [compartment of Hades], and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended"** (Rev. 20:3).

Satan's Revolution

Following one thousand years of perfect environment on earth, Satan will be released from his imprisonment to lead a futile revolt of his fallen angels and treasonous men against the government of Jesus Christ. Known as the *"Gog and Megog Revolution"* (Rev. 20:7-10), Satan's final attempt will involve his fallen angels and unbelievers, all of whom will be instantly overpowered. After this last and unsuccessful attempt to supersede God's authority, Satan will be condemned to the Lake of Fire wherein he will be **"tormented day and night for ever and ever"** (Rev. 20:10).

Satan's final revolution against divine authority, supported by his angelic and human agents, validates the principle that environmental perfection does not contribute to man's control of his inherent sinful nature and, thereby, to the resolution of difficulties in his life.⁸⁷ On the contrary, obsessive and radical efforts to improve man's environment serve to incite acts of human good that oppose, rather than support, God's grace plan for the human race with severe adverse consequences. Even with perfect environment and the direct, visible role on earth of Christ Himself, some will reject Him as Lord and Savior. However, God will preserve the earth and its inhabitants until His overruling purpose for all of His creation has been fulfilled regardless of Satan's or man's efforts to change, or even influence, the course of human history. Only the believer in Christ, empowered spiritually by God the Holy Spirit, is capable of resolving life's difficulties by taking advantage of doctrine. Made possible only as enabled by God's grace plan for mankind, the environment to be perfected resides wholly within the souls of human beings.

⁸⁷ Also refer to the "Fall of Man" within the pristine environment of the Garden of Eden, page 24.

Last Judgment

The Millennium will conclude with the distribution of resurrection bodies to millennial believers, followed by the total replacement of the old with a new universe. Immediately thereafter, the Last Judgment⁸⁸ will occur during which unbelievers of all dispensations will be judged, not for their sins for which Jesus Christ previously paid the penalty on the cross, but for their works of human good and evil during their lives on earth:

I [John] saw the dead [unbelievers], great and small, standing before the throne [of Christ], and books [of Works] were opened. Another book was opened, which is the Book of Life [believers]. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books [works of human good and evil] ... If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 20:12-15)

Despite his own well-intentioned righteousness, the unbeliever lacks God's divine righteousness and will be judged unqualified to live with Him. Listed in the Books of Works, he will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire eternally alienated from God. Believers, listed in the Book of Life, will advance to the Eternal State, forever in fellowship with God.

Eternal State

Immediately preceding His creation of the Eternal State, Jesus Christ will destroy the existing universe, including the heavens and earth, and create a new universe as the eternal residence for God's royal family:

The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare ... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (2 Pet. 3:10-13)

I [Apostle John] saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away ... "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He [Christ] will live with them ... He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [including the sinful nature] has passed away." (Rev. 21:1-4)

⁸⁸ Also known as the Great White Throne Judgment and Final or Day of Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

DISPENSATIONAL REVISION

Never revealed in Old Testament Scripture was God's future insertion of the Church Age into dispensational history with its unique "*mystery*" doctrines. Due to Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ as the prophesied Jewish Messiah, God changed His delegation of client nation status from Jewish unbelievers to Gentile believers, and introduced new doctrines to substitute the ***Power Plan of God*** (*Church Age*) for the ***Ritual Plan of God*** (*Age of Israel*). That these doctrines were previously unknown to Old Testament writers is documented in the following verse:

Now to Him [God] Who is able to establish you by my [Paul's] gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery [doctrines] hidden for long ages [dispensations] past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him [Christ]. (Rom. 16:25-26)

Paul purposefully utilizes the Greek word *μυστήριον* (*mustérion*), translated "mystery," to relate to the ancient mystery cults with which unbelievers of his day were familiar. These cults revealed their secrets (mysteries) only to a select few who had been initiated into their religious sects. So also the mystery doctrines of the Church Age were not revealed in the Old Testament but were made known to a select few — the royal family of God — in the New Testament Epistles. Thus, Paul's use of this word identifies the concept that biblical truth revealed in the Church Age cannot be understood using human systems of learning. Only believers in Jesus Christ as enabled by the ministries of the Holy Spirit can learn to live the Christian way of life.

Just as God designated certain individuals or groups in prior dispensations as the guardians and communicators of His Word, He selects pastor-teachers to teach, preserve, and defend these mystery doctrines during the Church Age:

So then, men ought to regard us [pastor-teachers] servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things [mystery doctrines] of God. (1 Cor. 4:1)

Most importantly, pastor-teachers are mandated not to communicate inaccurate biblical doctrines to their congregations. They must not distort the essential, original meaning of Scripture by mixing or substituting secular philosophies for divine truth. So important is this mandate for pastors that disobedience will cause severe, adverse disruptions in the freedom, stability, and security of individuals, families, and, if prolonged, the sovereignty of the nation:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ [divine viewpoint]. (Col. 2:8)

SELECTED DOCTRINES

Beginning with the Book of Romans and ending with the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation, the mystery doctrines are addressed exclusively to believers in the Church Age, allowing special access to spiritual privileges and opportunities unavailable in prior dispensations. Supported by policies and procedures, the Christian way of life has been redefined for the believer in Jesus Christ. As a result, the Church Age believer is incapable of growing spiritually or living the Christian way of life without studying, learning, and applying the doctrines revealed in the New Testament Epistles. Since this overview includes only the basics of the Christian faith, we will not undertake a comprehensive analysis of these doctrines,⁸⁹ but will briefly introduce several of them that hopefully will motivate the reader's further interest.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The word "baptism" means *identification*, which in Scripture identifies the new believer's eternal union with Jesus Christ at the moment of salvation.⁹⁰ As previously explained, the new believer gains access to the top power sphere wherein he is transformed into a new spiritual species as a member of the body of Christ and becomes the beneficiary of eternal life in union with Him:

The [human] body is a unit, although it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with [union with] Christ. For we were baptized [enabled] by one Spirit [Holy Spirit] into one body [family of God, also known as the body of Christ] — whether Jews or Greeks [Gentiles], slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink ... You [believers] are the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27)

⁸⁹ More thorough analysis may be obtained by referring to the Bible classes and publications on the Web site of Joe Griffin Media Ministries at www.joegriffin.org.

⁹⁰ Refer to Appendix B — Union With Christ, page 159.

Power Plan of God

Superseding the ritual plan of God for Israel, Jesus Christ in His humanity demonstrated the power plan of God during the Incarnation by His total reliance on the ministries of God the Holy Spirit and His obedience to the mandates of God, His Father. This power plan exhibited by Christ became the paradigm for living the Christian way of life during the dispensation of the Church. It consists of eight divinely empowered spiritual functions that distinguish the Christian way of life (refer to chapter 14, page 82).

Utilization of these spiritual functions enables the believer to emulate Christ in His humanity, knowing that only a perfect God can create a perfect plan to compensate for man's innate imperfection. Since the believer is susceptible to the temptations of his sinful nature, he is incapable of realizing God's plan by use of human knowledge, intelligence, experience, maturity, personality, or energy. His human viewpoint must be replaced by divine viewpoint, spirituality must be substituted for carnality, and spiritual maturity must be the believer's foremost objective in his life. Only from his knowledge and experiential utilization of doctrine can the believer learn to trust in and rely upon divine resources for the conduct of his life:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life
[as an unbeliever], to put off your old self [sinful nature],
which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be
made new in the attitude of your minds *[renovated*
thinking from doctrine]; and to put on the new self,
created *[spiritually reborn]* **to be like God in true**
righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24)

Family Responsibilities

The mystery doctrines included the concepts of royal priest and ambassador because the new believer becomes a member of God's royal family with all of its privileges, and include the newly created functions of "**Priest**" and "**Ambassador**" as personal responsibilities of each believer.

Royal Priesthood

Whereas Old Testament Levitical priests were delegated the responsibility of representing man before God, the believer in the Church Age is individually empowered to represent himself, directly and privately, before God. As a member of God's royal family, each believer is empowered to be his own royal priest — "**But you** *[believers]* **are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to** *[the royal family of]* **God**" (1 Pet. 2:9). Therefore, the believer-priest is enabled by God the Holy Spirit to conduct his life as unto the Lord, communicating through constant prayer with God

the Father. This priestly function requiring the believer to learn and apply doctrine makes possible his advance to spiritual maturity, a doctrinal status in life that maximally glorifies God while ensuring his inner happiness and productivity. The privacy of this direct linkage with God the Father inspires growth in personal accountability, individualized blessings, deployment of spiritual gifts, and unconditional respect for other people.

Royal Ambassadorship

Whereas the royal priesthood represents man before God, the believer's role as a royal ambassador represents God the Son before man: **"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us"** (2 Cor. 5:20). Church Age believers are divinely appointed as representatives of Jesus Christ on earth with a divine mandate to communicate to unbelieving mankind, by spoken word and/or example of their lives, the gospel of the physically absent Savior.

*Responsibilities Compared*⁹¹

<i>Priest</i>	<i>Ambassador</i>
<i>Represents himself</i>	<i>Represents Christ</i>
<i>Toward God</i>	<i>Toward man</i>
<i>Private</i>	<i>Public</i>
<i>Before God</i>	<i>Before the world</i>
<i>Learns doctrine</i>	<i>Interacts with others</i>
<i>Spiritual advance</i>	<i>Spiritual service</i>
<i>Receives blessing</i>	<i>Gives blessing</i>

Citizens of Heaven

Church Age believers are no longer citizens of the devil's world subject to its satanic strategies and tactics, but members of a heavenly community on earth in an eternal union with Christ — **"Our citizenship is in heaven"** (Phil. 3:20). As citizens of heaven, believers in the devil's world are regarded as **"aliens and strangers"** (1 Pet. 2:11), and should conduct their lives worthy of their station in life (Eph. 4:1) — **"As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude."** (Col. 2:6-7, NASB)

Royal Aristocracy

Just as Roman citizenship during the first century A.D. enjoyed special privileges, so also the Church Age believer, as a citizen of heaven and a member of God's royal family, benefits from privileges and opportunities

⁹¹ Thieme, *The Integrity of God* (4th ed.), 107.

unique in dispensational history — in effect, the believer personifies heavenly nobility residing on earth:

For He [God] chose us [believers] in Him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will. (Eph. 1:4-5)

Church Age believers in Jesus Christ represent a new, superior class of human beings — spiritual aristocrats — whom God adopted as members of His royal family (1 Pet. 2:9). Using the Bible as our textbook and the local church as our classroom, we must learn to conduct ourselves like royalty (Rom. 15:1).

Problem-Solving Devices

Beginning with the “*on switch*” to the Christian way of life, confession of sins provides the believer with spiritual access to the second problem-solving device, the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit that initiates and sustains spiritual growth within God’s grace plan. As the believer’s faith in Bible doctrine continues to be challenged by the inevitable exigencies in his life, he learns experientially to take advantage of all ten problem-solving devices in order to accelerate his progress toward the “high ground” of spiritual maturity. Culminating in his preoccupation with the person and mind of Jesus Christ, the believer, now spiritually mature, is enabled to glorify Him, magnify His Word, and become the beneficiary of divine blessings and rewards in time and eternity. These ten biblical problem-solving devices,⁹² as interpreted from Scripture, are summarized as follows:

Confession of Sins (Rebound) (1 John 1:9)
Filling of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16)
Faith-Rest Life (Rom. 4:20-21)
Grace Orientation (1 Pet. 5:5-6)
Doctrinal Orientation (Rom. 12:2-3)
Personal Sense of Destiny (Rom. 14:7-8)
Personal Love for God (Rom. 8:28)
Unconditional Love for Man (1 Cor. 13:4-7)
Sharing God’s Happiness (John 15:11)
Occupation with Christ (Phil. 1:20-21)

⁹² Refer to the Bible classes and publications on the Web site of Joe Griffin Media Ministries for an expanded explanation of these problem-solving devices.

Introduction

Due to the human condition with its inherited sinful nature, the believer's soul is continuously challenged by adversity, as well as by prosperity, to surrender its confidence in and dependence upon the Word of God. The source of such pressure most often emanates from satanic enticement and duplicity, but is also the result of mental, emotional, and physical limitations that are common to the human race. Nonetheless, whatever the pressure, God in His grace has empowered the believer with biblical problem-solving devices that enable him to endure and eventually triumph over any problem or pressure he confronts in life.

The third of the problem-solving techniques, the Faith-Rest Life, is defined as trusting in the Lord (*faith*) when challenged by life's pressures, and persevering in that faith while patiently waiting on Him for guidance and provision (*rest*). Regardless of the circumstance or severity of the pressure, the believer who lives the faith-rest life enters into a state of inner stability and tranquility — **“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 4:7). The faith-rest life is also referenced in Scripture as a moment-by-moment **“Sabbath,”** or rest from human effort, while trusting in the Lord's promised solutions to daily problems and pressures. In short, as the believer **“casts”** the pressures of his life upon God (1 Pet. 5:7), courage is substituted for fear, rest is substituted for worry, and a relaxed mental attitude is substituted for anxiety and distress. Once the soul is stabilized, the believer is enabled to effectively utilize the other seven problem-solving devices in his life.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

Numerous passages in the Bible illustrate both the principle and practice of the faith-rest life by the positive believer. This overview will identify and analyze both Old and New Testaments examples. The futility of applying human solutions to human problems is contrasted with the faithfulness of God's promised deliverance of spiritually advancing believers from life's numerous difficulties — **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight”** (Prov. 3:5).

Exodus From Egypt

The faithfulness and power of God's deliverance from adversity is illustrated in the Old Testament by the mass departure (exodus) of the Israelites from Egypt. The Egyptians enslaved the Jewish people for 430 years until God in His grace acted to deliver His chosen people from their misery:

The Lord said [to Moses], "I have indeed seen the misery of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey [the Promised Land]." (Exod. 3:7-8)

Selecting Moses as His delegated spiritual authority, God's deliverance of the Jews from slavery was initiated by the imposition of ten plagues upon Egypt (Exod. 7-12) that persuaded Pharaoh to "**let His people go**" (Exod. 7:2). The Old Testament exodus of the Jews symbolically illustrates certain doctrinal principles of the Christian way of life for Church Age believers:

- The Egyptian slavery of unbelieving Jews is symbolic of slavery to the sinful nature, freedom from which requires belief in the Passover Lamb,⁹³ namely Jesus Christ, who suffered spiritual death on the cross in order to liberate mankind from the unopposed control of his soul by the sinful nature (1 Cor. 5:7).
- Corresponding to the wandering of the Jews in the Sinai wilderness, the Church Age believer enters into phase two of God's plan and is required to cope with the troubles and trials of the faith-rest life that typify the Christian way of life. These non-disciplinary pressures are intended to prepare the believer for God's blessings on earth and in eternity. Therefore, believers must learn to trust in God to solve life's difficulties just as they trusted Him to resolve their sinful nature problem by the redemptive sacrifice of His Son (Rom. 5:10).
- The Israelites were not permitted to enter the Promised Land until they successfully lived the faith-rest life. Even as the Jews were tested for their trust in God's provisions, Church Age believers are similarly challenged to become spiritually self-sustaining. Failure to pass these tests results in repetitive testing until they learn how to trust in God for their every need.

⁹³ The tenth and final plague administered by God resulted in the death of all firstborn males of humans and animals, except for the Jews who were instructed to spread the blood of a sacrificial lamb (symbolic of Christ on the cross) on the doorframes of their houses. Therefore, the blood served as a sign for God to "*pass over*" the Jewish firstborn, thereby sparing their lives (Exod. 12).

