

Introduction to “The Spiritual Life”

This study series, "The Spiritual Life" is a study of the spiritual principles which govern true Christian character and service. We will emphasize the sufficiency of the divine resources and the heart conditions necessary for holy living and spiritual power in ministry. The overall objective is that each of us may respond to God's heart and purpose for spiritual men and women.

Lesson 1 - Heart to Heart. This study opens by considering one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith: that God would call a fallen and depraved humanity to holiness. The key issue is a matter of the heart, which is seen by tracing Jesus' relationship with his disciples from the Gospel of Mark.

Lesson 2 - The Holiness Requirement. This study focuses on God's holiness and his command to his people to be holy. This key command of Scripture is considered in some depth, especially our innate ability to keep it, because it is critical to understanding the grace of God.

Lesson 3 - Grace, God's Provision for our Need. This study and the one that follows, Lesson 4 - Grace, Whose Triumph is it, Anyway? focus on the importance of understanding that *it is who we are in Christ, not what we do*, that is the critical issue in living a life of true Christian character. Especially in light of God's holiness, all our good works are as filthy rags, yet for many of us it is our behavior (or lack of it) that defines in our minds our identity as Christians, the security of our salvation, and a triumphant life. Coming to grips with this habit of thought is essential to understanding how to live a holy life.

Lesson 5 - Who We Were in Adam. Before we were Christians we are united to Adam. We had his nature, and inherited his sin, even before we were born. This lesson examines who we *were* in Adam as the basis for many of the struggles we have living a life glorifying to God. The good news is, it is who we *were* in Adam - past tense!

Lesson 6 - The Day We Died. Christians are no longer *in* Adam. We are no longer identified with him, and therefore no longer have his fallen identity. The simple fact of the matter is that we are not who we think we are! Something radical and amazing has happened to us - we have died to sin's reign and have a new sovereign, Jesus Christ. We are united with Jesus in the same way we used to be united with Adam, and so we have a new identity, an identity that frees us from the dominion of sin. Romans 6 tells us how all this has come to pass.

Lesson 7 - Deliverance from Sin. In Romans 6:5-14 Paul moves from the basic fact of our identity with Christ and provides a practical application that is the model for all biblical application. It is a matter of the head, the heart, and the hands. We are delivered from sin - to experience that deliverance, Paul tells us there is something we must *know*, something we must *consider*, and something we must *present*.

Lesson 8 - Facing the Flesh. The wonderful truths of Romans 6 are pretty lofty, but in Romans 7, Paul changes gears significantly, coming to a grimy reality: "*I am of flesh, sold into bondage to*

sin. For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not... Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" In this lesson we explore the enemy within that prevents us from being able to obey God on our own power, the flesh.

Lesson 9 - The Ministry of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 holds the key to the enemy within. The Holy Spirit is the single most important resource available to the Christian for day to day living. This lesson looks at the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

Lesson 10 – The Believer’s Responsibility. Even with all that God has done for the believer, we are still left with the nagging questions: "Just what is our responsibility in the Spiritual Life?" This study explores the relationship between discipline and dependence on the Lord’s strength and provision.

Lesson 11 – Spiritual Warfare. Where does spiritual warfare fit in the spiritual life? We have seen all that God has done for us in our salvation, and we conclude happily that we are not alone. On the other hand, *we are not alone!* There is real opposition to God, both earthly and supernatural, and we are in the middle of the struggle.

Lesson 12 – How Not to be Satan’s Breakfast. This lesson explores more fully the teaching of the New Testament on spiritual warfare and makes application from it.

Lesson 13 – Now That We’re Spiritual. The final lesson in this series will both sum up where we’ve been and point us to the road ahead.

Lesson 1: Heart to Heart

Just at the beginning of this study, stop and consider for a couple of minutes this question: "What are the things that keep you from being effective in your personal spiritual life and ministry?" If it helps you to think of these things (painful though they may be), jot them down on a piece of paper.

If you are like most people, your list probably includes a combination of annoyances (too busy) and serious problems (repetitive sin, unsaved spouse). As you consider your list, consider the following.

The things on your list *can* hinder, but they are not the foundation of our spiritual lives. Eliminating these hindrances might give us the illusion of greater effectiveness, but the true foundation of personal spiritual life and ministry is who we are in Christ, not simply what we do or don't do.

What happens to a building if the foundation is weak or flawed? The building can't stand. We all tend to focus more on our personal lists than on the *true* foundation of a spiritual life. That is, when we are looking for prescriptive advice on strengthening our walk, we tend to focus on *eliminating items from our personal list* rather than on building a strong foundation in Christ.

This lesson is intended to help us understand that our foundation in Christ is not a static thing but can always be strengthened. And it is usually strengthened not by building up, but by tearing down. I think the single best place this point is illustrated is in Mark's gospel.

Mark emphasizes Jesus' role as *servant*. He provides this focus while tracking Jesus' two key relationships: with the Pharisees and with the Twelve (AKA the Apostles, or the Disciples). Start by looking at 3:1-5 and comparing it to 6:45-52. What do the disciples have in common with the Pharisees? The answer may surprise you - they both have *hard hearts*. Hard hearts? The Twelve? The Men Who Turned the World Upside Down? Yup.

We can understand the differences between them pretty easily. The Pharisees are locked in mortal combat with Jesus while the Twelve have made a commitment to him. They have drawn different conclusions about him (the Pharisees see evil while the Twelve see good, the Pharisees see only threat while the Twelve see promise), but at heart both groups are the same - stony!

Why? What has happened to disciples up to this point? Mark traces this path of Christian growth and commitment in the early chapters of his book:

- Initial Commitment - left careers, followed Christ (1:16-20)
- Conflict - witness absolute conflict between Master and authorities (2:6-11, 15-3:6)
- Lessons (healings, parables, confrontations - thru 6:6)
- Storm I - illustrated that he controls the elements - very clear sign of who he is (4:35-41)
- Final Commitment - shows the 12's obvious growth as disciples (chosen and sent, 6:7-13)

In 6:30, at the end of this great trip, where they were staggeringly successful, preaching, healing, casting out demons (see v13), they are offered time alone with Jesus - a vacation to rest and recuperate from their labors. But it doesn't quite turn out the way they expect! Instead, Mark records that the vacation turns into a test of the most difficult nature. The creative miracle of Jesus that we call "the feeding of the 5,000" (6:31-44) is in fact no vacation for the Twelve. Instead, thousands of spiritually and physically needy people are looking to *them* for help! And to make matters worse, when they bring the matter to Jesus' attention, he tells the Twelve *to take care of it* (v37)!

Was his request reasonable? Could they do what he asked? Feed 5,000 people with no food and no resources? In case you aren't sure, the answer is ***no***. Then why did he ask? Because Jesus is illustrating the need to trust him. The Twelve have just returned with great success, and they are very likely feeling that they have this disciple stuff figured out. They are God's men on earth, the indispensable men whom Jesus simply must have to do his work. And so, Jesus asks them to do what he knows they cannot, so that they can see that he and he alone is their resource for the spiritual life.