First Exodus Generation

During the first seven weeks following their deliverance from Egypt, the first exodus generation experienced God's protection and provision in miraculous ways: parting of the Red Sea and drowning of Pharaoh's army (Exod. 14); provision of water in the Desert of Shur (Exod. 15); and the provision of food in the Desert of Sin (Exod. 16). Yet, when God guided the Israelites to what they assumed was a waterless camp, they failed His faith-rest test:

So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?" They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" (Exod. 17:2-3)

Despite God's miraculous deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian slavery and His guidance and provision in the Sinai wilderness, these verses illustrate the absence of trust in Him among the Israelites. God guided two million Jewish adults, plus their offspring, to a waterless desert to test their trust in His promises to provide for their logistical support regardless of the adversity. The Jews failed to trust in God's promised deliverance and challenged God's integrity by complaining to Moses, His delegated spiritual authority. The Jews should have known from doctrine and experience that the resolution for their helpless circumstances consisted of confidence in the promised grace of God that had already provided a divine solution to their problems.

This same divine grace is applicable to Church Age believers who are tested for their confidence and courage under the pressure of "no-hope" situations. Human viewpoint solutions are always ineffective and promote reliance on worldly strategies rather than on God's grace plan for the human race. The believer who prevails over adversity is both confident and courageous in his use of divine promises and resources in his life and abides by the following biblical principles:

- Trusting and applying God's promises under maximum pressure are required of the believer to successfully live the faith-rest life.
- By claiming one or more of God's promises, the believer's mental attitude is stabilized despite the severity of the adversity, enabling his concentration on the recall of pertinent biblical doctrines.
- God's faithfulness is upheld by His immutability, which can never permit any change in His promises to the human race (2 Tim. 2:13).
- Since God sacrificed His Son on the cross for both the temporal and eternal benefit of unbelieving mankind, how can He not fully provide for believers who are members of His royal family (Rom. 8:32)?

Problems and pressures are intended to motivate the believer to sustain his faith in God's Word, develop his confidence and courage under pressure, and expedite his progress toward the goal of spiritual maturity. The advancing believer is grateful for the opportunity to use God's promises and personally experience the faithfulness of His grace solutions. If God's Word is never challenged, there is little motivation to apply previously learned doctrine to life's difficulties; as a result, spiritual advancement is minimized or does not occur. However, having successfully passed these tests of faith, the believer qualifies for divine blessings in both time and eternity.

The Lord's deliverance of the quarrelsome Israelites from their thirst for water is illustrated in the next verses of Exodus, chapter 17:

Moses cried out [*prayed*] to the Lord, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff [*of judgment*] with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place *Massah* [*testing God*] and *Meribah* [*complaining to God*] because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exod. 17:4-7)

Doctrinal principles revealed in these verses are relevant to all believers:

- Moses did not attempt to apply human solutions to the problems of his people; rather, he prayed to God for His divine counsel. As the designated leader, Moses conveyed God's Word to the Israelites. So too Church Age pastor-teachers are obligated to know the Word and divine viewpoint, rely on God's guidance in the use of their spiritual gift, and accurately explain God's Word to their congregations.
- Moses' staff of judgment was symbolic of God's omnipotence and faithfulness in delivering the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. These same divine attributes are accessible by believers of all dispensations who trust in and patiently wait on His grace.
- The striking of the rock at Horeb depicted the future humanity of Jesus Christ suffering spiritual death on the cross when God judged the sins of mankind — out from the "**Rock of Christ**" (1 Cor. 10:4) flows the water of salvation and eternal life (John 4:13).

Having failed to employ the principles of the faith-rest life, the first exodus generation of the Israeli nation was tested and re-tested for forty years in the Sinai wilderness — ultimately, however, they were not permitted to enter the Promised Land. They chose not to associate adversity with opportunities to experience the faithfulness and power of God to provide them with divine solutions. Exasperated by unbelieving fear and anxiety, they rejected God's grace that depends not on anything they could offer, but on what He was willing to freely provide for those who abide by His Word.

Second Exodus Generation

Because of its rejection of God's grace provisions, only a few of the first exodus generation, including Moses and his brother Aaron, survived the forty-year wilderness journey. Their descendants, the second exodus generation, were guided by the Lord to revisit the same waterless desert where the first generation had been tested forty years earlier:

Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers [*of the first generation*] fell dead before the Lord [*sin unto death*]!" (Num. 20:2-3)

These verses indicate that in addition to failing to execute the faith-rest life, for which they suffered the sin unto death, the first-generation parents did not endeavor to teach their offspring, the second generation, the importance of God's Word in their lives. As the divinely delegated authority for the family, parents are obligated to perpetuate Christianity by teaching their children the faith-rest life and other biblical doctrines, enabling their advance to spiritual maturity in service to the Lord:

"These commandments [*Word of God*] that I [*God*] give you today are to be upon your hearts [*in your souls*]. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deut. 6:6-7)

Some believers decide in favor of problem resolution by reliance on human government rather than depend on God's faithfulness and power within a national environment of personal freedom. Whether the issue is Egyptian slavery for the Israelites or economic adversity during the Church Age, believers coping with life's unavoidable difficulties may be falsely motivated to utilize human judgment, rather than divine viewpoint, to resolve their problems. Such strategy inevitably results in additional problems and tests of their faith. For the spiritual benefit of the positive believer, God tests his

confidence and courage to apply Bible doctrine under pressure not only to enable problem resolution, but also to confer blessings in time and eternity:

But one thing I [Paul] do: Forgetting what is behind [past failures] and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal [spiritual maturity] to win the prize [divine blessings] for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:13-14)

Continuing with the second exodus generation, the seriousness of Moses' disobedience to God's mandates is revealed in the Book of Numbers, which prohibited his entry into the Promised Land:

He [Moses] and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in Me enough to honor Me as Holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring [lead] this community into the [Promised] Land I give them." (Num. 20:10-12)

Although one of the greatest believers and leaders in human history, Moses failed God's faith-rest tests by disobeying several of His divine instructions, resulting in the denial of his entry into the Promised Land:

- Committed mental and verbal sins by his unauthorized judgment and resentment of the Israelites — **"you rebels."**
- Demonstrated self-righteous arrogance by assuming credit for the provision of water to his people — **"must we bring you water?"**
- Disobeyed God and lost his temper by striking rather than speaking to the rock as instructed — **"struck the rock twice."**
- Failed to glorify God before His people — **"You did not trust in Me enough to honor Me as Holy in the sight of the Israelites."**

As the delegated spiritual leaders of the Israelites, Moses and his brother Aaron were accountable to God for their disobedience. Consequently, they were denied the opportunity to lead them into the Promised Land. However, despite the unfaithfulness of Israel, God's grace remained true to His perfect essence by providing water for the second generation Israelites and their livestock: **"If we [believers] are faithless, He [God] will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself [deny His perfect essence]" (2 Tim. 2:13).**

New Testament Commentary

So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today [*David’s era*], if you hear His [*God’s*] voice, do not harden your hearts [*ignore His promises*] as you [*the Israelites*] did in the rebellion [*first exodus generation*], during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried Me and for forty years saw what I did [*faithfulness of divine grace*]. That is why I was angry [*anthropopathism: human trait assigned to God to facilitate comprehension*]⁹⁴ with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray [*human viewpoint thinking*], and they have not known My ways [*learned and applied God’s Word*].’ So I declared on oath in My anger, ‘They shall never enter My rest [*the Promised Land*].’” (Heb. 3:7-11, as quoted from Ps. 95:8-11)

The Holy Spirit is imploring Jewish and Gentile believers not to replicate the faith-rest failures of the Israeli generations of Exodus 17 and Numbers 20. Evil is the attitude of the believer who challenges God’s faithfulness that promises deliverance from life’s difficulties for those who respond positively to His Word. For the Israelites of the two exodus generations, God’s rest referred to their occupation of the Promised Land; for Church Age believers, His rest applies to divine blessings in time and eternity. Regardless of the dispensation, if the believer does not learn and apply God’s Word, then life’s problems and pressures will inevitably re-emerge for further divine testing until God is satisfied with the believer’s attainment of soul stability and inner tranquility. Several scriptures authenticate God’s power, faithfulness, and love when the spiritual believer is subjected to severe pressure:

Cast your cares [*burdens*] on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous [*any believer having God’s righteousness*] fall. (Ps. 55:22)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding [*human viewpoint*]; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6)

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isa. 41:10)

⁹⁴ Refer to Footnote #2, page 3, for further explanation.

Continuing in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 3:

See to it, brothers [believers], that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving [unbelief in God's promises] heart [soul] that turns away from the [promises of the] living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as [while] it is [still] called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness [refusal to believe God's Word]. We have come to share in [be made partners with] Christ if we hold firmly [experiential sanctification⁹⁵] to the end [death or the Rapture] the confidence we had at first [in the beginning]. (Heb. 3:12-14)

No matter the difficulty or circumstance, God desires that all of us seek and persist in His rest when under severe pressure; in so doing, “*muscle*” will be added to our faith and, experientially, the power of doctrine will accumulate in our souls. In due course, with the enabling power of God’s promises and the ministries of the Holy Spirit, the believer gains the confidence and courage to objectively evaluate and resolve any issue in his life. As he learns and uses God’s promised deliverance from difficulty, every day becomes a “*Sabbath*” — the more hopeless the situation and more helpless the believer, the greater his blessings and rewards by simply trusting in Him. These tests of faith-rest offer unique opportunities to stand fast in obedience to doctrine, imitating the integrity of Christ, while under pressure in the devil’s world.

In summary, it is the free exercise of the believer’s volition that determines whether he suffers from human viewpoint in the “*wilderness*” or prospers from divine viewpoint in the “*land of milk and honey*.” God in His grace has provided solutions to man’s problems if only we would choose to trust in His faithfulness, omnipotence, and immutability. The believer must rest in God’s deliverance in accordance with His perfect timing:

Those who wait upon deliverance from the Lord will exchange their strength for His. They will mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isa. 40:31, EXT)

“I [Christ] have told you these things, so that in Me believers may have inner peace. In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33, EXT)

⁹⁵ Following salvation, the believer is set apart (sanctified) as Bible doctrine renews his mind and his thinking conforms to the thinking of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

In the Book of Hebrews, chapter 4, the human author's commentary reveals several doctrinal principles applicable to believers today:

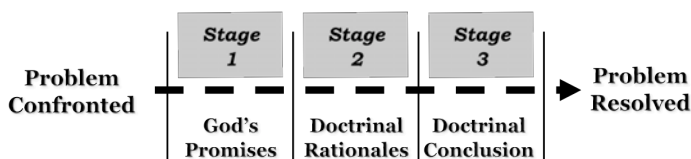
- Just as promises of God liberated Old Testament believers from hopeless and helpless situations, His faithfulness is available to believers in successive dispensational periods of human history who respond positively to His Word.
- The Greek word for “rest,” *κατάπαυσις* (*katápausis*), is defined as peace of mind, something on which to lean for support, and the cessation of action and exertion. Hence, God's rest conveys the concept of the believer under pressure doing nothing apart from trusting in Him to resolve his problems.
- To avoid additional problems and the re-testing of their faith, believers are admonished not to ignore God's promises that are available to them if only they would decide to claim them.
- Knowing God's Word is the first step in living the faith-rest life. His promises are of no value if the believer does not combine that knowledge with continuing faith for application in his life.
- Enduring faith, not human effort, empowers the believer to enter into God's rest wherein he trusts totally in the faithfulness and power of His promised deliverance — **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble”** (Ps. 46:1).
- God's Word is **“alive and powerful,”** capable of discerning the **“thoughts and intentions”** of all of His creation (Heb. 4:12). The believer's thoughts are evaluated each morning by Jesus Christ, including his attempts to live the faith-rest life.
- Practice of the faith-rest life by the believer offers opportunities to witness for Christ as Lord and Savior. Exhibiting a stabilized mind and peaceful soul under pressure, the believer radiates to outside observers an inner confidence whatever the adversity.
- God is forever faithful by offering His divine solution: **“Stand still and watch the deliverance of the Lord”** (Exod. 14:13).

Integrating these principles, the *faith-rest life* may be summarily defined as:

Combining the promises of God with enduring faith and trust in His Word, resulting in a condition of physical rest and mental clarity, freed from anxiety and filled with confidence in God's faithfulness to resolve the stress in the believer's life, whereby the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified and His Word is magnified.

FAITH-REST MECHANICS

Fulfillment of the faith-rest life, especially when under stress with seemingly irresolvable difficulties, is accomplished by three successive stages in the mental attitude of the positive believer. Although the believer is a **“citizen of a heavenly community”** (Phil. 3:20) and a member of the royal family of God, he lives in the devil’s world wherein he is constantly pressured by satanic temptation to forsake God’s will and purpose for his life. Therefore, faith-rest mechanics must be practiced in sequence to enable problem resolution and, as a result, to fulfill his role as an ambassador for Christ.



Stage One: God’s Promises

By claiming God’s promises with abiding faith, the believer is liberated from the fear, anxiety, and confusion that frequently accompanies adversity, and impedes his ability to think calmly and rationally. His soul experiences an inner serenity in harmony with God’s provisions for his life — **“Fear not for I [God] am with you”** (Isa. 41:10). There is no difficulty in the believer’s life for which God has not already provided a solution upheld by His integrity:⁹⁶

His diverse power has given us all that we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him Who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has granted us His magnificent and precious promises, so that by them we might become sharers of the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Pet. 1:3-4)

Several of God’s promises are documented below,⁹⁷ the fulfillment of which is contingent upon the use of rebound that activates the Christian way of life and is essential for the believer to be capable of faith-resting God’s promises:

“Come to Me [Christ], all of you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28)

Now faith [in God’s Word] is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1)

With God nothing shall be impossible. (Luke 1:37)

⁹⁶ Refer to Appendix B – Divine Integrity, page 156.

⁹⁷ God’s promises may also be referenced in Appendix A, page 151, in an expanded format.

Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven [will never change]; [therefore] Your faithfulness continues through all generations. (Ps. 119:89-90)

As for God, His way is blameless; the Word of the Lord is tried [has been tested]; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. (Ps. 18:30)

Stop worrying about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication after thanksgiving [to God for His grace provisions] let your requests be made known to God [Father], and the peace of God [confidence in His Word] that passes all understanding shall garrison your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)

There is no testing taken you but such as is common to man [experienced by others]; God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able, but with the testing will provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

Stage Two: Doctrinal Rationales

Claiming divine promises creates an inner soul tranquility that enables the believer's concentration on and recall of biblical doctrines pertinent to the resolution of each of his difficulties. The believer enters into a state of God's rest wherein the Holy Spirit assists in the recall and deployment of doctrines, thereby providing confidence in God's ability and commitment to resolve his problems. From among numerous doctrinal rationales that are available to the believer under stress, the three most frequently used are the *Essence of God*, *Plan of God*, and *Logistical Grace of God*.

Essence of God Rationale

The attributes of God's perfect essence provide the positive believer with the unconditional assurance that whatever God promises He fulfills completely, correctly, independently, and impartially. Discussed in detail in chapter 2, the following briefly defines the attributes of God's divine essence as they relate to the mechanics of the faith-rest life:

Sovereignty: As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God's unlimited control over all that exists includes every conflict in the believer's life. There is no difficulty He cannot or will not resolve if only the believer chooses to believe and rest in Him.

Righteousness: Since God is always correct in His thoughts, decisions, and actions, the believer's difficulties are incidents from which he learns to apply Bible doctrine. Whether the result of poor

decisions or as tests of his faith, the believer's problems were anticipated and resolved in eternity past⁹⁸ by God's perfect plan.

Justice: God is always impartial in His judgments. Adherence to His perfect standards is rewarded; His blessings are directed to those who remain steadfast in resolving problems biblically.

Love: Since God personally loves His own perfect righteousness imputed to believers at salvation, His matchless grace is motivated to provide divine solutions for all of their difficulties.

Eternal Life: God is not limited by either a beginning or ending; He has always existed and will forever exist. He has included solutions for all the believers' problems in His perfect plan throughout history.

Omniscience: God knows all that is knowable. Accordingly, He foreknew in eternity past the intricate details of believers' exigencies and their divine resolution.

Omnipotence: God is without limit in His ability and power — He is able to make happen whatsoever He wills, whenever He pleases, without assistance. Therefore, His promise to resolve the believer's problems is irrefutable and never requires human participation.

Omnipresence: God is universally ubiquitous, an eyewitness to all that occurs in creation simultaneously. He is totally aware of and personally observes all of the believer's difficulties.

Immutability: God's essence cannot be altered; His perfect Word cannot be modified or distorted. His divine perfection is an absolute assurance of the immutability of all of His divine attributes.

Veracity: God is perfect truthfulness, never devious or dishonest. The believer can always depend on Him to fulfill His promises by providing solutions for his problems.

Plan of God Rationale

Inclusion in God's plan as a member of His royal family enables the believer to fulfill God's purpose for his life: to glorify Him, magnify His Word, and reflect the integrity of Jesus Christ under pressure. Thus, unhindered by fear or anxiety, he is empowered to advance in God's plan by confronting life's problems with confidence and courage. Three theological terms⁹⁹ are used to define the grace plan of God for the believer:

For those [believers] God foreknew He also predestined ... those He predestined, He also elected (Rom. 8:29-30).

⁹⁸ Eternity past is a designation for an indeterminate period of time preceding God's creation of the angels, universe, and human beings.

⁹⁹ Refer to Joe Griffin Media Ministries that provides additional details of these complex concepts.

Foreknowledge

Foreknowledge is the knowledge of something before it exists or occurs; this attribute defines God's total familiarity with the lives of all believers. Since God knows all that is knowable (*omniscience*), He is also capable of foreknowledge (*a function of omniscience*) that enables Him to foresee, instantly and simultaneously, all individuals in future history that willingly accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Hence, God's foreknowledge in eternity past allows for His creation of individualized plans for believers that provide for the resolution of difficulties in advance of their future occurrence.

Predestination

Predestination is the provision of divine grace that identifies beforehand the destiny of believers within God's eternal plan for the human race. In eternity past, God designed a plan for every individual who, by his own volition, accepts Christ as his personal Savior (2 Tim. 1:9). Essential to His plan, predestination identifies the believer as eternally united with Jesus Christ and, as a result, as a participant in His eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:5).

God created a perfect plan that sustains all who believe in Christ as Savior regardless of their difficulty or circumstance, adversity or prosperity. There is no power in the universe that can remove the believer from God's plan:

For I [Paul] am convinced that neither death nor life, neither [elect] angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:38-39)

Election

Using His foreknowledge, election is God's selection of believers who have been predestined to become the beneficiaries of His salvation. Election sets apart divine blessings beyond salvation that empower the believer to fulfill God's purpose of glorifying His Son and magnifying His Word:

God elected believers in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. (Eph. 1:4, CTL)

For as long as the believer remains physically alive, he is assured of a divine purpose, or personal destiny, for his life on earth. Following physical death, the believer's destiny is fulfilled by his participation in the divine bliss of the Eternal State in fellowship with God forever. It is important to note that God elects only those individuals who first willingly choose to believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior — God's election must be preceded by the saving belief in Jesus Christ exercised by human volition.

Logistical Grace of God Rationale

Believers on earth serve as soldiers for Jesus Christ in an invisible war,¹⁰⁰ the resolution of which depends on mankind's acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ and the grace plan of God. Believers who comprise the forward ranks in this battle, have been promised by God all that is required to survive in the hostile environment of the devil's world: that is, both physical and spiritual support necessary for their advancement in the grace plan of God:

Physical Support: Basic needs including food, clothing, and shelter.

Spiritual Support: God's Word; local church; pastor-teacher; and the Grace System for Perception of divine thought.

Grace Rationales

Several biblical passages document God's logistical grace support for the believer and offer doctrinal rationales for living the faith-rest life:

- God's divine essence is the assurance that His logistical grace support is promised for every member of His royal family:

**His divine power has given us everything we need for
[our physical] life and godliness [our spiritual life]
through our knowledge of Him [Christ].** (2 Pet. 1:3)

- Jesus Christ speaks of the imputation of God's perfect righteousness at salvation as the source of logistical grace support for His royal family:

**“Seek first His kingdom [faith in Jesus Christ] and His
righteousness and all these things [logistical support] will
be given to you.”** (Matt. 6:33)

- The prophet Jeremiah calls attention to God's abiding faithfulness to support the believer in the midst of his troubles:

**Because of the Lord's great love believers are not
consumed [sustained daily by His divine provisions], for His
compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great
is Your faithfulness.** (Lam. 3:22-23)

- The Apostle Paul writes that all the forces of the devil's world cannot remove the believer from God's love and grace plan:

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall
trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or
nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we
are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
(Rom. 8:35-37)**

¹⁰⁰ Refer to Isa. 14:12-14 and Appendix B – Angelic Conflict, page 161.

- As long as the believer is alive, God promises to support him with all that is required for his advance to spiritual maturity. Therefore, God is obliged to protect and make available the canon of Scripture that is the textbook of Christianity:

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever. (1 Pet. 1:24-25)

- God must make available access to the local church that represents the classroom for Christianity:

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing. (Heb. 10:25)

- Pastor-teachers are provided to communicate biblical doctrines in the textbook (Scripture) to the body of Christ assembled in the classroom:

He [Christ] Who gave some [the spiritual gift] to be pastor-teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service [divine good], so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Eph. 4:11-12)

- Under the teaching of a doctrinally oriented pastor-teacher, otherwise inexplicable spiritual truths of the Bible are learned and applied by the ministries of the Holy Spirit using the divine system of learning:

This is what we speak [revealed doctrine], not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths to a spiritual system [divine system of learning] ... that we may understand what God has freely given us. (1 Cor. 2:12-13)

Even if believers are sinful and negative to God's Word, logistical grace support from God is never terminated. However, as adopted children within His royal family, believers exhibiting sinful behavior are disciplined by God¹⁰¹ in order to encourage corrective thoughts, decisions, and actions. God's desire is not to punish but to bless His adopted children; His discipline is intended to motivate the replacement of divine blessing for punishment. Believers who choose to disobey God's mandate to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ fall into a secular lifestyle identified with unbelievers.

Stage Three: Doctrinal Conclusion

Once the believer has successfully fulfilled the first two stages of faith-rest mechanics, his increasing confidence in God's Word develops the requisite courage toward adversity in his life. No matter the difficulty, the reality of God's Word becomes more real to him than the reality of his problem. The

¹⁰¹ Refer to "Divine Discipline," pages 47 and 124-127, for further explanation.

courage to employ Bible doctrine triumphs over the inability to think under pressure. The more experienced the believer with the faith-rest technique, the greater his confidence and courage in utilizing doctrine in his life; and as he perseveres in faith-resting his problems, the more rapid his advance to the state of spiritual maturity.

Scriptural Examples

I [God] will bless her [Sarah, Abraham's wife] and will surely give you [Abraham] a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her. Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (Gen. 17:16-17)

Due to his advanced age, Abraham did not believe God's promise of a son. However, after employing the faith-rest technique, he gained the necessary confidence to trust in the promise of God by awaiting the birth of Isaac. The Book of Romans provides evidence of Abraham's use of the three successive stages of the faith-rest life regarding the birth of his son:

Without weakening in his faith, he [Abraham] faced the fact that his body was as good as [sexually] dead — since he was about one hundred years old — and that Sarah's womb was also [sexually] dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God [Stage One], but was strengthened [ἐνδυναμόω (endunamōō)] in his faith and gave glory to God [Stage Two], being fully persuaded [convinced] that God had the power to do what He had promised [Stage Three]. (Rom. 4:19-21)

The English "strengthened," from the Greek ἐνδυναμόω (endunamōō), means, "to receive power from something poured into you." Abraham's faith in God's Word resident in ("poured into") his soul empowered him to think calmly and objectively under pressure; the reality of God's promise of a son became more real to him than the reality of the sexual impotence of his wife and himself. With his soul stabilized, Abraham was enabled to focus on God's essence, which provided him with the assurance that whatsoever God promises, He fulfills:

- Academic understanding of God's promises, or in the Greek γνῶσις (gnōsis), is worthless unless the veracity of His promises is accepted as absolute truth [ἐπίγνωσις (epígnōsis)] — "**He [Abraham] did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God.**"

- Belief in God's promises is ineffective if the believer is lacking in his knowledge of doctrine that provides the confidence and courage to utilize the promise — Abraham **“was strengthened (*endunamōō*) in his faith and gave glory to God.”**
- Focusing on God's promises and recalling pertinent doctrines under pressure results in successful doctrinal conclusions — Abraham was **“fully persuaded [*totally convinced*] that God had the power to do what He had promised.”**

Conclusion

By claiming God's promises with abiding faith (*Stage One*), followed by his concentration on and recall of biblical doctrines pertinent to the resolution of his difficulty (*Stage Two*), then the reality of God's Word becomes more real to him than the reality of his present hardship or suffering (*Stage Three*). Hence, by living the faith-rest life the believer is privileged to conclude:

Regardless of adversity or its severity, do not be discouraged because God maintains control of all difficulties in the lives of believers, and has already provided solutions in eternity past for all the problems believers will experience in life.

If God is in control, then the positive believer may correctly conclude that he is in total control of his life and circumstances. The believer who emulates the biblical examples of Abraham and Jesus Christ Himself experientially gains confidence in God's Word, which in turn develops his courage as a royal priest and ambassador in *cosmos diabolicus*.¹⁰²

However, the believer desirous of God's blessings must first develop the capability to benefit from His blessings, which is made possible only by his knowledge, recall, and employment of doctrine in life. The more spiritually advanced the believer, the greater is his capacity for divine blessings. The greatest spiritual blessing for the mature believer is contentment in every circumstance of his life (Phil. 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 6:8-9). God is always patient and faithful in supporting the believer's advance to spiritual maturity.

¹⁰² The Latin phrase “*cosmos diabolicus*” was coined by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer and is translated “devil's world.” The concept is developed in his *Systematic Theology* (vol. 2, pp. 77-78): “The *cosmos* is a vast system that Satan has promoted, which conforms to his ideals, aims, and methods. It is civilization now functioning apart from God. This system embraces its godless governments, conflicts, armaments, jealousies, its education, culture, religions of morality, and pride. It is that sphere in which man lives. It is what he sees, what he employs. To the uncounted multitude it is all they ever know so long as they live on this earth. It is properly styled *the satanic system*, which phrase is in many instances a justified interpretation of the so-meaningful word, *cosmos*. It is literally a *cosmos diabolicus*” (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Angelology, Anthropology, Hamartiology*, in *Systematic Theology* [Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947], 2:77-78).

THE RIGHTEOUS NEVER FORSAKEN¹⁰³

It was Saturday night, and the widow of the Pine Cottage sat by her blazing fagots, with her five tattered children at her side, endeavoring by listening to the artlessness of their prattle to dissipate the heavy gloom that pressed upon her mind. For a year, her own feeble hand had provided for her helpless family, for she had no supporter: she thought of no friend in all the wide world around.

But that mysterious Providence, the wisdom of whose ways is above human comprehension, had visited her with wasting sickness, and her little means had become exhausted. It was now, too, midwinter, and the snow lay heavy and deep through all the surrounding forests, while storms still seemed gathering in the heavens, and the driving wind roared amid the neighboring pines, and rocked her puny mansion.

The last herring smoked upon the coals before her; it was the only article of food she possessed, and no wonder her forlorn, desolate state brought up in her

Essence of God Rationale

Divine attributes of essence:

"Lord sustains the fatherless and the widow." (Ps. 146:9)

lone bosom all the anxieties of a mother when she looked upon her children: and no wonder, forlorn as she was, if she suffered the heart swellings of despair to rise, even though she

knew that He, whose promise is to the widow and to the orphan, cannot forget His word.

Providence had many years before taken from her her eldest son, who went from his forest home to try his fortune on the high seas, since which she had heard no tidings of him; and in her latter time had, by the hand of death, deprived her of the companion and staff of her earthly pilgrimage, in the person of her husband. Yet to this hour she had upborne; she had not only been able to provide for her little flock, but had never lost an opportunity of ministering to the wants of the miserable and destitute.

The indolent may well bear with poverty while the ability to gain sustenance remains. The individual who has but his own wants to supply may suffer with fortitude the winter of want; his affections are not wounded, his heart is not wrung. The most desolate in populous cities may hope, for charity has not quite closed her hand and heart, and shut her eyes on misery.

But the industrious mother of helpless and depending children, far from the reach of human charity, has none of these to console her. And such a one was the widow of the Pine Cottage; but as she bent over the fire, and took up the last scanty remnant of food to spread before her children, her spirits seemed to

¹⁰³ Literary illustration of the faith-rest life: William H. McGuffey (ed.). "The Righteous Never Forsaken," *McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader*, rev. ed. (Cincinnati: American Book Company, 1896), pages 92-95.

brighten, as by some sudden and mysterious impulse, and William Cowper's beautiful lines came uncalled across her mind (*"Light Shining Out of Darkness"*):

*"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning Providence,
He hides a smiling face."*

The smoked herring was scarcely laid upon the table, when a gentle rap at the door, and the loud barking of a dog, attracted the attention of the family. The children flew to open it, and a weary traveler, in tattered garments and in apparently indifferent health, entered, and begged a lodging and a mouthful of food. Said he: "It is now twenty-four hours since I tasted bread." The widow's heart bled anew, as under a fresh complication of distresses; for her sympathies lingered not around her fireside. She hesitated not even now; rest, and a share of all she had, she proffered to the stranger. "We shall not be forsaken," said she, "or suffer deeper for an act of charity."

Plan of God Rationale

God knew of her problem and provided for her in His perfect plan: *"The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him."* (Lam. 3:25)

Logistical Grace Rationale

"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19)

charity before. But, madam," said he, continuing, "do you not wrong your children by giving a part of your last mouthful to a stranger?"

"Ah," said the poor widow — and the tear-drops gushed into her eyes as she said it — "I have a boy, a darling son, somewhere on the face of the wide world, unless Heaven has taken him away, and I only act toward you as I would that others should act toward him. God, who sent manna from heaven, can provide for us as He did for Israel; and how should I this night offend Him, if my son should be a wanderer, destitute as you, and He should have provided for him a home, even poor as this, were I to turn you unrelieved away!" The widow ended, and the

Doctrinal Conclusion

"I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread." (Ps. 37:25)

stranger springing from his seat, clasped her in his arms. "God indeed has provided your son a home, and has given him wealth to reward the goodness of his benefactress: my mother! Oh, my mother!" It was her long lost son, returned to her bosom from the Indies. He had chosen that disguise that he might more completely surprise his family; and never was surprise more perfect, or followed by a sweeter cup of joy.