Seen in this light, the feeding of the 5,000 is a paradigm for life as a Christian, because we are all called to do what we are not adequate for, through Jesus Christ. This was a calculated action on Jesus' part, which is best seen by his next action, in the storm scene we read at the beginning of this study, 6:45-52.

Whose idea was it to get in the boat? (Jesus') Did the approaching storm take Jesus by surprise? (No) Was Jesus walking to catch up and get in with them? (v48) No - v48 says he was going to walk past them. Why? Because the Twelve had left all to follow Jesus, and even in their growth and success as his followers, their focus was still on themselves. That is why Jesus asked them to feed the 5,000. He challenged them to put their every trust and resource in him, not in themselves. And their response is seen here in v52: hardened hearts.

Why? Because the root of a hard heart is drive for significance, even as a Christian dedicated to God's glory. And these Twelve, like most of us, have in the core of their hearts a drive for significance, a desire to be somebody, that keeps them from putting everything on Jesus, even after they have trusted him for salvation. Does that describe you? Are you one of the millions of Christians who live day by day manufacturing an identity, thinking you start at ground zero each day, justifying existence by acting in such a way that God will be pleased with you? You aren't alone.

The ultimate issue is *control*. Who is going to control my life? The God I trust or me? Whose terms will govern my thoughts? His or mine? For the Twelve, at this point in their lives, the answer was self, and when Jesus challenged them, their response was to harden their hearts.

We can see this through the rest of Mark's gospel. Look at 8:27-38, especially v27-32. Jesus asks them "Who do people say I am?" When the Twelve confess their own belief that Jesus is Messiah (v29-other Gospels add "Son of the Living God, a recognition that he is deity), Jesus affirms their confession and tells them what it means to be God's Anointed - it means the Cross (v31).

Being God's Anointed meant something different to the Twelve. They expected Messiah to rule, to kick Roman butt, to bring God's kingdom to reign on earth. In short, they expected a political Messiah. And so, blessed Peter, in a fit of Leader's Disease, takes Jesus aside in a not-so-gentle rebuke in v32-33. Matthew adds his helpful language to the Son of the Living God, "God forbid it, Lord." The Twelve have the right facts, have drawn the right conclusion about Jesus, but they have the wrong agenda. Their heart is still focused on man's interests, not God's. They are looking to be #1.

From this point on in Mark, the Twelve are in a graveyard spiral with Jesus. Four more times Jesus will teach the necessity of the Cross, and four times the Twelve will be focused instead on themselves, specifically with who is #1 in the kingdom. Trace it yourself by comparing these passages in Mark: Cross - 9:31-32, #1 - 9:33-34; Cross - 10:32-34, #1 - 10:35-41; Cross - 14:22-25, #1 - 14:27-31

During the escalating conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, the Twelve are blind to it all. At best they are worried and confused about what Jesus is doing to the very bitter end. Look now at

Mark 16. It's over, all have fled (except the women), Jesus has been crucified, the resurrection reported to the Twelve, who refuse to believe it (v10-11). Still focused on the wrong agenda, they grieve and mourn in v10 (I wonder, are they grieving for Jesus or themselves?). In v14, Jesus appears to them, with a *message of reproach for their unbelief and hardness of heart*.

What does he do next? He sends them out to preach the gospel! Jesus' 3 year ministry to the Twelve was to *bring them to this point, not for salvation, but for life*. What will they do with their issues of control, of being #1 now? The only thing they can do - take his agenda, giving up their own. What was his agenda? The cross - total sacrifice of self, taking his death as theirs, taking his resurrection seriously, taking his sufficiency, not their own.

Jesus wasn't trying to build the Twelve into spiritual he-men who could go out and conquer the world, he was breaking them down to nothing so that they would put everything they had on him. At that point, and only at that point, were they ready to go out and minister. I truly believe that at this point, the Twelve have finally figured it out. Their hard hearts are shattered, and they are ready to look to Jesus for all their strength, power, significance, and effectiveness.

Does the thickness of the Twelve make you want to shake them and shout "Wake up! What is it with you guys?" If so, welcome to the Pharisee-of-the-Month club. Repeat after me, "God, I thank you that I am not like these 12." Well, trust me, we are they.

What shape is your heart in? Are you struggling to control your life? Manufacturing an identity? First, you're not alone. Second, Jesus never gave up on the 12, either. God's call to each of us is to be *holy*, and we fall far short, don't we? Unless we see our own inadequacy and his sufficiency, we can never meet his expectation of us. If we try to maintain the illusion of control, then illusion is all we'll have.

If your heart is hurting and you are a Christian, you're in the right place. Bill Lawrence says there are 3 distinctives of Christianity: *hurt* over sin, *hope* knowing there is *help*. If you find yourself in company with the Twelve, give control and adequacy up to Jesus Christ. Let him break your heart so that he can remake and strengthen it.

Lesson 2: The Holiness Requirement

Why did Jesus rebuke Peter in Matthew 14:28-31? Because he didn't live up to Jesus' expectation. What was his expectation? To do what he did, which was to walk on water. *In other words, Jesus expects followers to walk on water!*

Before you dismiss that entirely, realize that like Peter, *we are* commanded to meet an impossible expectation: holiness! God expects holiness of us, and in truth he might just as well ask us to walk on water.

Holiness is the foundation and starting point of the spiritual life. It is God's standard for mankind and it is the standard for the believer's walk with God. *We need to be holy!* God says so many times. Look up these references for yourself: Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Pet

1:16; Hebrews 12:10; Matthew 5:48. God only needs to say something once for it to be true. When he says many times, we'd best listen.

What does it mean to you to be holy? How do we "do" it? Before you answer too hastily, consider this: If your answer is "in Christ," doesn't our behavior matter? Yes. But if its behavior, then can I attain to God's holiness through behavior? No. What about the intentions of the heart (Jeremiah 17:9-10)? But if holiness is internal, do externals count for anything?

Maybe it would help to think of what that word "holy" means. Is it positive or negative? Is God saying "don't do this" or is he saying "do that"? At its root the words translated "holy" mean "separation", but the Bible's emphasis takes it further: it focuses on *consecration* (dedication to God), resulting in *purification* from sin (positive emphasis, negative scope).

Holiness is a unique attribute of God, and the most emphasized of the Old Testament. The angels of Isaiah 6 declare "Holy, Holy, Holy" not "Powerful, Powerful, Powerful"). God is holy positively - there is only the presence of right in Him. He is also holy negatively - there is the total absence of evil in Him.