Introduction

In the Old and New Testaments, the causes and effects of, and solutions to, human suffering are the focus of numerous scriptures. Originating from its fallen condition, the human race has been and will continue to be subjected to both deserved and undeserved suffering throughout history, which may be summarized in three categories:

Volitional Responsibility: Applicable to believers and unbelievers.

Divine Discipline: Applicable to believers only.

Suffering for Blessing: Applicable to believers only.

Volitional Responsibility

All human beings engage in irrational thinking that prompts irresponsible decisions and actions for which they alone are volitionally responsible. Such thinking is no one else's fault but their own and invariably results in self-inflicted suffering originating from three sources:

Self-Imposed Misery: Suffering attributable to irrational thinking and false motivation whereby the “*end justifies the means.*”

Self-Induced Misery: Suffering resulting from ill-advised decisions that are followed by irresponsible actions.

Self-Indulged Misery: Suffering caused by impulsive gratification of lust patterns, resulting in sin, human good, and evil.

Applicable to both believers and unbelievers, the principle reason for most human suffering originates from self-induced misery whereby irresponsible, even apathetic, personal decisions are responsive to:

- Satanically inspired temptations or deceptions from the sinful nature.
- Emotionally motivated decisions devoid of rational thought.
- Faulty judgment from inadequate or incorrectly analyzed information.
- Specious teachings of Scripture or from decadent cultural standards.
- Disobedience to God's mandates, even if ignorant of them.

Scriptural documentation of the individual's accountability for his own self-inflicted suffering may be cited as follows:

If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible. (Lev. 5:17)

Divine Discipline

In the Book of Hebrews, the following verses serve to explain the principles of divine discipline intended only for believers:

You have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons [children of God]: “My son, do not make light of [take lightly] the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart [become discouraged] when He rebukes you.” (Heb. 12:5, quoted from Prov. 3:11)

The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as [His] sons. For what son is not disciplined by his [human] father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you [unbelievers] are illegitimate children and not true sons [of God]. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. (Heb. 12:6-9)

- The Greek word for “discipline,” παιδεύω (*paideúō*), requires training a child to adulthood using corrective action. Hence, the believer’s soul requires periodic cleansing by the use of divine discipline.
- Divine discipline should never be ignored nor should believers become discouraged by its enforcement. Some believe that God’s love cannot sanction discipline, but they fail to recognize that discipline imposed by the heavenly Father is indicative of His divine love for His children.
- Others become discouraged by divine discipline. They assume their difficulties are warnings God may have forsaken them, or that salvation may in fact be lost. These believers fail to recognize that His discipline is intended only for their blessing — they are eternally saved regardless of the number or severity of their failures.
- Believers in Christ are accepted as adopted sons in God’s royal family and as full participants in His grace plan. Just as children of human fathers are disciplined for wrongdoing, so also are God’s children who forsake His mandates and embrace the lifestyle of *cosmos diabolicus*.
- The believer must endure divine discipline by never complaining to or blaming God or others, or questioning the fairness of his difficulties. If God did not love His children, He would not attempt to supplement their training with discipline that is always intended as an expression of His divine love, never vengeance. His love is also evidenced by His provision of logistical grace support to those He disciplines.

Intended only for reversionistic believers (Heb. 12:8), divine discipline is an expression of God's grace to encourage their compliance with His righteous standards. By living within the divine power system, first revealed by Jesus Christ during the Incarnation, the believer is current on rebound, filled with the Holy Spirit, and employs doctrinal problem-solving devices to prevent the adverse ramifications of irrational thinking and false motivation. God desires to bless all believers, but He cannot do so as long as the believer imitates the unbeliever by living within Satan's cosmic system.

Believers, both individually and collectively, are the only recipients of God's discipline during their lives on earth. However, discipline is never a part of the believer's experience in eternity (Rev. 21:4) since belief in Christ avoids God's eternal judgment (Heb. 9:27). On the other hand, unbelievers, both individually and collectively, do not suffer from God's discipline in time (Heb. 12:8), but rather from His judgment in both time and eternity, the latter relating to their sentence to the Lake of Fire wherein they suffer from eternal alienation from God (Rev. 20:11-15).

In proportion to the believer's continuance of sinful behavior, God imposes His divine discipline in three successive stages.

(1) *Warning Discipline*

Compounding the self-inflicted misery of irresponsible decisions, God provides warning discipline as an advance notice of continuing sinfulness. Only by the confession of sins to Him may the reversionistic believer liberate himself from his discipline and regain his spiritual fellowship with Him, a relationship that is essential to living the Christian way of life:

I [Jesus Christ] stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice [warning discipline] and opens the door [confesses his sins], I will come in and eat [re-establish fellowship] with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:20)

(2) *Intensified Discipline*

Dispensed for continuing carnality, intensified discipline is enforced for the believer who ignores rebound, initiating severe corrective action. This stage represents the final opportunity for restoration of fellowship in God's plan before "*hardness of the heart*" occurs, a regressive, implacable state that suppresses spiritual orientation in the reversionistic believer:

Today, if you hear His [Christ's] voice, do not harden your hearts [continue to reject God's plan]. (Heb. 4:7, as quoted from Ps. 95:7-8)

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God [subject oneself to intensified discipline]. (Heb. 10:31)

Requiring an extensive desire and commitment to regaining his spiritual status, the believer suffering from intensified discipline is able to recover his fellowship with God by the use of rebound, concentration on His Word, and a greater commitment to the study and application of doctrine in his life.

(3) *Dying Discipline*

The greater the involvement of the believer in Satan's cosmic system, the less capable he is in re-establishing his spiritual relationship with God. If his carnality persists over a prolonged period of time in rejecting God's grace and fails to respond to God's discipline, eventually his spiritual purpose on earth ceases. Irreversibly enslaved by his chronic sinfulness, the believer undergoes the final judgment, dying discipline, representing God's last act of grace for one of His children. Face-to-face with the Lord in heaven, the believer is finally relieved of his unbearable misery:

It is impossible for those [believers] who have once been enlightened [positive volition to faith in Christ and His mandates] ... if they fall away [hardness of heart], to be brought back to repentance [recovery to previous spiritual state]. (Heb. 6:4-6)

If anyone has seen his fellow believer committing a sin not leading to death, he should pray and God will give him life. There is a status of sinfulness that leads one to death. (1 John 5:16, CTL)

Although no one sin or multiple sins leads to the believer's physical death, there is a condition of continuous, unconfessed sinfulness capable of creating a radical and sustained change of mind toward Christianity. The believer's volitional decision not to trust or act in compliance with God's plan becomes irreversible — his heart hardens to such a degree that, in God's judgment, his recovery from remorseless, unrelenting carnality is no longer redeemable. Nonetheless, providing the believer is still alive, he can be restored to divine fellowship if he finally changes his mind and confesses his sins to God. If he remains current on rebound, then his soul is progressively renovated, little by little, as the result of the comprehensive study and use of biblical mandates, supported by a rigorous prayer life by himself and others on his behalf.

Summary of Discipline

Divine discipline may be defined as punitive action taken by the justice of God in His grace to correct, punish, encourage, train, and motivate the believer's interest in and use of Bible doctrine in his life. Divine discipline is intended for believers only (Heb. 12:8), individually and collectively, and is administered only during their lives on earth, never in eternity (Rev. 21:4).

First Corinthians, chapter 11, describes all three stages of divine discipline in its instruction for the believer to be attentive to his spiritual status during the mandated Eucharist ceremony:

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord ... For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak [*warning discipline*] and sick [*intensified discipline*], and a number of you have fallen asleep [*dying discipline*]. But if we judged ourselves [*current on rebound*], we would not come under judgment [*divine discipline*]. (1 Cor. 11:27-31)

Suffering for Blessing

The advancing believer who is positive toward the grace plan and Word of God, realizes the purpose of suffering is for divine blessing. Whatever and whenever pressure occurs, He has already provided for its solution in eternity past — for that reason, the believer regards life's inevitable sufferings as opportunities to apply doctrine and grow spiritually. In so doing, he honors God and His Word, serves as an effective ambassador for Jesus Christ, and receives blessings in time. Suffering by the believer for divine blessing may be categorized as follows:

Providential Preventive Suffering: Intended to prevent arrogance.

Momentum Testing: Intended to accelerate spiritual growth.

Evidence Testing: Intended to maximally glorify God.

Providential Preventive Suffering

As priests and ambassadors, believers are mandated to be knowledgeable of and obedient to Jesus Christ and to function as His earthly emissaries to an unbelieving world. In these roles, believers can be tempted by arrogance to regard themselves more highly than they should (Matt. 23:12; Rom. 12:3), severing their spiritual relationship with God and deferring their function as spiritual aristocrats until their recovery to spiritual status by use of rebound. Thus, God uses providential preventive suffering to encourage genuine, rather than enforced, humility among believers:

Lest I [*Paul*] should become arrogant because of the surpassing quality of revelation [*knowledge of doctrine*], I was given a thorn in the flesh [*providential preventive suffering*], a messenger of Satan that he might torment me, lest I become arrogant. (2 Cor. 12:7, CTL)

Momentum Testing

The positive believer regards all difficulties in life as opportunities to learn and apply doctrine under pressure, thereby accelerating his growth toward spiritual maturity. Persevering in his obedience to God's Word and remaining current on rebound, the believer is motivated to successfully endure these tests of his Christian faith by acknowledging the following doctrinal conclusions:

*God's knowledge is infinitely superior to human viewpoint.
 God's omnipotence exceeds the power of all my problems.
 God's veracity will furnish the solution to all my problems.
 God's integrity and faithfulness protect His promises.
 God's immutability cannot be changed or devalued.
 If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31).
 God's grace is sufficient for all believers (2 Cor. 12:9).*

Momentum testing, then, provides the motivation to accelerate the believer's spiritual advance to maturity, and may be categorized as follows.

People Testing

Whether from pressure initiated by relatives, friends, work, school, or shared activities, people testing entices the believer to acquiesce to the deceptively evil standards of others. To successfully pass these tests requires emphasis on God rather than on people — Bible doctrine, not people, must always be the top priority in the lives of believers:

Do not be misled [deceived by others]: “Bad company corrupts good character.” (1 Cor. 15:33)

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm [evil]. (Prov. 13:20)

Thought Testing

Suffering from thought testing identifies the continuous conflict between human and divine viewpoints, a virtual combat zone within the soul for control of the believer's thinking and, eventually, his way of life:

For though we [believers] live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they [our weapons] have divine power [divine viewpoint] to demolish strongholds [of satanic influence in the soul]. We demolish arguments and every pretension [cosmic propaganda] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every [human viewpoint of] thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

System Testing

Despite the type of organization, the believer may be subjected to suffering from unfair treatment by an authority structure, fellow workers or students, or organizational policies. It matters not whether the organization is the family, workplace, school, church, extracurricular activity, or social event, the biblical solution to system testing is to continue to fulfill one's responsibilities as unto the Lord, knowing that He will resolve whatever conflict may occur:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart [soul], as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Col. 3:23-24)

Disaster Testing

To endure with poise and grace under the pressure of an extreme calamity and its related trauma defines disaster testing:

These [tests of suffering for blessing] have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Pet. 1:7)

Just as gold is purified under the intense heat of fire, so also the believer's spiritual advance is accelerated by his endurance under pressure of disaster testing. When the believer attains spiritual maturity, he may be graded as "pure gold," for which God is "able to bless him exceedingly abundantly beyond all he can ever ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

Evidence Testing

The third stage of suffering is evidence testing that is uniquely planned to glorify God in human history. This type of testing is intended only for spiritually mature believers to provide evidence to Satan and his fallen angels that regardless of the suffering, the believer's faith in God and loyalty to His grace plan is unwavering (refer to the Book of Job).¹⁰⁴ Evidence testing is always unfair, unjust, and undeserved, and invariably occurs unexpectedly, without explanation, for a short period of time.

Evidence testing follows the pattern of all suffering for blessing since "God is faithful, who will not allow the believer to be tested beyond what he is able to bear" (1 Cor. 10:13). Only the spiritually mature believer has the necessary doctrine accumulated within his soul to be able to withstand and benefit from the severity of evidence testing.

¹⁰⁴ Thieme, *Christian Suffering* (1997), chapter 10.

Summary

Human suffering may be summarized by the following comparison:¹⁰⁵

	For Discipline	For Blessing
<i>Issue:</i>	<i>Sin, Human Good, Evil</i>	<i>Spiritual Momentum</i>
<i>Status:</i>	<i>Walking in Darkness (a)</i>	<i>Walking in the Light (a)</i>
<i>Intensity:</i>	<i>Unbearable</i>	<i>Bearable</i>
<i>Viewpoint:</i>	<i>Arrogance/Subjectivity</i>	<i>Humility/Objectivity</i>
<i>Solution:</i>	<i>Confession of Sins</i>	<i>Problem-Solving Devices (b)</i>
<i>Result:</i>	<i>Cursing Becomes Blessing</i>	<i>Accelerated Growth</i>

- (a) Walking in Darkness refers to living within Satan’s cosmic system. Walking in the Light refers to living within the Divine Power System.
- (b) Problem-Solving Devices include the Faith-Rest Life, personal love toward God, and unconditional love toward man that produce confidence and courage toward life and circumstances.

It must be noted that suffering for divine discipline or blessing never results in the believer’s loss of salvation since once saved, always saved. God’s grace gift of salvation is irrevocable; His divine attribute of immutability assures the faithfulness of His plan for the entire human race. Even our repudiation of faith in God or His Word cannot cause God to deny Himself:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died [retroactively] with Him [Christ], we will also live with Him [in eternity]; if we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown [deny] Him, He will also disown [deny] us [our eternal rewards]; if we are faithless, He will remain faithful [our eternal salvation], for He cannot disown [deny] Himself. (2 Tim. 2:11-13)

He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord ... For not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us dies for himself. If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. (Rom. 14:6-8)

Suffering is inevitable for all believers on earth. Therefore, we are obliged to prepare for adversity by advancing to spiritual maturity within the grace plan of God, which is only possible by our most important commitment in life to learn and apply doctrine as taught within the classroom of the local Church by a qualified pastor-teacher.

¹⁰⁵ Thieme, *Christian Suffering* (1997), page 52.

Prayer Protocol

Prayer is the divinely ordained method of direct and private communication between the individual believer and God the Father. Therefore, prayer is the unique prerogative of the royal priesthood of believers and represents one of the privileges intended by God for those who accept by faith His Son, Jesus Christ, as their personal Savior. As a participant on the front lines of the angelic conflict¹⁰⁶ during his life on earth, the believer-priest is privileged to submit his prayer requests directly and privately to God the Father, which may be defined as either *intercession* (prayer for others) or *petition* (prayer for oneself). As explained later in this chapter, these requests must adhere to a sequential protocol that focuses on doctrine in the believer's soul:

Prayers are directed only to God the Father under the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Prayers consist of confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition, in that order.

Prayers are submitted only by believers in the name of Jesus Christ.

The believer is commanded to “**pray continually**” (1 Thess. 5:17), but only as enabled by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; 6:18). As a spiritual weapon, prayer is intended by God to resolve problems before they occur, never as an after-the-fact, problem-solving method. Whereas the prayer of the new or beginning believer is primarily concerned with rebound and the faith-rest technique, the advancing believer focuses less emphasis on his own prayer requests and more on his intercessory prayers for others.

CONTENT OF PRAYER

God is not a God of disorder (1 Cor. 14:33); He is completely organized and professional in His every thought and action (1 Cor. 14:40), an example that the believer should emulate in his prayers to Him. Therefore, an improved understanding of God's protocol for the believer's prayers to Him involves the scriptural interpretation of certain Greek words.

¹⁰⁶ Refer to Appendix B – Angelic Conflict, page 161.

Confession

The first Greek word found in Scripture mandating confession of sins is ὁμολογέω (*homologéō*), which corresponds to a legal term requiring only a simple acknowledgment of facts as under oath in a court of law. Applied to the spiritual life, this simple naming of sins to God the Father is all that is required to restore the believer's fellowship with Him:

If we confess [ὁμολογέω (*homologéō*)] our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our [known] sins and cleanse us from all wrongdoing, including unknown and forgotten sins. (1 John 1:9)

Even though a Christian, the believer is powerless to live the Christian way of life when out of fellowship with God — that is, living a life burdened by unconfessed sins. When not in fellowship, the process of applying doctrine to personal experiences can be faulty, often misleading or offensive to others. Thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and flexibility in his relationships with others are required of the believer as a royal ambassador for Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

Another Greek word is εὐχαριστία (*eucharistía*), translated “thanksgiving,” which conveys an expression of gratitude to God for His grace support and comfort that is often provided through other believers:¹⁰⁷

You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion and through us [believers] your generosity will result in thanksgiving [eucharistía] to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks [eucharistéō] to God. (2 Cor. 9:11-12)

Regardless of the number or harshness of his difficulties, the believer knows he is a participant in the grace plan of God, which includes His provision for every detail of life. Thus, the sincere expression of gratitude to the Father must be included in every prayer with recognition of His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Advocate or Intercessor:

Pray continually; give thanks [εὐχαριστέω (*eucharistéō*)] in all situations, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess. 5:17-18)

Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 5:20)

¹⁰⁷ Good manners require the believer to thank those who were motivated by God to assist him.

Doctrinal principles concerning the concept of thanksgivings, or gratitude, offered in prayers to God the Father may be summarized as follows:

- “*Eucharistía*” literally advocates a thankful mental attitude that is evidenced by prayerful expressions of gratitude to God.
- Thanksgivings are possible only from knowledge of the Word and plan of God, His policy of grace, and His purpose for blessing.
- Ignorance of the Word results in ignorance of God, which precludes an understanding of the divine grace of God.
- In eternity past, God chose to allow royal priests of the Church Age the unique privilege of praying directly and privately to Him.
- The more the believer loves God, the more discerning his awareness of God’s blessings, and the greater his desire to offer prayers of thanksgivings to Him.
- Personal love for God motivates unconditional love toward man, resulting in appreciation and an attitude of thanksgiving for Him.
- Once the believer becomes self-sustaining in his spiritual life, he personifies inner stability, tranquility, and contentment resulting in a mental attitude of thanksgiving (Phil. 4:11-13).
- Nothing occurs by accident in the believer’s life that has not been anticipated in God’s personalized grace plan for him. Hence, gratitude for the divinely assisted ability to effectively confront problems in life should always be included in his thanksgivings.
- During the latter days of the Church Age, there will be too few believers who will exhibit an attitude of thanksgiving (2 Tim. 3:1-2).

The believer’s ultimate motivation in offering his prayers of thanksgiving to God is for the assurance that Jesus Christ controls human history:

He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn [priority of position rather than of origin] over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together [are regulated and controlled]. (Col. 1:15-17)

Intercession

The Greek word for intercession is ἐντευξις (*énteuxis*), which translates to “*intercede for or act on behalf of another.*” Jesus Christ currently intercedes as the Advocate or Intercessor for believers as if in a courtroom; He defends our sins against Satan’s accusations by affirming to the Father the penalty for

all human sins was previously paid by Him on the cross. Under the principle of double jeopardy,¹⁰⁸ the Father's justice approves the testimony of Jesus Christ while Satan's case against the believer is always dismissed:

He [Christ] is able to save completely [eternally] those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede [ἐντυγχάνω (*entunchánō*)] for them. (Heb. 7:25)

If anyone does sin, we have One Who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

God the Holy Spirit also offers intercessory prayers to God the Father on behalf of believers:

And He [Father] Who searches our hearts [souls] knows the mind [thinking] of the [Holy] Spirit because the [Holy] Spirit intercedes [*entunchánō*] for the saints [believers] in accordance with God's will. (Rom. 8:27)

The Apostle Paul authenticates the divinely enabled function of intercessory prayer for fellow believers:

We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom ... giving thanks to the Father Who has qualified you to share in the [eternal] inheritance of the saints¹⁰⁹ [believers] in the [Christ's] kingdom of light. (Col. 1:9-12)

The following are other examples of intercessory prayers that focus on the believer's encouragement of unbelievers and other believers:

Salvation: For opportunities to present the gospel of Jesus Christ and its objective assessment by unbelievers, emphasizing man's deliverance from the Lake of Fire (*purpose of salvation*) with His grace gift of eternal life (*result of salvation*) (John 3:16, 36).

Doctrine: For believers following salvation, to mature spiritually in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by the consistent assimilation and application of doctrine to life (2 Pet. 3:18).

Pressure: For believers to persevere in their recall and use of doctrine under pressure, knowing God will not allow them to be tempted beyond what they can endure (1 Cor. 10:13).

¹⁰⁸ The believer cannot be twice judged guilty for the same crime.

¹⁰⁹ In the Greek, "saint" means *set apart for a special purpose*, which distinguishes all believers.

Grace: For the recognition of God's grace, not human effort, which represents what God is free to do for mankind resulting from the substitutionary sacrifice on the cross of Jesus Christ (Rom. 11:6).

Truth: For the persistent study of God's Word in order that he will **"know the truth, and the truth will set him free"** (John 8:31-32).

Warning: For the awareness of those who create discord within the body of Jesus Christ in opposition to the Word of God, requiring the withdrawal of any personal association with them (Rom. 16:17).

Confidence: For unfailing trust in God's Word, knowing that Jesus Christ is man's grace gift from God assigned with the responsibility of creating and controlling human history (Col. 1:15-17).

Love: For the believer to personally love God with **"all his heart, soul, mind, and strength,"** and unconditionally **"love his fellow man as himself"** (Mark 12:30-31).

Petition

The Greek word δέησις (*dēsis*), translated "*petition* or *entreaty*," is a form of a personal prayer request to God that is usually based on immediate need. The following scriptural reference demonstrates its biblical usage:

Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer [proseuchē] and petition [dēsis], with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Phil. 4:6)

Petitions often result from the believer's failure to understand or utilize one or more of the ten problem-solving devices interpreted from Scripture. Since prayer is intended to confront problems before they occur, most problems are resolved not by prayer but by rebound, knowledge of doctrine, obedience to God's mandates, and/or diligence in the use of problem-solving devices:

The [spiritual] weapons we [believers] fight with are not the weapons of the world [of human origin]. On the contrary, they have divine power [doctrine] to demolish strongholds [satanic influence]. We demolish arguments and every pretension [cosmic propaganda] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every [human viewpoint system of] thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

In summary, the believer's petitions should give emphasis to his personalized function within the grace plan of God and his responsibility to glorify Him while magnifying His Word. The believer need not pray for God's logistical support since it is guaranteed (Matt. 6:11, 25-34), nor should he pray for

miracles or physical healing since these spiritual gifts were temporarily in existence only during the precanon period of the Church Age. With minor modification, petitionary prayers may be adapted and personalized from the intercessory prayers listed in the previous section of this chapter.

As the believer successfully lives the Christian way of life, God provides him with the spiritual and logistical support needed to glorify Him. Thus, we may properly conclude that if the believer lives his life in obedience to the mandates of Jesus Christ, God will reciprocate with blessings that are **“exceedingly abundantly beyond all we ask or think, according to His power that is at work in us”** (Eph. 3:20).

Summary

The effectiveness of prayer is dependent upon the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit and the doctrinal content and grace orientation of the believer's soul. The more doctrine learned, the more advanced the understanding of the will and purpose of God, and therefore the more effective his prayer:

“If you [believers] remain [abide] in Me [Christ] and My words [doctrine] remain [abide] in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you [shall be done for your personal advantage].” (John 15:7)

Doctrinal principles with reference to effective prayer requests offered by believers are reaffirmed by the following:

- Biblical protocol addresses prayers to God the Father utilizing the power of God the Holy Spirit in the name of God the Son.
- Agenda for successful prayers must consist sequentially of confession of sins, thanksgivings directed to God, intercessory prayers for others, and petitionary prayers for oneself.
- Without invading the privacy of others, believers must be alert to each other's circumstances, concerned with each other's spiritual growth, and considerate of each other's needs. Thoughtfulness for one another is expressed by intercessory prayer requests, which reflect a grace attitude toward members of God's family.¹¹⁰
- The content of prayers must be prepared and expressed based on Bible doctrine, conform to the will and purpose of God for the human race, and remain faithful to His grace plan in order to facilitate responses from Him.

Examples of prayer requests that are either answered or unanswered by God the Father are explained in the following sections of this chapter.

¹¹⁰ **“Make it a matter of honor to show preference to others”** (Rom. 12:10).

SPECIAL PRAYERS

To assist the believer in his preparation and delivery of prayer requests, the following overview consists of prayers that are specific to certain individuals or occasions in the believer's life. These prayers are termed "special" not for their greater importance or frequency of use, but for their specific prayer content.

Meals

Prayers for meals should consist of a statement of thanksgiving followed by a petition for the sanctification of the food. Apart from adherence to these two biblical principles, prayers preceding food consumption need not address other issues or concerns of those in attendance. Such prayers are intended for food, not for individuals. These principles are found in the Book of 1 Timothy:

For everything God created [*for food*] is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is sanctified [*set apart*] by means of God's Word and [*the believer's*] prayer. (1 Tim. 4:4-5)

Thanksgiving acknowledges God's creation of everything to be eaten and the environment He has made available for its origin and growth. Sanctification requests God to set apart, or bless, the meal to be eaten since the food may be unsafe or appear to be inedible — notwithstanding, God transforms the food into palatable nourishment for the believer. How does the sanctification process occur? The above verse indicates God responds to the prayer request by means of the intervention of His Word and the intercessory prayer by the believer on behalf of the food. In short, God sanctifies all plant and animal life He has created as acceptable for human consumption:

Then God said, "I will give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (Gen. 1:29)

"The fear and dread of you will fall upon the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground and upon every fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything." (Gen. 9:2-3)

Authority

Prayers for all individuals in positions of authority throughout society are mandated since the competency of leadership contributes to the protection, prosperity, freedom, and orderliness of local communities and nations. Such leaders include: the President and national, state, and local officials; federal,

state and local judiciaries; military forces; law enforcement; and leaders of commercial, educational, and family relationships:

- External aggression is averted by the constant training, dedication, and vigilance of the nation's military and its leaders.
- Internal insurgency is controlled by a principled, effective, and impartial system of jurisprudence and its enforcement.
- National prosperity and stability are maintained, even nurtured, by leaders adhering to divine establishment principles and supporting the divinely sanctioned system of free-enterprise capitalism.¹¹¹

Paul provides scriptural evidence in the Book of 1 Timothy:

I urge that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings [governmental authorities] and all those in authority [in leadership positions], that we may live peaceful and quiet lives [external and inner tranquility] in all godliness and holiness. (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

Unbelievers

Prayer requests for the unbeliever must first acknowledge the principle that human volition cannot be overruled by God or prayer. Therefore, prayers for unbelievers should appeal to the sovereignty and justice of God to:

- Familiarize the unbeliever with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the opportunity for his volition to freely respond to the message;
- Prepare the unbeliever's mental attitude to be as objective as is necessary when presented with the gospel; and
- Make certain the unbeliever is not confused by the outcome of his gospel decision: the Eternal State is reserved only for believers whereas the Lake of Fire is the final destiny for unbelievers.

Only God's omniscience knows what motivates each unbeliever, including the pressures in his life that will initiate an objective assessment of the gospel. Thus, the believer may properly pray for whatever is necessary leading to an objective response by the unbeliever. However, the believer must never coerce or interfere in the unbeliever's life; rather, only as inspired by the Holy Spirit, the believer's role is to remain alert to opportunities provided by God for the presentation of an objective gospel message. The believer is further motivated knowing that the unbeliever's response to the gospel of Christ is the most important decision in his life since an eternal association with God depends solely upon faith alone in Christ alone.

¹¹¹ Free-enterprise capitalism is supported throughout Scripture: e.g., the principle of private property is confirmed in the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20); and capitalistic principles are validated by Jesus Christ Himself in the Parable of the Vineyard Workers (Matt. 20).

Intercessory prayer for unbelievers must focus on volitional, non-coerced acts of personal volition as essential for salvation. The Apostle Paul, who identifies himself as the “**Hebrew of Hebrews**” (Phil. 3:5), was concerned for his fellow Jews who had not accepted Jesus the Christ as their Jewish Messiah; rather, they continued to seek salvation, spirituality, and eternal life by adherence to the rituals and works of the Mosaic Law. To stress the significance of volitional choice, Paul inserts a three-chapter parenthesis into the Book of Romans specifically addressed to the Jewish unbelievers of his day, which is also applicable to unbelievers today:

- Chapter 9 speaks of Israel’s *selection* by God in the past; chapter 10 speaks of Israel’s *rejection* by God in the present; and chapter 11 speaks of Israel’s *acceptance* by God in the future.
- Chapter 9 distinguishes between the racial Jew, who rejected Christ as the Messiah, and the spiritual Jew, who accepted Him as the Messiah-Savior. Both the racial and spiritual Jew can trace their lineage back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but only the spiritual Jew is allowed entry into the Eternal State:

The Gentiles, who did not strive for self-righteousness, have attained divine righteousness ... Israel, who pursued after righteousness based on the Law, has not attained the purpose of the Law (which is salvation). Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness by means of an act of faith but rather as if it were by means of many works. (Rom. 9:30-32)

- Just as the Jewish unbelievers of Paul’s day believed their entry into heaven depended on ritualistic observances and good deeds, many Gentile religions today falsely teach the same concept that belief in Christ must be accompanied by rituals and works to become worthy of an eternal relationship with Him.
- Scripture is explicit in its assertion that salvation for the Jews, as it is for Gentiles, is possible only by faith alone in the Savior alone:

For what does the Scripture say? “Now Abraham had believed in God and that faith was credited to him for righteousness [Gen. 15:6].” But to him who works for salvation, his wages are not credited according to grace but according to debt. But to him who does not work for salvation but believes in Him Who justifies the unbeliever, his faith receives credit for the imputation of divine righteousness. (Rom. 4:1-5)

- In chapter 10, Paul teaches the failure of the Jewish people to accept Jesus Christ as their prophesied Messiah:

What does it [Deut. 30:11-14] say? “The message of salvation is near you, in your mouth and in your soul.” That is the message of faith that we proclaim. Namely, if you will acknowledge with your mouth to God, “Jesus is Lord,” and if you will believe in your soul that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For you see, by means of the soul, mankind believes [in Christ] resulting in imputed righteousness [at salvation], and by means of the mouth [“Jesus is Lord”], mankind speaks to God about salvation. (Rom. 10:8-10, CTL)

- From Old Testament Scripture, Paul reminds Jewish unbelievers that salvation is as near as their mouths (“**Jesus is Lord**”) and their souls (“**belief resulting in imputed righteousness**”).
- The phrase, “**Jesus is Lord**,” represents a statement of belief directed to God, not to others as in a public profession of faith. The word “**Lord**” to the Jews was associated with the word “**Jehovah**,” the Messiah or God-Man Redeemer promised to Israel.
- Overseen by the Levitical priests, the Jews were committed to a works-oriented system for salvation, while rejecting faith alone in Messiah alone as the only means by which the imputation of God’s righteousness to the new believer can occur.
- Citing Moses, Paul affirms that salvation is attained within the soul of man (*by faith*), not without (*by human effort*); and this faith is volitionally communicated to God in prayer, not through ritual.
- When the gospel message is accepted by the soul as enabled by the Holy Spirit, the new believer understands that the Messiah-Savior’s sacrifice on the cross liberates him from the unopposed oppression of sin and creates an eternal relationship with Him.
- To assert that salvation is achieved, wholly or partially, by means of human effort is in total opposition to God’s grace as evidenced by His Son’s substitutionary sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. If man is capable of contributing to his own salvation, why is there any need for a Messiah/Savior?

Salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone is verified throughout the New Testament: John 3:15-18, 36; 6:47; 11:25; 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16; 3:22, 28; 4:1-5; Gal. 2:16; 3:26; Eph. 2:8-9; and 1 John 5:11-13.

Enemies

“But I [*Christ*] tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:44-45)

Using the problem-solving device of unconditional love for mankind, the believer is scripturally mandated to love and pray for his enemies without any preconditions. These prayers should include the believer’s request that his oppressor replace his erroneous point-of-view with a positive response to the gospel message of Jesus Christ and God’s Word. In every instance, the believer must depend upon, not interfere with, the Father for the fulfillment of his prayer request.

Unconditional love requires the believer to employ enough doctrine to be capable of love based on his own virtues and standards, not on the alleged qualities of others. Despite what the oppressor says or does, the integrity of unconditional love expressed by the believer should never be violated.

Believers

Prayers for fellow believers should always request that God encourage their doctrinal advance to life’s foremost goal of spiritual maturity:

And this is my [*Apostle Paul’s*] prayer: that your [*unconditional*] love may abound more and more in [*epígnōsis*] knowledge [*of doctrine*] and depth of insight [*discernment of its truth*]. (Phil. 1:9)

For this reason [*because of this unconditional love*], from the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (Col. 1:9)

The unity of the local church, and consequently its invisible influence within the local community, is dependent upon its individual members in various stages of spiritual growth all striving to encourage one another through prayer and the doctrinal example of their lives. Positive, advancing believers become the beneficiaries of divine blessings and awards in time and eternity; and, if sufficient in number, they also play a major role in sustaining their client nation status with God.

Communicators

Evangelists, pastor-teachers, and missionaries share the responsibility, as well as accountability, for faithfully communicating the absolute truths of God’s Word to both believers and unbelievers. These individuals must be

supported by constant prayer on their behalf, which should request of God His encouragement for their spiritual discernment of Bible doctrine and its accurate communication to their respective listeners:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful [alert] and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery [doctrine] of Christ, for which I am in chains [Roman prison]. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (Col. 4:2-4)

Finally, fellow believers [Thessalonians], pray for us [Paul and others in his missionary group] that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. (2 Thess. 3:1)

The believer's prayer for these doctrinal communicators fulfills his national and international obligation to encourage the spiritual progress of succeeding generations. When these communicators fail in their divinely assigned responsibilities, nations begin to reject, even legally ban, the teaching of God's Word resulting in divine discipline and ultimately loss of individual freedoms and national sovereignty.¹¹²

UNANSWERED PRAYERS

Even though prayers may be genuinely offered, God does not answer prayers when they do not conform to divinely established prayer protocol. For example, all prayers of the believer in a state of carnality, with unconfessed sin in his life, are unanswered. In fact, they are not even heard by the Father.

Carnality and Cosmic Living

When the believer is not in spiritual fellowship with the Holy Spirit due to unconfessed sins, he is living a life as an unbeliever by complying with the standards of Satan's *cosmos diabolicus*. Prayers are answered only under the mentorship of the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit: **"If I regard iniquity in my heart [unconfessed sins], the Lord will not hear me [listen to my prayers]"** (Ps. 66:18).

Consequently, carnality and cosmic living by the believer is admonished scripturally by two divine mandates:

Do not grieve [λυπέω (lupéō): do not reject the power of] the Holy Spirit [by sinning]. (Eph. 4:30)

Do not quench [σβέννυμι (sbénnumi): do not restrain] the Holy Spirit [with acts of human good]. (1 Thess. 5:19)

¹¹² Refer to Appendix B – Cycles of Civilization, page 162.

The filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, activated only by the believer's confession of sins, prompts God's response to prayer requests: **"Pray at all times in the filling of the Holy Spirit"** (Eph. 6:18).

Satanically inspired, the carnal believer's soul may be dominated by such sins as anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, and revenge. Motivated by unfulfilled lust patterns in the soul, these sins are often incorrectly justified by the following: sinful behavior as scripturally defined is superseded by man's freedom to define human behavior as he wishes; or faith-based relationships, especially Christianity, is a hindrance to the believer's thinking and acting according to what he believes is in his best interest; or acts of human good, without divine assistance, are well-intentioned, promote good will among men, and therefore accomplish God's ultimate purposes.

Rejection of Divine Policy

Only the Bible teaches correct mechanics for divinely acceptable prayer requests. If God did not intend for prayer to be offered in a prescribed manner, He would not have included proper prayer protocol in Scripture. Prayers are left unanswered for the following reasons:

- Failure to observe the correct prayer sequence: confession followed by thanksgiving, intercession, and petition.
- Failure to address all prayers to God the Father, under the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Failure to include biblical prayer content that conforms to the will and purpose of God.

Ignorance of Doctrine

Rejection of or lack of interest in Bible doctrine by the believer results in ignorance of God's Word that invalidates his prayer life. The top priority in life must be the inculcation and integration of the Word of God in the believer's soul. Rather than pray for that which promotes the will and purpose of God in his life, the uninformed believer emphasizes that which is convenient for or pleasing to him. In fact, he becomes involved in what he perceives is pleasing to God, rather than learning from doctrinal Bible study what God desires from him.

The Book of Isaiah provides an explanation for why God does not answer the prayers of the believer who is ignorant of doctrine:

Wash and make yourselves clean *[confession of sins]*.
Take your evil deeds *[human good and evil]* **out of My sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right** *[from knowledge of Bible doctrine]*! (Isa. 1:16-17)

In this verse, the believer is commanded to “**learn to do right**,” which is better translated to “*learn from the process of being taught what is right*.” For prayers to be answered, the believer needs to pray from a soul full of doctrinal concepts. The word “**right**” refers to God’s Word learned from faithful Bible study taught from the original languages by a qualified pastor within a local church. As previously stated, when these communicators fail in their responsibilities, nations begin to reject God’s Word and, if sustained, suffer loss of their sovereignty and individual freedoms.

Influence of Lust Patterns

When the believer prays while under the control of his lust patterns, God does not answer his prayer requests due to an unacceptable, unconfessed mental attitude resulting from lustful motivation:

You lust and do not have what you want, so you commit murder. You are jealous and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on pleasures. (Jas. 4:2-3)

Frustrated by not receiving what he has requested, the lustful believer is motivated to fight and quarrel, even to commit murder. Jealousy is a mental attitude sin provoked by the insatiable yearning to confiscate what another person possesses. The jealous person is motivated by believing what another person possesses rightly belongs to him. Envy, on the other hand, is more insidious. A comprehensive description of envy¹¹³ may be found in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, volume 5 published in 1912, by William L. Davidson, Professor of Logic at the University of Aberdeen (New York: Scribner/Clark):

“Envy is an emotion that is both selfish and (malicious). It is aimed at persons and implies dislike of one who possesses what the envious man covets or desires. There is in it also a consciousness of inferiority to the person envied. He who has got what I envy is felt by me to have the advantage of me and I resent it. Consequently, I rejoice if he finds that his envied possession does not give him entire satisfaction – (I rejoice) much more if it actually entails on him dissatisfaction and pain: that simply reduces his superiority in my eyes and ministers to my feelings of self-importance...envy is in itself a painful emotion although it is associated with pleasure when misfortune is seen to befall (its) object.”

¹¹³ Quoted by Helmut Schoeck, “Envy.” (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987), p. 20-21.

Disobedience to Scriptural Mandates

The believer's obedience to biblical mandates is an encouragement for God to answer his prayers. A divine mandate is the expression of God's will that is directed toward, and often challenges, the volition of the human soul:

Whatever we have asked we receive from Him because we continue to execute His mandates and we keep on doing what is pleasing to Him. (1 John 3:22)

New Testament mandates in the Greek are grammatically expressed in the imperative mood that challenges the volition of the believer with changing how he thinks. However, because of the believer's free will, God's commands may be either obeyed or disobeyed, with divine outcomes for both decisions. Four types of the imperative mood exist:

Command: Positive appeal to the will of another — “*Do this...*”

Prohibition: Expression of a negative command — “*Do not do that...*”

Entreaty: Employs urgency — “*This needs to be done.*”

Permission: *Consent of the object* to whom the mandate is directed.

Failure to comply with God's imperative moods nullifies His acceptance of the carnal believer's prayers. For example, if the believer fails to:

- Confess his personal sins directly to God.
- Utilize the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.
- Consistently learn and integrate Bible doctrine.
- Employ problem-solving strategies to resolve difficulties.

Noncompliance with God's Will

Utilizing knowledge of doctrine as the prerequisite for effective prayer, the believer must petition God in accordance with His will and purpose:

This is the confidence believers have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (1 John 5:14)

Lacking doctrinal knowledge, the believer is arrogant if he asks God for something that is not consistent with His will. Noncompliance with God's expressed will also includes the arrogance of those who may be doctrinally informed, but fail to use their knowledge due to fixation with their own self-importance. These believers frequently pray to the Father from an emotional or sinful state of fear or anxiety. They fail to make use of the doctrine previously learned, which is accessible to enable resolution of their problems if only they would submit to the power and authority of the Holy Spirit.

Arrogance

Arrogance is a complex or system of thought¹¹⁴ defining the self-centered believer who is preoccupied with his own self-importance, an obsession that becomes the top priority in his life. The arrogant person is divorced from reality by wrongly assuming that his self-righteous fervor is blameless. Such a believer often displays his arrogance by participating in campaigns for unrealistic reform: for example, unilateral disarmament, world peace, and international harmony.

As has existed throughout human history, “**wars and rumors of wars**” will continue until the millennial reign on earth of Jesus Christ. Therefore, individuals and nations are counseled in Scripture never to compromise, but always to safeguard their right of national sovereignty by developing secure defenses against internal strife and external aggression. Several scriptures attest to the Lord’s counsel:

Christ answered: “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end [of the Age of Israel] is still to come [Second Advent]. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” (Matt. 24:6-7)

Christ said to them: “If you don’t have a sword [weapon], sell your cloak and buy one” ... “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.” (Luke 11:21-22; Luke 22:36)

Rather than pray to God based on his knowledge of and reliance on doctrine, the arrogant believer is easily deceived by satanically inspired strategies to disagree with God’s plan for himself and the human race. Arrogance is the evil manifestation of satanic influence that is often exhibited by deceptive attempts to mislead others in contradiction of God’s Word:

They cry out [pray] but God does not answer because of the arrogance of evil men. Surely God will not listen to a phony [arrogant] cry [prayer], nor will the Almighty regard it. (Job 35:12-13)

The righteous man trusts in his [own] righteousness and does evil; none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done. (Ezek. 33:13)

¹¹⁴ Refer to Web site of Joe Griffin Media Ministries for further explanation.

Lack of Compassion

If man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out [pray] and not be answered. (Prov. 21:13)

We should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I [Paul] was eager to do. (Gal. 2:10)

Due to circumstances beyond their control, there are always individuals who are legitimately impoverished or disadvantaged and require assistance. Thus, recipients of the believer's divinely inspired compassion and assistance should include the following:

Poor health due to illness or injury:

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged Him on his knees, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said, "Be clean!" (Mark 1:40-41)

Handicapped due to birth defect or injury:

Great crowds came to Jesus bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others and laid them at His feet and He healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. (Matt. 15:30-31)

Persecuted for their faith:

God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them. (Heb. 6:10)

Widows and orphans:

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (Jas. 1:27)

In addition to compassion toward those in need, the believer should express unconditional love, a forgiving attitude, and genuine compassion for the needs and weaknesses of others, followed by actions if appropriate:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Eph. 4:32)

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Forgive as the Lord forgave you (Col. 3:12-13)

Marital Discord

Husbands, be considerate as you live with your wives on the basis of knowledge [doctrine], she being the weaker vessel since she is a woman, and show respect as a fellow heir of the grace life so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet. 3:7, CTL)

Wives, in the same way be submissive¹¹⁵ to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior [example] of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment ... Instead, it should be that of your inner self ... which is of great worth in God's sight. (1 Pet. 3:1-4)

The man is mandated by God to exercise authority over his wife with respect and doctrinal intentions, never by physical force or mental anguish. Since the man is designed by God as the aggressor and the woman as the responder in the marriage relationship, the husband is the divinely appointed authority and the wife is the divinely designated responder to that authority:¹¹⁶

Wives, submit to your husband as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of [authority over] the wife as Christ is the Head of the [universal] Church ... Husbands, [unconditionally] love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up as a substitute for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water through the [God's] Word ... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (Eph. 5:22-28)

The husband should never attempt to manipulate or influence his wife, either physically or emotionally, by taking advantage of her instincts as a responder: **"Husbands do not be harsh with your wives"** (Col. 3:19, EXT), whereby the word **"harsh"** includes the sins of bitterness, anger, slander, intimidation, and arrogance. However, when the husband exercises his authority in grace and the wife revolts against him, she causes marital discord and her prayers are unanswered. Using leadership qualities rather than managerial behavior, the husband should unconditionally love and encourage his wife; in response, his wife will be motivated initially with respect and eventually with love for him.

¹¹⁵ "Submissive" (or "submit") in the Greek, [ὑποτάσσω (*hypotássō*)], means to willingly respect or honor her husband's authority, whereas the husband is commanded to love his wife.

¹¹⁶ Refer to the Joe Griffin Media Ministries Web site at www.joegriffin.org for the doctrine of marriage of "Right Man-Right Woman."

Because of God's enduring, immutable grace, believers do not become discouraged: though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed *ONE DAY AT A TIME*. For our modest, momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18, EXT)

The sixty-six books of the Bible are only an infinitesimal fraction of God's infinite wisdom that He chooses to reveal to mankind. Yet, with a finite mind and inherited sinful nature, even the most spiritually advanced believer cannot learn and apply all of this wisdom in a short period of time. He must commit himself to a lifetime of study, recall, and use of God's Word simply to advance to the "*higher ground*" of spiritual maturity. Necessarily, then, living the Christian way of life may be described as a process of continuous spiritual growth that is *incrementally learned and experientially applied* — that is, a day-by-day pursuit and use of God's Word as only revealed in Scripture.¹¹⁷ Where there exists spiritual growth and motivation due to the accelerated use of doctrine in life, individual days are meaningful and accompanied by inner joy:

Teach us to number our days correctly, that we may gain a soul full of wisdom. (Ps. 90:12) ... Satisfy us in the morning with Your unfailing grace, that we may sing for joy and be happy all of our days. (Ps. 90:14)

With perseverance, the believer must patiently live his life one day at a time, recognizing that every new day offers another daily provision of logistical grace from God. The ungodly pressures and deceptions of *cosmos diabolicus* are never-ending — hence the motivation for the positive believer to maximize the time he spends within the divine power system on a daily basis. When the believer surrenders to the authority of Satan's cosmic system, God's divine discipline is imposed, time on earth is forfeited, and days of empowerment by the Holy Spirit within God's plan are lost forever:

For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers. My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food [*doctrine*]. (Ps. 102:3-4)

¹¹⁷ The following commentary is adapted from: R. B. Thieme, Jr., "*One Day at a Time*," Ephesians, MP3 CD (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1985), 412:1175.