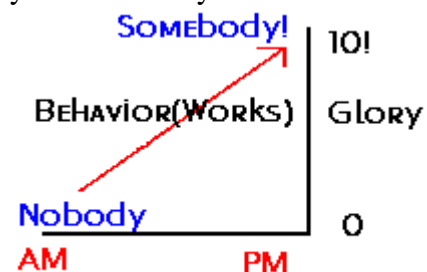
But why does God command we be something we can't possibly be? *Because anything less is out of his character, and an impossibility.* God accepts no excuses because as an inherently and infinitely holy God he hates sin (if you don't believe me, check out Habbakuk 1:13; Isaiah 1:14-17; or Psalm 5:5 for starters). We see the clearest proof of God's hatred of sin in his treatment of his beloved son. The tiniest single internal blemish still offends God's holiness - we can never justify the slightest deviation from his will - God hates sin no matter where he finds it - saint or sinner. He does not hate sin in one and overlook it in another. He hates sin intensely whenever and wherever he finds it. Therefore the impossible call to "be holy."

Here is a working definition for God's holiness:

☛ *God is holy in that all He is, thinks, feels, says, does, and wills is **inherently** and **eternally** good and right and in that He is **inherently** and **eternally** free from evil of any kind.*

Think back to your list of hindrances from the first study. Does it reveal your own unholiness? Our tendency is to equate holiness with behavior. If we do the right and avoid the wrong, we are living holy lives. That was the Pharisee's message. But if we see God's holiness clearly, we will see our own unholiness clearly. Holiness is *not* rooted in behavior. There is no external action that equates to holiness. That is why Jesus focused on the disciple's hearts, not their hands.

There is a model of behavior that I call the "Nobody/Somebody" model. It says that we start each day as *nobodies*, and we live and act in such a way that by the end of the day we will have accomplished things which will have made us *somebodies*. If we've had a good day, done some good things, got some stuff accomplished, maybe got to minister or share the gospel a little bit, then we are something in our own eyes and God's.



We tend to live as though it is our behavior, our accomplishments, our works, that make us somebody. With this view, we start out at ground zero every day, seeking to justify our existence by what we do. When we don't do much, we don't feel very good about ourselves. That is the attitude betrayed in this very perceptive quote by an unexpected source:

- "My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. That's always been pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become somebody, I still have to prove that I'm **SOMEBODY**. My struggle has never ended, and it probably never will." Madonna, quoted from Vogue, in "What Jesus Would Say," by Lee Strobel

The nobody/somebody model that traps us all (including Madonna) is the same old drive for significance that so affected the Twelve (see Lesson 1 - Heart to Heart). But we can't be holy in the same way God is holy, which is inherently, infinitely holy. We are limited creatures, but there is a human holiness to which we are called and which we must attain: conformity to revealed standards of his holiness in the Scriptures.

Human holiness is still primarily internal - a matter of *being, thinking, feeling*. Human holiness is both positive and negative - positive in that it is consecrated **to** purity, negative in that it is consecrated **from** impurity. So human holiness represents "doing" as an outward expression of an "inward reality. Being must precede behavior. Here is a definition of human holiness:

- *We can be holy in that we must be dedicated to purity as God defines it in His word in every aspect of our being (thought, attitude, word, desire, and deed), and in that we must be consecrated from impurity as God defines it in His word in every aspect of our being (thought, attitude, word, desire, and deed).*

Which brings us back to walking on water. Even with our own definition are we any more able to live it? Therefore we have an impossible standard to live up to. **How do you deal with an impossible standard?** You make lists. Put sin into categories - big, little; mortal, venial; external, hidden. Make excuses - "I'm weak in that area" "I didn't mean to." Redefine the standard of holiness to something we can do (like the Pharisees). But mostly, do you know what people do with an impossible standard? Live with massive guilt

What does it mean to you to be holy? How do we do it? Do we have a different definition now? What did Jeremiah say about your inner reality? It is *desperately wicked*. So how can that help you be holy? It can tell you that you can't be holy in ourselves - *it is who we are in Christ that is our only resource for holiness and our primary motivation for holiness*.

Called to it, but we can't do it. This is a life of struggle/conflict - *if we take it seriously*. Human holiness is active! Peter writes to Christians in mortal combat with their culture that they are to live a distinctive lifestyle (1 Pet 1:13-16) marked by:

- **dedication** (v13, gird, turn from leisurely lifestyle, get ready, be prepared)
- **discipline** (v13 - sober, free from rash, confusion, excess passion - well-balanced, self-controlled)

- **determination** (v13 - not looking behind, firm/conscious decision keep Grace in view, and its end
- **distinctiveness** (v14-15 - turn from world's mold)
- in other words, **holiness** (v16)

Holiness must be central, but it doesn't have to be harsh. There is hope for the holiness requirement:! As we face our inability and see the need for God's presence and power. As we face our impurity and see the need for God's purity. As we face our futility and see the need for God's purpose.

- "Caught in this dilemma, what are we Christians to do? We must like Moses cover ourselves with faith and humility while we steal a quick look at the God whom no man can see and live. The broken and the contrite heart He will not despise. We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by. We must take refuge from God in God. Above all we must believe that God sees us perfect in his Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness."

We can take refuge from God in God in the sense that we can take refuge from His necessary judgment in His mercy. Even though we cannot accomplish the holiness God commands of us we find our acceptance in Christ, the very acceptance He has provided for us.

Consider this. If holiness was the most emphasized attribute of God in the Old Testament, what is the most emphasized attribute in the New Testament? Love - first the requirement, then the provision. How can we be holy? Grace! - God's provision for our need. To accomplish God's holiness we must understand God's grace - next study.

Lesson 3: Grace: God's Provision for Our Need

We have seen that the condition of the heart is the critical issue in the spiritual life, and that being a Christian, having the Holy Spirit indwelling us, is no guarantee of an open heart. Further, we saw that the basic requirement and foundation of the spiritual life is God's requirement that his people be holy, just as he is holy. With this impossible requirement staring us in the face, what can we do? Where can we turn? "Caught in this dilemma, what are we Christians to do?...We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by. **We must take refuge from God in God.** Above all we must believe that God sees us perfect in his Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness."

That last part, "God sees us perfect in his Son" is what this study is all about. **Grace, God's provision for our need. To accomplish God's holiness we must understand God's grace.** It is who we are in Christ, *not what we do*, that is the critical issue. Especially in light of God's holiness, all our good works are as filthy rags, even as believers, yet for many of us it is our

behavior (or lack of it) that defines in our minds our identity as Christians, the security of our salvation, and a triumphant life.

What is the place of grace in the Christian life? First, grace for salvation. A layman's definition of grace would go something like this: *Grace is unmerited favor, being given something we don't deserve.* Romans 3:23-24, 5:1-2, and Ephesians 2:8-9 all teach some pretty important truths about grace.

Romans 3:23-24 tells us what our state was without grace, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We cannot and do not meet God's holiness requirement. We fall short (way short) of God's glory. We need God's judicial pardon from our sin, which is what grace gives us, v24: "and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." **God's unmerited favor has given us what we don't deserve, free (for us) justification from our sin.**

Paul goes on to say in Romans 5:1-2 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." **We have access to and stand in God's grace through Jesus Christ.**

How do we gain grace? Scripture is clear that grace is given *thru God's action alone, entirely apart from any action of our own.* Paul says in Galatians 1:15 that he was called by God's grace from the womb - hardly Paul's choice! Ephesian 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace through faith, and that faith itself is given by God, not something of my own will.

Therefore, what do we have to do to earn grace? Nothing. **Does its nature change after salvation?** No. **Does it remain an operative principle in our lives?** Yes. Grace is the basis of our salvation, because by it God provides our *justification*, making us positionally holy before God. Grace neither changes nor disappears after salvation, and so grace must play a role in *sanctification*.

What is the place of grace in the Christian life? Grace for sanctification. In asking for definitions of sanctification once, one member of my class said that sanctification was the process of living out God's holiness. Many people nodded their heads. A couple of responses later, another said sanctification was the process by which we become holy, at which many people nodded their heads. And yet, these are two mutually exclusive and conflicting views! The problem with understanding sanctification is that there are two "flavors" of sanctification: *Positional* - in which the believer is declared holy, and *Progressive* - which is literally a process, beginning when one becomes a Christian, of living out God's holiness. What does grace mean for sanctification?

The Perspective of Grace - grace teaches us discipline! Titus 2:11-12, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

The Power of Grace - grace *enables* obedience! Romans 5:20-21 "The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, *grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness* to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So grace plays as much of a role in sanctification as it does in salvation. But given that, consider this: We've already said that the nature of grace doesn't change and it remains an operative principle in the believer's life after salvation. Since there is no human effort in our salvation, then is there no human effort in our sanctification? Does God do it all without us? Paul (as usual) provides the answer:

- 1 Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them -- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."
- Colossians 1:28-29 "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

There is plenty of human effort involved in both these passages! But note well, our labor is *according to his mighty power* - it is not our own strength that supplies the ability to labor, it is God's. Our effort is God's grace within us, providing the fuel for our work. Actions not fueled by grace are only dead works, even as Christians.

There is human effort in our sanctification, but our effort does not sanctify us. Remember, if we can't be holy, and we are saved by grace which still operates in our lives, it is grace alone that sanctifies, works are merely an outworking of that grace. Our definition of grace must include unlimited power to live holy lives Any effort we expend is entirely fueled by God's grace and power. We must realize that God's grace precedes our good works and it produces our good works, ala Ephesians 2:10.

With that understanding, we can understand well Ryrie's definition of grace:

- The grace of God in the New Testament is His *unmerited* favor in the gift of His Son, who offers salvation to all and who gives to those who receive Him as their personal savior *added grace* for this life and *hope* for the future. *Ryrie*

Grace is a Risky Proposition. There is risk in an emphasis on grace, isn't there? Some may take it to an extreme, abusing grace, using it to justify their sin. Nevertheless, we must emphasize grace. Listen to Martin Lloyd-Jones commenting on Romans 6:

"The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge being brought against it. There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the NT gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misinterpret it to mean . . . that because you are saved by grace alone it doesn't matter at all what you do; you can go on sinning as much as you like"

because it will redound all the more to the glory of grace. That is a very good test of gospel preaching. If my preaching and presentation of the gospel of salvation does not expose it to that misunderstanding, then it is not the gospel." From Chuck Swindoll, The Grace Awakening, p. 39.

In other words, the preaching of true grace will always be open to the charge of cheap grace. And while that danger will always exist at the surface, at the heart there is a clear and simple difference between cheap grace and true: cheap grace excuses and justifies the sin, while true grace justifies the sinner.

If not grace, what? What is the alternative to grace? *Works* - maybe as Christians we don't think of our works much. Instead, we think in terms of a stronger commitment to Christ, or trying harder, doing more, avoiding the bad, doing the good, cutting out the gray areas that may lead us into temptation. What is the problem with works? *God's holiness is not achievable by any of man's works, either internal or external.*

We recognize intellectually and with our hearts that grace is God's provision for our need for both our salvation and our sanctification. However, the risk inherent in grace produces a tension that is inescapable. Because we can and sometimes do abuse grace, we opt instead for a safer and less tense path. Even as believers, our tendency is to operate not on the basis of grace, but of works, so that we feel better about ourselves. This is in reality a kind of "functional" legalism. We will explore this more fully in the next lesson.

Lesson 4: Grace and Triumph

We saw in the previous lesson that grace is God's provision for our need for both our salvation and our sanctification. However, we also saw that our tendency, even as believers, is to operate not on the basis of grace, but of works. We are in fact very often *functional* legalists.

Functional Legalism. As *functional* legalists we recognize and condemn legalism when it comes to salvation, the idea that we can be saved by our works. However, we embrace it and live as legalists for sanctification. Although it is God's grace that justifies and sanctifies, many of us live day by day relying on *our works* for our sanctification. When our works don't measure up, we either question our salvation or our worthiness. We saw this "nobody/somebody" model of behavior in an earlier lesson.

This nobody/somebody "model" works in three ways - first, **by causing us to judge according to what we do**. Ask yourself these questions:

- How do you feel about yourself when you miss your quiet time, when you don't pray, when you pass on a witnessing opportunity, or fall into a "big" sin? When you are less than pleasant with your family, friends? When you just don't feel spiritual?
- Now, how do you feel when you have a great quiet time, share Christ with a friend, turn your back on temptation, are kind and generous to all those around you, and you have a plain sense of God's presence in your life?

If you are like most, you fall easily into the trap of feeling like on a "good" day, God is blessing and you are walking in sanctification, and on a "bad" day, God is not only *not* blessing, but you are the lowest of Christian pond scum!

The second way this "model" works is *by causing us to judge according to what we don't do.* How do you tell who is spiritual and who isn't? Most of us would at least implicitly define spiritual people by what they don't do. For instance, how do you feel when you see Christians smoking, drinking, going to non-G-rated movies, swearing or using coarse language, listening to hard rock, or playing the lottery? When you see an individual engaged in any of these activities, does it make you wonder about them, just a little bit?

One problem with this is that it reduces God's standard of holiness to what is do-able through human resources, just like the Pharisees. Also, the *absence* of anything is *not* authentic spirituality. Authentic spirituality is seen in the *presence* of the fruit of the Spirit. For example, smoking. For many Christians, this is simply *not* an issue, because we don't *want* to smoke. The world condemns it, and we know it's bad for us. San Francisco (and many other cities) have enacted city-wide no-smoking ordinances. How many Christians want to set their standards of holiness by the San Francisco city council?

The third way this "model" works is *by instilling within us a deep sense of guilt.* As functional legalists we live out of a sense of debt. When we sin, we ask God for forgiveness, telling him we won't do it again, promising to try harder, to act right. That's just like inviting God over for dinner to make up for how we've treated him, and that's wrong. Grace is a gift.