Since every new day is a grace gift from God, the believer must regard every day alike — no day is different from another. Consequently, the believer is challenged daily to learn and employ Bible doctrine in order to prevent the shortening of his days on earth:

Let this be written for future generations to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord. (Ps. 102:18)

Man does not live on bread alone, but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God. (Matt. 4:4)

In other words, the days provided to the believer by God's logistical grace are meaningful only if they are used to fulfill the will and purpose of God for his life. Meaningful, spiritual time spent on earth is purchased daily by the believer's knowledge and faithful use of doctrine in his life:

Constantly buy time because the days [on earth] are evil [devil's world]; because of this stop being ignorant [of Bible doctrine] but completely understand the will and purpose of the Lord. (Eph. 5:16-17, CTL)

My son, do not forget My teaching [doctrine personified], but keep My commands in your heart [soul], for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. (Prov. 3:1-2)

Blessed [Happy] is the man who finds wisdom [doctrine], the man who gains understanding, for She [doctrine personified] is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold ... Long life [length of days] is in Her right hand; in Her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all Her paths are peace [prosperity and soul tranquility]. (Prov. 3:13-17)

In summary, the believer's affirmative response to the Word of God, as enabled only by rebound and the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, adds Spirit-filled days to his life from the matchless grace of God:

The believer remembers doctrine; he has confidence the Lord's logistical grace never ceases, for His compassions never fail; they are renewed ONE DAY AT A TIME. Great is His faithfulness. (Lam. 3:21-23, EXT)

He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord ... For not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us dies for himself. If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (Rom. 14:6-8, CTL)

By claiming God's promises with abiding faith, the stressful believer is freed from the anxiety and confusion that inhibits his ability to think calmly and rationally. His soul experiences an inner peace that is compatible with God's desire to bless and reward those who respond positively to His Word, and who persist in the deployment of His mandates in their lives. With over seven thousand promises in the Bible, there is no human difficulty or concern for which God has not already provided a solution, each of which is assured and sustained by His divine integrity. To activate relief from life's inevitable stress, rebound from sinfulness is essential for the believer to be capable of faith-resting God's promises.

The following includes several challenges or pressures that typically hinder the believer's spiritual growth, together with a promise or mandate from the Word of God to resolve the difficulty.¹¹⁸

- ANGER.....**Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. (Jas. 1:19-20)
- ANXIETY.....**Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. (1 Pet. 5:7)
- BELIEF.....**For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
- CHARITY.....**Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 9:7)
- CHILDREN.....**These commandments that I give you today are to be in your souls. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deut. 6:6-7)
- COMFORT.....**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I [Christ] have overcome the world. (John 16:33)
- CONFUSION.....**Whoever follows Me [Christ] will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life. (John 8:12)
- CONTENTMENT.....**Godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Tim. 6:6)

¹¹⁸ Refer to *Promises of God* (2014), Joe Griffin Media Ministries, for an expanded explanation.

- COURAGE**..... Be strong and courageous, all you who have confidence in the Lord. (Ps. 31:24)
- DEATH**..... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and staff, they comfort me. (Ps. 23:4)
- DISCIPLINE**..... The Lord disciplines those He loves [*believers*], and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his [*human*] father? (Heb. 12:6-7)
- DESPAIR**..... Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Josh. 1:9)
- ETERNAL LIFE**..... He who has [*believes in*] the Son [*Christ*] has eternal life; he who does not believe in the Son of God does not have eternal life. (1 John 5:12)
- FAILURE**..... I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. (Isa. 41:10)
- FAITH**..... For it is by grace you are saved, through faith — and this salvation not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)
- FAMILY**..... Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (Col. 3:18-21)
- FAITHFULNESS**..... I recall doctrine; therefore I have confidence: the Lord's logistical grace functions never cease, for His compassions never fail; they are renewed one day at a time. Great is His faithfulness. (Lam. 3:21-23)
- FEAR**..... The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (Heb. 13:6)
- FORGIVENESS**..... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to cleanse us from all wrongdoing. (1 John 1:9)
- GOSSIP**..... Your tongue plots destruction; it is like a sharpened razor, you who practice deceit. You love every harmful word. (Ps. 52:2-4)
- GRACE**..... If by grace, then it is no longer by works; for if it were, grace would no longer be grace. (Rom. 11:6)
- GREED**..... Be wary of all kinds of greed; life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. (Luke 12:15)

- GRIEF.....**My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to Your Word. (Ps. 119:28)
- GUIDANCE.....**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. (Prov. 3:5)
- HUMILITY.....**Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matt. 23:12)
- JEALOUSY.....**For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (Jas. 3:16)
- LOVE.....**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. (1 Cor. 13:4-5)
- OBEDIENCE.....**If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:10-11)
- PRIDE.....**Let him who boasts boast in the Lord. For it is not the one who praises himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord praises. (2 Cor. 10:17-18)
- SUCCESS.....**Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. (2 Pet. 1:5-7)
- SUFFERING.....**We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Rom. 5:3-4)
- TEMPTATION.....**He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- TRUST.....**In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (Ps. 56:11)
- UNCERTAINTY.....**We know that God works all things together for good for those who love Him. (Rom 8:28)
- WEAKNESS.....**My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in your weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9)
- WORK.....**Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Col. 3:23-24)
- WORRY.....**Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. (Ps. 55:22)

For believers interested in doctrines offering more advanced analysis of Scripture, a condensed introduction to selected scriptural concepts is provided herein. Perhaps this introduction will encourage further interest by the reader in the relevance of the God's Word in his life. However, it must be emphasized that spiritual growth does not occur rapidly, but requires a daily process of attentiveness to and concentration on Bible doctrine — namely, ***doctrine learned incrementally and applied experientially***. Additionally, we recommend the MP3 audio streams and publications posted on the Web site of Joe Griffin Media Ministries.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is the *written Word of God* that became the *living Word of God*, or *Mind of Christ*, during the Incarnation:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originates from one's own disclosure [human viewpoint]. For prophecy came not in old time from the will of man: but the holy men of God [human authors] spoke as they were carried along [directed] by [God] the Holy Spirit.
(2 Pet. 1:20-21, CTL)

The Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the writers of Scripture, that without waiving their intelligence, individuality, talent, vocabulary, personality, literary style, personal feelings, or any other human trait, God's complete and coherent message to man was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship:

All Scripture is God-breathed [inspired] and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, so that the believer may become spiritually mature and thoroughly equipped for the production of divine good. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, CTL)

The words "**all Scripture is God-breathed**" in the Greek literally mean both Old and New Testaments were written by human authors divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit to enable spiritual growth by believers while at the same time glorifying God and magnifying His Word in the devil's world.

The Bible consists of sixty-six books written over a period of 1,500 years by some forty human authors who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recorded God's revelations to mankind in writing. Requiring criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of manuscripts in Scripture, special groups and councils were organized to agree on tests of authenticity. One of the essential tests was the absence of any contradiction or disagreement among the manuscripts, with particular emphasis on their harmony with doctrines and teachings already in existence. Furthermore, each manuscript had to provide evidence of divine inspiration (1 John 4:1).¹¹⁹ By the year 425 B.C. with the completion of the Book of Malachi, all of the Old Testament books presently included in Scripture were authenticated. From A.D. 336 to A.D. 419, Church councils were held to finally agree on the books to be included in the New Testament.

Almost 2,000 years have elapsed since the original autographs of the New Testament were written, none of which survive today. The question arises as to how close to the original writings are the copies presently available? The answer is astonishing: 5,686 Greek manuscripts (wholly or partially) plus 19,284 in other languages, totaling 24,970 manuscripts exist today. The degree of variation among these manuscripts is incredibly small. Textual scholars Westcott and Hort¹²⁰ estimated that only sixty variants (or 2 percent) in this vast collection of documents had any significance and none adversely affected the intended meaning of the biblical subject matter. Therefore, they concluded that the New Testament manuscripts presently existing have been duplicated with 98 percent accuracy. No copy of manuscripts written by other ancient authors duplicates its original as accurately as those of the New Testament, some of which date back to the early second century A.D. The chart below compares this group of biblical manuscripts with those of well-known ancient authors:¹²¹

AUTHOR	WHEN WRITTEN	INITIAL COPY	TIME SPAN	NO. OF COPIES
NEW TESTAMENT	A.D. 40-100	A.D. 125	25 yrs.	24,000+
HOMER	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500	643
PLATO	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,300	7
ARISTOTLE	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400	49

¹¹⁹ Thieme, *Canonicity*, R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries.

¹²⁰ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 532.

¹²¹ ©1979 by Campus Crusade for Christ. All rights reserved. Adapted from: Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 41-42.

DIVINE INTEGRITY

Divine integrity embodies a concept that defines the character of God's grace relationship with mankind and establishes an eternal relationship with Him for those who believe in Christ for salvation. All that God has accomplished with reference to His human creation are expressions of His divine integrity, whereby His attributes of righteousness, justice, omniscience, and love function together in perfect harmony with one another. Consequently, the integrity of God is an intrinsic attribute that defines His character, which is revealed by His grace plan for the human race.

Righteousness and Justice

God's righteousness consists of *principles of divine integrity* that define His absolute truth, whereas His justice is comprised of *judgments of divine integrity* that support the principles of His righteousness (Ps. 89:14). These two attributes of His divine essence always function in tandem:

Whatever Righteousness Approves, Justice Blesses
 Whatever Righteousness Rejects, Justice Condemns
 Whatever Righteousness Demands, Justice Executes
 Whatever Righteousness Is, Justice Cannot Change

Therefore, God's righteousness establishes the standards of His integrity and God's justice serves to uphold those standards. Since His righteousness is the foundation of His essence, His justice is always fair and never arbitrary: **"He will judge the world in righteousness; He will govern the peoples with justice"** (Ps. 9:8).

God's integrity interacts with mankind in two interrelated ways:

Point of Responsibility: To reconcile unrighteous man to Himself, God assumed the responsibility of providing His grace plan of salvation and eternal life to those who choose to believe in Jesus Christ.

Point of Contact: God's justice interacts with mankind, whereby He: saves the unbeliever who expresses faith alone in Christ alone; blesses the believer with divine assets at salvation; and disciplines carnal believers for their compliance with standards of the devil's world.

Love and Grace

God's eternal love motivates all of His interrelationships with the human race, including His enforcement of righteous standards with which we must comply. As the third attribute of His integrity, God's personal love is the *Point of Reference* for the unique spiritual life offered to believers in the dispensation of the Church. Thus, God's integrity interacts with mankind by

the interrelated and coordinated functions of His righteousness (*condemns or approves*), His justice (*judges or blesses*), and His love (*motivates His grace*). These innate attributes of His integrity are demonstrations of His unsurpassed grace directed to the human race, which represents what God is free to do for mankind resulting from the substitutionary sacrifice of His son, Jesus Christ, on the cross.

MOSAIC LAW

The Mosaic Law was introduced to the Jews during the dispensation of Israel and is comprised of three sections (Exod. 19-31):

Codex I: Protected the autonomy of human volition, which included the Ten Commandments representing God's confirmation of human morality. Initially offered to Israel, the Ten Commandments were intended for both believers and unbelievers as a means of maintaining order in their lives, not as a means of realizing their personal salvation or spirituality. As God's client nation, Israel was obligated to distribute and teach these mandates (four spiritual and six establishment) to non-client nations.

Codex II: Spiritual code of the Law that explained divine principles of Christology (Messiah-Savior) and Soteriology (salvation). Jewish prophets communicated these principles prophetically and Levitical priests depicted the Messiah and His role in salvation ritualistically by means of animal sacrifices and the observance of holy days.

Codex III: Reaffirmed the four divine institutions and introduced the laws of divine establishment that included the formation of government, inviolability of human life, privacy of property, appointment of judges, capital punishment, military service, and free-enterprise capitalism.

However, due to man's inborn sinful nature, total compliance with these codices was unattainable and never specifically intended by God for either salvation or spirituality. Rather, the Law was created by God to reveal man's need for the Savior by which the power of his inherited old sin nature could be controlled by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, identified in Scripture as the "**law of the [Holy] Spirit of life**" (Rom. 8:2):

Christ is [personifies] the end [fulfillment] of the Law so that there may be righteousness [spiritual relationship with God] for everyone who believes. (Rom. 10:4)

Jesus Christ in His humanity voluntarily agreed to endure substitutionary spiritual death on the cross so that mankind might take advantage of an eternal relationship (*salvation*) and temporal fellowship (*spirituality*) with God.

During the Incarnation, Christ fulfilled all three codices of the Mosaic Law and reaffirmed for Church Age believers most of their mandates:

“Do not think that I [Christ] have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matt. 5:17)

However, His reaffirmation in the New Testament of Old Testament mandates excluded the Jewish observance of the Sabbath and their system of tithing:

Sabbath: An example of Old Testament worship not reaffirmed in the New Testament is the concept of the Jewish Sabbath as revealed in the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:8-11). During the Dispensation of Israel, the Jewish people were required to honor the Sabbath by “*resting from work*” during the seventh day of each week; their rest was a form of worship in recognition of God’s day of rest following the restoration of the heavens and earth (Gen. 2:2-3). If the Jews failed to honor this day, they suffered divine discipline. In the New Testament, every day is a Sabbath during which God is worshipped in the privacy of the believer’s soul.

Tithing: Literally meaning “*one tenth*,” tithing was a Jewish system of income taxation for believers and unbelievers that maintained the Levitical priesthood, Jewish government, and the indigent and disabled. This system of tithing was specific to the dispensation of Israel and not reaffirmed in the New Testament for the Church Age.

HUMAN DEATHS

Seven categories of human death are identified in the Bible:

Physical Death: For the believer, the human soul and spirit are separated from the human body and transferred to heaven.¹²² For the unbeliever who lacks a human spirit, his soul is transferred to the Torments section of Hades¹²³ to await the Last Judgment (1 Cor. 5:1-8).

Second Death: Occurs at the Last Judgment of Jesus Christ when all unbelievers, accompanied by fallen angels, are sentenced to the Lake of Fire and separated from God for all eternity (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15).

Temporal Death: When the believer sins and fails to confess his sins, he is alienated from God until he rebounds (Rom. 8:6,13).

¹²² Prior to Jesus Christ’s resurrection, the believer’s soul and human spirit were transferred to the Paradise compartment of Hades reserved for believers only. At His ascension, Christ transferred all Old Testament believers directly to heaven.

¹²³ Torments is that region of Hades (often referred to as Hell) wherein all unbelievers are temporarily located following their physical death to await the Last Judgment at the end of human history, at which time they will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire along with Satan and his fallen angels, alienated from God for all eternity (Rev. 20:11-15).