Attempts to compensate God for our failure are completely out of harmony with the reality that grace is a gift. Grace is not based on our worthiness (we have none) but on his condescension. **Is there any way to repay God for the "free gift" of grace (to use God's purposely-redundant phrase in Romans 5:15-18)? Should we even try?** Hear the words of Lewis Sperry Chafer: "All attempts to repay his gift, be they ever so sincere, serve only to frustrate his grace and to lower the marvelous kindness of God to the sordid level of barter and trade."

How much grace is in this "nobody/somebody," "good day/bad day" model? When we live and think this way, we are drawing assurance of God's favor from *our* sincerity, *our* past experience of salvation, *our* religious performance, and the absence of "*big*" sins in our lives, trivializing God's holiness. There is a good word for this - *legalism*. We can define legalism this way: *My* effort by *my* resources to obey God for *my* glory.

The nobody/somebody, good day/bad day model minimizes God's holiness and the evil of even the most trivial sin. In light of God's holiness, how can we ever *behave* our way toward him? It puts the basis for our acceptability before God on *our* shoulders, works before grace.

The frame of mind that says "For God to accept me, I must obey him" is a dangerous thing. Picture a building that looks good and strong, but is in fact built on a flawed foundation. How long will it last? The foundation for our Christianity is grace. The foundation for our Christian living is grace as well. Anything else is dead works and legalism. Whether we feel it or not, the real picture is not "nobody/somebody." It is instead "from glory/to glory" as in 2 Corinthians

3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Only as we realize this can we become holy in practice. Otherwise we are relying on nobody/somebody, good day/bad day, thinking, and will have the crack of legalism running right down the middle of our foundation. If we are attempting to accomplish holiness by our behavior to be acceptable to God we will know only failure and frustration. You may ask, "Could we never obey God and still be acceptable before him?" Sure, but that's cheap grace, not true. "But aren't I supposed to do good works? Aren't I supposed to act right?" Of course. Consider these verses:

- Ephesians 4:7, 12 "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it . . . to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"
- Colossians 1:10 "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God"
- 1 Timothy 6:17-18 "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."
- James 2:18 "But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."

What place do works have in a believer's life? If we are saved through grace and sanctified through grace, where do works come in? There *is* effort involved in our sanctification, *but* 1) it is *not our effort alone* and 2) our effort does not sanctify us. Think of the question this way - why do we do good works? So God will be pleased with me? To glorify him? Live holy? Act Christian? Because this is what Christians do? Source of our identity is *not our experience* but *our relationship with Christ*. It is a settled fact based on grace. Our works result from our relationship. Works don't gain me status with God, they are an outgrowth of my relationship with him. **Therefore our source of security is not based on our behavior or our accomplishments, but on his.**

False works vs. Grace works. We must learn the balance between dependence on Divine resources and mere human effort, between expending human power and Divine power. The difference between false works - legalism - and grace works is that a *false work* is accomplished in my own power out of a desire to live up to God's standard, in other words, to obey him and earn his approval. A *grace work* is accomplished through Divine resources in response to God's grace in conformity to God's standard. A grace work is done to please God and express love to him, with no thought of seeking to earn anything from it. A grace work is done out of spiritual security, a false work out of spiritual insecurity.

Whose Triumph is it, Anyway? So then, we have God's grace not only for salvation but also for sanctification. Then why do we not live in victory over sin? We know we are supposed to live triumphant lives, abundant lives - 2 Corinthians 2:14 tells us so! "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him." When I think of the Christian's triumph, I picture conquering particular sins and habits. We all have things we used to do as non-Christians or immature believers that we no longer do, and we can point to those things as signs of growth and God's presence.

However (and I say this to my own shame) there are sins we *still* do, even as Christians a long time. The trick is that we've learned to keep them away from the public view (back to our list of hindrances). We struggle with sin in certain areas, some we fight our whole life long, some we will put away. We suffer defeat and guilt, but on the outside we always try to show the same cheerful front as every other believer, conforming to the prevailing Christian culture on the outside, dying on the inside. Ray Stedman calls this "the great imitation". We put on our Christian faces, hiding pain and need, so that we can act the role we think we are called to play.

Is there any other way? Is the promise of the Spirit an illusion? How can a believer find the way of constant triumph of 2 Corinthians 2:14? The answer lies in God's grace. Grace is constant in the believer's life. In ourselves, as Christians, we are totally inadequate to avoid evil or do good, but God leads us in constant triumph, whether we are feeling it or not. After all, Paul put no conditions on the triumphal procession of 2 Corinthians, did he?

Someone has said, "It is possible to avoid the pain and humiliation of repentance and renewal by maintaining an outward facade of spiritual commitment, moral impeccability, and orthodox behavior. Some are content with the mingled life, half flesh and half spirit, half self-effort and half-grace." But that is no way to live.

Our triumph is not based on *our* victory over sin, but on *Christ's*. The triumphant life, like our identity and security, is not rooted in *our* behavior as Christians, but in *Christ's*. We are not adequate, our adequacy is from God, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:5: "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God" unconditionally. Grace is not just unmerited favor - it is also unlimited power to obey! Perhaps the model we need to have in mind is something like this: ***All I Am + All He Is = Obedience***

Paul's "triumph" is a word that pictures a Roman military victory parade - where a victorious general has a triumphal procession to celebrate the victory. The general leads the procession with his army singing hymns of victory, accompanied by incense-carrying slaves. The defeated general or king and his warriors are there to be held up to public spectacle and ridicule. In just the same way, Christ has triumphed over sin and satanic powers. We are not adequate for Christ's triumph, but we are there - *as incense carrying slaves*. We carry the aroma of Christ as a life or death sentence. We demonstrate Christ's triumph through his indwelling presence and power not by what *we do*, but by what *he did* and who we are in him.

What is our role in sanctification? Simply this: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, then do as you please.* Anchor your life in grace, not effort. Live because of who you are in Christ, not to be accepted by God. I like this little poem, which has been attributed to John Bunyan:

*Run, John, run. The law commands
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
Better news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly and gives me wings.*

Lesson 5: What We Were in Adam

We have seen God's holiness and the demands it places on the believer, demands that we never could meet. The tension of God's holiness requirement is balanced by the provision of grace. God has made provision for our need, lifting us up to his standard, not only in salvation, but in our sanctification, our daily walk. The result is constant triumph, even in the midst of deepest despair.

There is a real question, though, when the circumstances of our lives are such that we can't see his triumph and have little or no experience of it. When that happens, what does this say about me? As we start to explore grace's unlimited power, we will begin with great weakness. This lesson we will turn to deal with our self-struggles in the spiritual life. Consider: What are some of the common sin struggles among unbelievers? Think of non-Christians you know, or your own particularly sinful areas before becoming a Christian. Now, what are some of the common sin struggles among believers? Guess what? If you wrote both these lists down, you wouldn't find much difference between them.

How do you account for the similarity? Most of us would say ignorance, blindness, or willfulness. All would be right. Focus on ignorance for a moment. We struggle sin *in part* because we are confused about ourselves. Our focus is on our flaws and our behavior. We live life with the "nobody/somebody" model in our hearts and minds. We concentrate on who we *were* in Adam instead of who we *are* in Christ. That easy to understand because our origin, growth, and past history is all of Adam. Read Romans 5:12-21 and note how many times Paul uses the past tense: *were*.

That's why Paul exhorts the Romans to live by a renewed mind (Romans 12:1-2). It *needs* renewing! What happens when we try living Christ's life with Adam's mind? We substitute human achievement for God's. We draw on our behavior for our security, significance, and value. Our only resource is our flesh, living based on our individual needs and wants. Such an inherently selfish and powerless source however is doomed to failure, and what may initially give security, significance, and value ultimately becomes insecure, insignificant, and without value.

As we've said, the cart is before the horse. We understand justification by faith through grace. God reaches down in his grace and lifts us up to be in his family. But we live like pleasing God requires our work. It is as though our lives are controlled by a slide and a ladder. When we sin, we slide back down to some imagined level of unacceptability before God, and we must clime a

ladder of behavior (or works) to get back up. However, as we said in the previous lessons, we are sanctified the same way as we are justified, by God's grace, not by our works.

Understanding that our Adamic history is *past tense* is critical, and is the supreme demonstration of God's grace and power in our lives. In Ephesians 1:18-2:7, Paul pictures God's power in raising Christ (v18-23), the evil of our Adamic nature (2:1-3), and his grace extended to us (v4-7). F. F. Bruce comments: "If raising Christ from death to sit at his on right hand is the supreme demonstration of God's power, then raising the people of Christ from spiritual death to share in Christ's place of exaltation is the supreme demonstration of his grace."

Understanding who we *were* helps us understand God's grace. Let's look in detail at what we were in Adam from **Ephesians 2:1-3, starting in v1**: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins." **Dead in sin** - what does that mean? That we were non-existent? That we were dead in terms of being totally insensitive to God? I think the best explanation is this: we were alive, had a living identity, and did things (bad things - v2-3, but we were *active*). We were dead in that we lived in our sin in an *ongoing separation* from God. Think of a foreign citizen, who has no relationship to the United States. He is separate from the USA – dead to it.

Paul also says that we were **conformed to the culture** in v2: "in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." We were controlled by the ways of this world. We followed the ruler of this world. Our commitment and purpose, the steps we took, on given ground in a given direction, was ruled by Satan, totally opposed to the Holy Spirit.

We were **willfully rebellious**, v3: "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.." Deliberately disobedient, driven by uncontrollable, insatiable demands of the flesh, we were all objects of wrath.

In other words, everything we were was opposed to God in every way. Even when we were not aware of our resistance, we opposed God constantly in all aspects of our lives. **Two forces** pressurized our pre-Christian lives toward evil: one was *the constant demand that we conform* to the environment in which we lived, the other was *the spiritual power of evil* against which we had no means of defense. But both these external forces of evil exercise their power largely because there is within us another force on whose support they can rely. It is like having a traitor in the gates right inside you, all the time, a traitor which will seeks ways to expose you to the enemy – your flesh.

All this formed the foundation for our self-image, which we deal with even now as we live out Adam's post-fall experience. Our guilt, shame, fear, alienation, defensiveness, anger, frustration, ambition, hatred, bitterness, confusion, hurt and all of our other struggles all come from our Adamic, fleshy natures. But God exercised *the same power* to raise us from the dead that he exercised to raise Christ (Ephesians 1:19-23), and seated us with him in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:4-7), and it is on *these truths* that we must build our self-image.

Contrast who we were in Adam with who we are in Christ:

What I Was in Adam:	What I am in Christ:
Given over to sin (Rom 1)	Justified (2 Cor 5:21)
Subject to wrath (Col 1:21)	At peace with God (Rom 5:1)
Identified with Adam's sin (Rom 5)	Identified with Christ's death (Rom 6)
Possessing only Adam's nature (Rom 5)	Possessing the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:22)
In domain of darkness (Col 1:13)	In kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13)
Dead in sin (Eph 2:1)	Made alive (Eph 2:5)
Child of wrath by nature (Eph 2:3)	Partaker of divine nature (2 Pet 1:4)
Alienated from God (Col 1:21)	Reconciled to God (Col 1:22)

Seeing how this amazing and radical change took place is our next step.

We understand the greatness of God's power when we understand the depth of our sin. Most of us have no trouble knowing the depth of our sin. The problem is most of us aren't fully aware of what God has done in our salvation and the changes his power has worked in us to free us from what we were in Adam. This is the point of the next lesson.

Who needs the gospel? Who is it for? *Christians need the gospel, too.* At salvation we put the gospel on the shelf and move to the "duties" of discipleship. We must understand the gospel and live the spiritual life in its atmosphere. For that reason, the next few lessons will focus on understanding Romans 6-8, "the gospel for Christians."

Lesson 6: The Day We Died

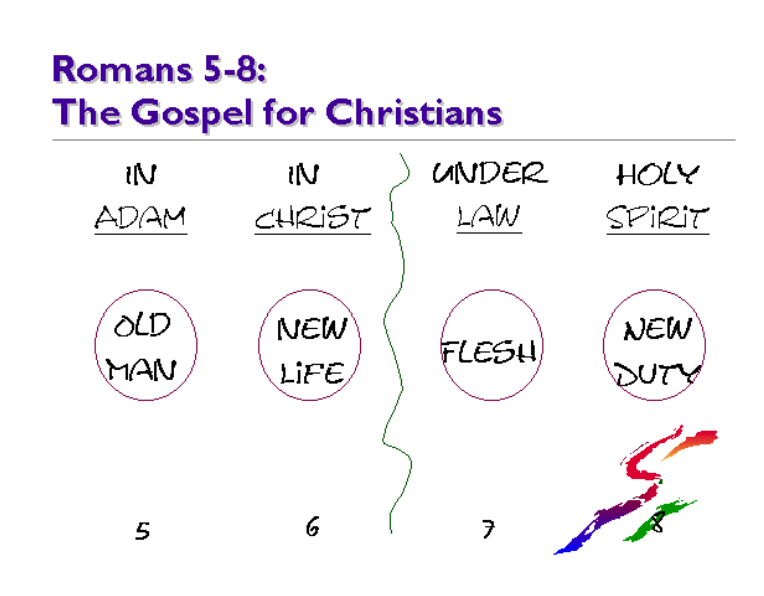
In Adam we were in the dominion of darkness, dead in sin, objects of God's wrath. We had no claim upon God, no hope of heaven, no light of life. Our view of ourselves reflected and in some cases may still reflect the defensiveness and futility of our Adamic nature.

We were born in spiritual union with Adam (Romans 5:12-21) and therefore drew our identity of death from him. As our representative, so chosen by God, we were identified with him in his sin, and the fruit of his sin worked in each and every one of us resulting in our own willing participation in sin. From this came our identity as sinners alienated from God, guilty and condemned.