Spiritual Death: All human beings are born spiritually dead due to their inheritance through procreation of a genetically transmitted sinful nature and the imputation of Adam's original sin (Rom. 5:12; Rom. 6:23).

Positional Death: At salvation believers are identified with Christ in His spiritual and physical deaths; as a result, their sinful natures are positionally judged and buried with Him (Rom. 6:1-14).

Operational Death: When the believer is controlled by his sinful nature, he is identified as operationally dead and, as a result, incapable of producing divine good (Jas. 2:26).

Sexual Death: Referenced to Abraham who, at an advanced age, was unable to procreate until the Lord divinely assisted with the birth of his son Isaac (Gen. 17:17; Rom. 4:17-21).

UNION WITH CHRIST

At salvation the Holy Spirit baptizes the believer into an eternal union with Christ, whereby the believer is “**created in Christ Jesus**” (Eph. 2:10) as a new spiritual species. This spiritual rebirth enables the believer to share for all eternity in the divine inheritance possessed by the humanity of Jesus Christ, which consists of the following attributes:

Righteousness: God imputes His righteousness to the new believer from which originates an eternal relationship with Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Priesthood: God commissions new believers in the Church Age as royal priests — a priesthood under the leadership of Christ as the High Priest (Heb. 6:17-20) — with responsibilities to represent themselves in prayer, directly and privately, before God and advance spiritually in their knowledge and use of doctrine (1 Pet. 2:9).

Eternal Life: God creates a human spirit in the new believer to which He imputes eternal life and with which the Holy Spirit enables his comprehension and discernment of doctrine (1 John 5:11-12).

Election: God selects those who volitionally express faith alone in Christ alone as the beneficiaries of His salvation, and sets apart divine privileges, blessings, and provisions beyond salvation that enable the believer to glorify His Son and magnify His Word (Eph. 1:4).

Sonship: God's selection in eternity past of all believers in Jesus Christ to become children of His family forever (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26-27).

Destiny: Based on His foreknowledge of all that would occur in human history, God predestined all believers as adopted sons endowed with unique privileges and responsibilities (Eph. 1:5).

Sanctification: The new believer is sanctified, or set apart, in Christ for the purpose of serving Him as a royal priest and ambassador (1 Cor. 1:2-3).

Heirship: As adopted sons of God, believers are heirs of Him and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, and share in the divine inheritance possessed by the humanity of Christ (Rom. 8:16-17).

Royalty: Believers become members of God's royal family, to live and reign with Him in Christ throughout eternity (2 Tim. 2:11-12).

DIVINE INSTITUTIONS

Since God created man's essence to include the attribute of volition, human freedom must be protected. For instance, the Ten Commandments identify sins that destroy the basics of human freedom — life, liberty, property, privacy, and divinely delegated authority. Even belief in Jesus Christ as Savior is an act of volition, which must be protected to permit Christian study and evangelism.

An important biblical concept emerges: although God is the ultimate authority over all that exists, He delegates authority to both believers and unbelievers in order to perpetuate human freedom throughout history (Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). These divinely created systems of authority are known as the *four laws of divine establishment*:

Volition: Individuals are responsible for their own decisions as regulated by self-discipline and norms and standards in their souls.

Marriage: Husbands have been delegated the authority over their wives, which emulates the love of Jesus Christ for His Church.

Family: Parents are delegated the authority over their children, which must be exercised with respect and unconditional love.

Nation: Law and its enforcement, as well as the military, are systems of authority to protect national stability and sovereignty.

The fourth divine institution, also known as nationalism, safeguards the first three divine institutions by laws designed to defend and preserve individual freedom within the national entity. To make certain the continuation of these inalienable rights, the nation must secure its self-governance from internal and external threats that endanger its freedoms and national sovereignty:

Internally, by laws and their enforcement that inhibit centralized governmental control of individual freedoms. Concentrated power, if unrestrained, invariably results in secular humanism, a satanic belief system independent of God that takes advantage of man's arrogance to promote human solutions to human problems:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world [secular humanism] rather than on Christ [divine viewpoint]. (Col. 2:8)

Externally, by the enforcement of domestic laws prohibiting the loss of national sovereignty arising from international agreements that threaten individual freedom and self-government; and by an unequaled military force that is capable of overpowering all foreign aggressors. Scripture warns that there will be no international peace and prosperity until the millennial reign of Jesus Christ:

When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come [*Second Advent of Christ*]. (Mark 13:7)

Therefore, intercessory prayers on behalf of these divine institutions are needed to protect individual autonomy, privacy, property, and human life.

ANGELIC CONFLICT

When God created the universe, He created a race of super-creatures known scripturally as angels that included Lucifer, Son of the Morning,¹²⁴ the most exalted of His angelic creation. Sometime in eternity past, Lucifer abused his freedom through arrogance. Obsessing to be like God, he persuaded one-third of the angelic creation (“fallen angels”) to join him in a revolt against God’s authority (Rev. 12:3-9). Unabated throughout history, Satan and his fallen angels have been engaged in an invisible war with God known as the “*Angelic Conflict*,” contesting God’s supremacy rather than worshiping Him as their Creator.¹²⁵ Having been found guilty of rebellion by God’s perfect justice, Satan and his fallen angels were sentenced to the Lake of Fire:

Your [Satan’s] heart became arrogant on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor ... So I [God] made a fire come out from you, and it [the Lake of Fire] will consume you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. (Ezek. 28:17-18)

Since Satan protested his sentence, God graciously deferred the verdict until the end of human history. An appeal was granted allowing him to refute the

¹²⁴ In Isa. 14:12 (KJV), the proper noun, Lucifer, is the Latin word for “light-bearer,” and is used to translate the Hebrew word הֵלֵל (*Helel*), which means “radiant star.” The New American Standard Bible translates *Helel* “Star of the Morning.” The Hebrew text continues with the phrase בֶּן־שָׁחַר (*ben-Shachar*), translated “son of the dawn” in all the major English versions. Star of the Morning, Son of the Dawn refers to the superior officer of the Dark Side, the cherub-ranked fallen angel known by the monikers, Satan or devil, but whose real name is *Helel ben-Shachar*. Employing the Latin noun, Lucifer, conveniently summarizes all of these translations.

¹²⁵ Satan and his angelic and human agents strive relentlessly to create a one-world, “Christ-like millennium” on earth by imposing human viewpoint over any allegiance to divine viewpoint. Every deceptive effort is used to resolve the world’s problems with collectivist and secular solutions enforced by them.

judgments of his guilt (Job 1:6-12; Zech. 3:1-2). Coinciding with Satan's appeal, God created the human race to provide confirmation that a species inferior to angels, but with identical free will, would choose to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and God's plan for the conduct of their lives. Thus, the free will decisions of mankind throughout human history serve as witnesses for God's condemnation of Satan, which ultimately validate his eternal imprisonment in the Lake of Fire. By observing the human race, angels are eyewitnesses to Satan's guilt and God's grace and perfect justice.¹²⁶

CYCLES OF CIVILIZATION

Cyclical progressions of civilization from "*bondage-back-to-bondage*"¹²⁷ have occurred repeatedly throughout history. The American client nation to God is in danger today of repeating this progression unless the population of believers increases to include those who are more informed and faithful in applying doctrine in their lives. If not, believers ignorant of God's Word are too often enticed by cosmic propaganda to become unrestrained activists:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world [human viewpoint] rather than on Christ [divine viewpoint]. (Col. 2:8)

Where there is no teaching of divine revelation [doctrine], the people are unrestrained and ignorant. (Prov. 29:18)

These cycles of civilization as expressed by Clarence Manion in the early 1950s are reflected in the following progression:

Man begins his existence in bondage,
arising from bondage by spiritual faith,
from spiritual faith to courage,
from courage to liberty,
from liberty to abundance,
from abundance to selfishness,
from selfishness to complacency,
from complacency to apathy,
from apathy to dependency,
from dependency back into bondage.

¹²⁶ Scriptures include Job 1:6, 2:1-3; Luke 15:7, 10; 1 Cor. 4:9, 11:10; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim. 3:16, 5:21.

¹²⁷ Clarence Manion, Dean of the Notre Dame Law School, wrote of this progression as adapted from the writings of Alexander Fraser Tytler, 1747-1813.

BIOGRAPHIES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR ...

Joe Griffin is pastor of Grace Doctrine Church and president of Joe Griffin Media Ministries, both in St. Charles, Missouri. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama and, after a career in television production, was ordained to the ministry by Berachah Church in Houston, Texas.

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Smith and his family were among the initial group that formed Grace Doctrine Church in 1975, and has held several positions on the church's Board of Deacons. He is presently Senior Editor for the publications of Joe Griffin Media Ministries.

John and his wife, Susan, reside in St. Louis County, Missouri, and enjoy the privilege of sharing in the lives of their four children and eleven grandchildren.

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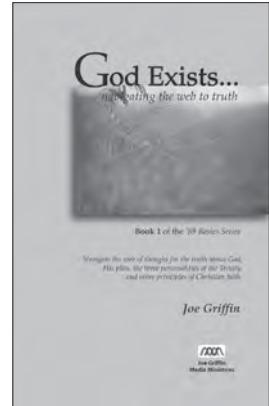
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God Exists Navigating the Web of Truth

Book 1

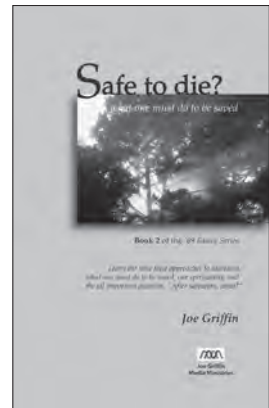
Griffin's study on the basic doctrines of the Christian faith was first published in 2005. This series in four volumes contains reprints of his pulpit notes from the 1989 Basics Series. Book 1 is an introduction to the logical rationale that concludes there is a God. This leads to a discussion of the plan of God, the three Persons of the Trinity, and divine essence. Finally, the entry of mankind into the plan of God is presented followed by his spiritual fall in the garden of Eden. Nine false approaches to the gospel of salvation are analyzed.



Safe to Die? What One Must Do to Be Saved

Book 2

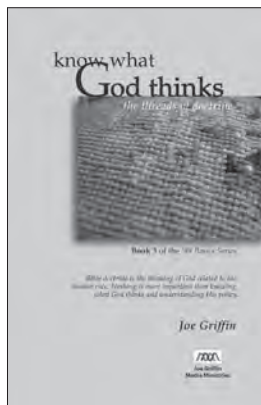
The importance of distinguishing the difference between spirituality and carnality is imperative for new believers to understand. The parable of the prodigal son clearly demonstrates this dichotomy. The passage demonstrates that the self-righteous elder brother committed far more sins than did the prodigal. The causes of carnality, lust patterns of the sin nature, and recovery of spirituality are explained. Safe to Die? concludes with a review of studies covered in the first two books.



Know What God Thinks

The Threads of Doctrine

Book 3

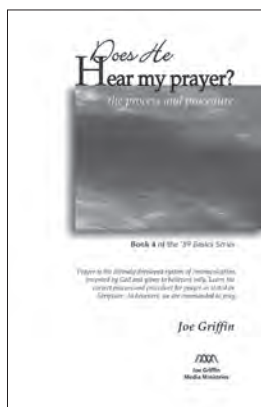


God is the epitome of order. It is easy to conclude that His Word is an orderly presentation of His thinking. Orderly thinking is contained in categories which are called doctrines. This book explains the importance of doctrines with emphasis on the doctrines of dispensations, the mystery of the church, and the faith-rest drill—the basic problem-solving device for the Spirit-filled Christian.

Does He Hear My Prayer?

The Process and Procedure

Book 4



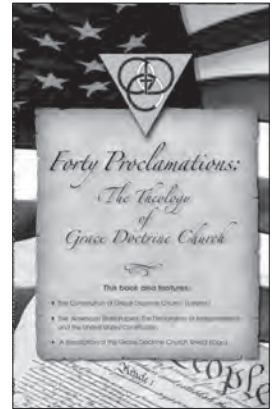
Prayer is the invention of God. It is a system of communication provided exclusively to those who are believers in Jesus Christ. The correct process and procedure for utilizing this asset is discussed in this final volume. All prayer is to be addressed to the Father followed by confession of sins. This insures the filling of the Holy Spirit. The initial phase of one's prayer should be the expression of thanksgiving to God for his grace provisions. When praying for other people, intercession for them should follow next, then, after that, personal petitions. All prayer should be concluded "in Christ's name." The book concludes with ten reasons why some prayers are not answered.

Forty Proclamations

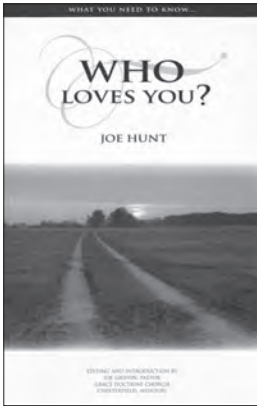
The Theology of Grace Doctrine Church

Forty Proclamations presents succinct definitions of forty core doctrines that are essential for believers to understand. In addition, the book contains copies of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution.

The foundation of all cultures is a central belief system that unites disparate individuals into a harmonious commonwealth. For Christians, the most sacred right contained in the Constitution's First Amendment is that of free exercise. Ancillary to it are those freedoms that enable a person to grow in grace so he can become a good soldier for Jesus Christ. Freedom of movement facilitates assembly. Freedom of assembly permits church attendance. Freedom of speech allows public exposition of Scripture. Freedom of the press insures the publication and distribution of the Bible and its teachings. Recognizing the importance of a free people having access to the foundational documents of the Republic, these State Papers are a part of this publication.



Who Loves You?



Joe Hunt, a long-time member of Grace Doctrine Church, was afflicted with brain cancer in 2006. His prognosis was not good. Accepting the fact that his days were numbered, he approached his pastor and brother with a request. He wanted them to publish a book containing the doctrines he'd learned that were sustaining him in the crisis. This publication is the result of that effort. It has been a source of great encouragement to many, especially for those who face similar circumstances as Joe's.

This 2010 revised edition contains the eulogy presented at Joe's memorial service in February 2007 plus an MP3 disk containing the 52-lesson basic doctrine series taught by Pastor Griffin in 1989.

These titles may be ordered from:

Joe Griffin Media Ministries
1821 South River Road
St. Charles, MO 63303-4124

“*He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord.
For not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us
dies for himself. If we live, we live for the Lord;
if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether
we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end
Christ died and lived again, that He might be
Lord both of the dead and of the living. (Rom. 14:6-9).*”

About the Cover:

If you were in a dark field at night, you wouldn't be able to see which direction you needed to go to find your way out. Darkness is a representation of the despair sin brings into your life. God's Word brings you out of the darkness into the light providing direction and guidance.

In this image, we see the morning light coming up over the meadow illuminating a path which represents wheel-tracks of righteousness. When a believer is lost and alone, he needs help finding the trail that leads him back to where he needs to be. He can't do that in the darkness of unconfessed sin. If he needed to travel through this pasture every day, he would learn where the path is and how to follow it rather than hike indiscriminately through the tall grass or be distracted by circumstances represented by the storm clouds that repeatedly confront each of us.

The Light that illuminates the path is God's Word; from it, believers learn how to navigate through life's challenges from divine guidance, one day at a time.

— Cindy Rawlins

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."
(Ps 119:105)

"You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord turns my darkness into light."
(1 Samuel 22:29)



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