But as Christians we are no longer in Adam. We are no longer identified with him, and therefore no longer have his fallen identity. The simple fact of the matter is that we are not who we think

we are! Something radical and amazing has happened to us - we have died to sin's reign and have a new sovereign, Jesus Christ. We are united with Jesus in the same way we used to be united with Adam, and so we have a new identity, an identity that frees us from the dominion of sin. Therefore we can no longer live the way we used to live!

Now we must renew our minds by understanding what God has done and what his work means for us. **Romans 6 tells us how all this has come to pass.** The major theme of Romans 6 is that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not only historical fact and doctrinal truth, but they are the personal experience of the believer as well. Chapter 6 forms part of a four-chapter segment in Romans that Jerry Bridges refers to as the heart of the gospel for Christians. Romans 5-8 holds the core teaching for this study in the Spiritual Life, illustrated by this diagram:



These 4 chapters are critical to teach and understand because of our tendency to limit grace to dealing with the penalty for sin rather than also dealing with it as believers, because of our tendency to think of ourselves as Adamic failures, and because it deals specifically with the question of Christians mired in sin. It asks the implicit question, "Does Sin still reign supreme in our lives?"

In keeping with his pattern of dealing with objectors throughout the epistle, Paul uses a series of questions to develop the argument of Romans 6:1-4. He begins with a question in v1, answers it with another question in v2, raises still another question in v3, and finally draws everything together in a summary statement in v4. This is followed by a transition in v5 and then further development of his thought in v6-14.

The Question: Shall we continue in sin so grace can abound? (6:1)

This question comes directly from Paul's argument in chapter 5. Look back at 5:20: *The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more...*

If you were a new Christian living in a *totally pagan* society, where there were far fewer moral restraints placed on appropriate behavior than there are even today, how might you respond to such a statement? *"The more we sin, the more grace we get? Party!"*

Or, if you were a new Christian thoroughly convicted of the evil of your pagan ways and determined to keep your nose clean to see heaven, how might you respond to such a statement? *"This grace stuff is absurd! You might as well say we can do anything we want! You're encouraging weaklings to sin!"*

Justification by grace is said (falsely) to put a premium on sin: *"If our acceptance before God depends entirely on his free grace, irrespective of any works of ours, then surely we may live as we please? . . . there is no point in being godly, rather the reverse."* (Stott)

If Paul had preached that man could have any part at all in his salvation this question would **never** have come up. But notice how he deals with the question. He neither denies the doctrine of grace, nor does he call for immediate perfection in personal holiness in the believer's lives. Instead, he teaches doctrine! Why does he do that? Because of the priority of a renewed mind. We need information before exhortation. *We need to understand the doctrine!*

Before launching into the doctrine though, let's be clear on two key terms in the discussion:

1. *sin* versus *sins*. Sins always refers to actions which are contrary to God's righteousness. Sin refers to the principle and power that produces sins. Sin is a principle that governs all who are identified with Adam. Paul is talking here of this internal principle of sin, not the external practice of sins. The NIV is particularly *unhelpful* here, with its translation of the literal "in sin" to "sinning."
2. "Continue" is a present tense verb, describing a habit of life, a lifestyle to be pursued, and therefore his question is basically this: "Shall we continue to live in the reign and rulership of Sin as the lord of our lives *so that* grace can abound?" His answer is one of outraged indignation.

The Answer: How Can We Who Died to Sin Continue in Sin? Or, Didn't You Know You Died to Sin? (6:2-3)

Paul rejects the question with the strongest negative registered in the New Testament: *May it never be! No, no, no, no, no! What a ghastly thought!* Why such a strong reaction? Because the statement is 180 degrees off the mark. It is impossible by the nature of the case for Christians to continue in sin's dominion *because we died to sin!* Does that statement take you aback a bit? How many of us have recent experience that sin is in fact still alive and kicking?

So then what does Paul mean? First, take note of these facts:

1. **When did this death take place?** (*in the past*). If it occurred in the past, could we possibly die to sin any more than we already have? Every person in this world who is a true believer has already died to sin. We are not to die more and more. This is different from putting sin to death - we'll talk about that in a future study.

2. **If we weren't aware of it, did we still die to sin?** This death occurred whether we are aware of it or not. It is an objective fact that does not depend on our awareness or understanding to make it true.
3. **We died to sin through our union with Christ.** Look at verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11. When Christ died to sin, we died also. Now, before we get to answer the question of just what it means that we died to sin, we need to understand this last point. What does the expression "union with Christ" mean?

Our union with Christ is a representative union, just as our union with Adam used to be. In the last lesson we dealt with who we were in Adam, the fact that we drew our identity from Adam as our representative by God's appointment. When he sinned, we sinned. His sin was as truly our own as if we had committed it ourselves. As a result of Adam's sin, Sin personified as a king reigned in death (5:21). We bore the legal guilt because of Adam's sin, and sin in us caused us to commit further sins.

In just the same way, Christ was our representative in his sinless life and atoning death, so that just as Adam's sin brought death and condemnation to all his race, so Christ's righteousness brought justification and life to all his race, all who trust in him. That again is why our acceptance before God has nothing to do with our performance as Christians, only with our Lord's performance.

We are identified with Christ through baptism (v3-4). But be careful, this is not water that Paul's talking about. "Baptism" can be a confusing word in the NT. **Baptism is a Greek concept dressed in English clothes with no real meaning in English.** It was not translated from Greek to English, only transliterated. The word is used in several ways - physical baptism, spiritual washing away of sins, filling with the Holy Spirit.

The root meaning of the word was to "immerse" or "dip", used of dyeing cloth. The point of the word is not so much the dipping as the dipping's result - a *total change of nature*. Of the dyed cloth which becomes totally permeated with the dye, and of the believer who becomes one with the person of Jesus Christ. Baptism at its most basic is a spiritual concept representing our total identification with Christ. We are identified with him, not Adam any longer, and so we are identified with his death.

Finally then, what does it mean to die to sin? First, it means we have died to its *penalty*, death (5:12, 6:23, 1 Cor 15:55-57). We have already borne the penalty of death, because Jesus bore the penalty of death. This death is not only or even primarily *physical*, it is primarily *spiritual*. Spiritual death is separation - think back on the temptation in the Garden - Adam & Eve didn't physically die that day, but they died spiritually, didn't they? The Prodigal Son wasn't physically dead, but because of his separation, his father considered him dead (Luke 15:11-32).

Second, it means that we have died to its *control*. King Sin no longer reigns over us or controls our lives. When we were dead in our sin, we were dead to God, separated from him, resulting in insensitivity and unresponsiveness to him. In the exactly the same way, we are now dead to King Sin, separated from him, resulting in insensitivity and unresponsiveness to him. *There is no such*

thing as salvation from sin's penalty (death) without an accompanying deliverance from sin's dominion. (Bridges)

What is the obvious question here? *If we died to sin's control, why do we still struggle with sins?*

Again, we have to distinguish between "sin" and "sins" again. The activity of sin, the external practice, is present in all men because we still have the flesh (more on that in a couple of lessons). But the good news, for the Christian is this: The dominion or control of sin is only present in non-believers. Romans 8:7 says the sinful mind is hostile to God - unremitting, day and night, no breaks. Romans 7:12, 15-23 says that the believer recognizes that God's Law is good, but he struggles to obey it. *The struggle itself is evidence of salvation.*

Sin's presence is never abolished, nor its influence altered (tendency is always the same), but its dominion is destroyed in a Christian. *"Our sin is a burden that afflicts us rather than a pleasure that delights us." (John Owen)* We have been delivered from sin's control. Christ made a once-for-all definitive breach with sin. We do not have to submit to it

The Conclusion: Since We Died and Were Buried with Christ, We Live a New Life (6:4)

V4 is the logical conclusion of all that has been said. We have been baptized into his death, and so we have been baptized into his burial. Burial is the seal of death. So completely are we identified with Christ that not only did we die with him, we were buried with him. But that's not all! We were identified with him in his resurrection as well. So complete was our identification with Christ that when he died to sin, we died to sin. When he was buried, we were buried. And when he was raised to a new life, we too were resurrected (literally), and so we must live like it.

Thank God, we are not on our own to do so. In the next lesson, we will look at the deliverance from sin that God has provided for us.

Lesson 7: Deliverance from Sin

We have seen in Romans 6:1-14 that the believer has died to the control of sin. The believer cannot continue in sin's rule and authority because of his union with Christ. As a result of this union there is an identification between the Christian and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which results in a new identity for the one believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The major theme of Romans 6 is that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not only historical fact and doctrinal truth, but they are the personal experience of the believer as well.

Last week we looked at 6:1-4, focusing on this identification with Christ. In those 4 verses Paul presents us with the vital truth that we died to sin with Christ. That information we must now apply. Paul bases his application on the information of v1-4, underscoring the importance of our identification with Christ and what must be its impact on our lives.

Transition - Romans 6:5. We have become united - identified - with his death, therefore, with his resurrection as well. The fact was stated in v4 - this is the logical basis for that fact. Paul is

merely saying "It makes sense that if we died a death like his we shall rise to a life like his. As we see how Paul applies this, we will see that our identification with Jesus' resurrection has implications for our *heads*, our *hearts* and our *hands*. And in these 3 elements, Paul gives us a classic example of true biblical application. It is not enough to have the information in our heads, we must move it to our hearts and into our actions. It is not enough to feel what we need to do with an emotional outpouring of intensity. It is not enough to do stuff, ticking off to-do's on a list. We need to involve all aspects of our beings to experience how Christ delivers us from sin. Our heads, our hearts, and our hands. Paul starts with our heads.

We know we are dead to sin and alive to God (v6-10). Rather than tell us to go out and do something, there is a truth which we must know first. That truth is outlined in v6-10. Verse 6 is in 3 parts - something happened so that something else might happen so that something else might happen:

Our old self was crucified . . .

that our body of sin may be done away with . . .

that we no longer be slaves to sin.

But what do these terms mean: *Old self? Body of sin? Be done away with? Slaves to sin?* Problem: we must know something here, but exactly what is not clear unless we understand these terms. We need our Apostle Paul Secret Decoder Ring! Let's examine each part in detail:

Our old self was crucified . . . Does "old self" refer to indwelling sin? Has indwelling sin been eradicated? *No*. Old self, literally old man, is our *unregenerate* selves. Who we were before Christ. Picture your life as a two volume work of literature (some of us are classics, some comic books). The end of the first volume of your life was closed when you became a Christian - everything from that point on is a different book. Volume I is closed and done with. The old man here refers not our old unregenerate nature, but to our old unregenerate selves. Stott says it is "Not my lower self but my former self."

The interpretation here is that we are separated from Adam. Our old man was crucified - does that mean that sin has no presence in us? No - the believer is no longer in Adam, but Adam is still in the believer. Here is Paul's point: *We have been delivered from what we were. We are no longer who we used to be. We struggle to see the reality of that deliverance in our lives, and must get in our minds the fact of our deliverance versus the experience of it.*

. . . that our body of sin . . . Is the body itself inherently sinful? *no* Is the body the same thing as the flesh? *No*. This pictures the body as sin's instrument - the body which sin uses. Our bodies are instruments of their own carnal impulses. The body of sin is the whole man, controlled by sin. What about it? It is "done away with".

. . . might be done away with . . . Does this mean our bodies are destroyed? That they no longer can be used as sin's instrument? *No*. The word doesn't mean annihilation, it means made

powerless - rendered inoperative - deprived of power. Here is Paul's point: *Our old self died so that our body might be powerless when it comes to sin.*

. . . that we should no longer be slaves to sin. When the preceding is clear, the meaning of "slaves to sin" falls into place. As a result of our identification with Christ, our body no longer **has** to be the instrument of sin. We do not **have** to sin. We will - but we don't *have* to. *Summary: "Because our old man was crucified with Christ our body can be freed from sin's control so we no longer must be enslaved to sin.*

The above is all true because of the simple truth in v7 - we have been freed from sin because we have died. Freed here is literally acquitted or justified. Sin's legal penalty (death) has been paid, and it has no further claim upon us. Therefore, we have the fruit of the resurrection: Christ's life (v8-10). Here is something profound to think about: We live Christ's life **right now**. The future tense here is only logical, not temporal (v4 shows it is a present truth). The logical future tense only points to the certainty of our participation in the resurrection life.

Because we have his resurrection, He can't die again - and neither can we. He lives unto God - and so do we. That is the truth which we must know - understand intellectually - have a grasp of. but that is not all. **We must translate that truth from our heads to our hearts.**

We must consider ourselves to be what God says we are (v11). This is the first command in the book of Romans! Paul fully develops our union and identification with Christ before calling on us to do something about it. And consider just what kind of a call to action this is - what does he tell us to do? *Consider - reckon - realize - think over - meditate.* This call to action is more of a call to attitude. We have knowledge - rather than go out and do something with the knowledge of who we are, we are to *think* about it clearly first.

"Consider" does not mean to pretend or make believe. It does not mean positive thinking. It does not mean possibility thinking. It means *reality thinking*. "Consider" means to look at facts and make a deduction from them. We are simply called to realize the fact that our old self did die. To realize that the death of our old self has already taken place. That Volume I has closed and can never be re-opened.

We must stop thinking of ourselves as who we were in Adam but who we are in Christ. "To live so that sin does not reign, we must conform our hearts to our intellectual knowledge. We know our relationship to sin is precisely the same as Christ's relationship to sin. **When the fact is seized by faith**, sin can no longer be king in our mortal bodies or make us yield to its passions." (Donald Gray Barnhouse)

We must get rid of the idea of experience at this point. Whatever your experience, whatever your feelings may be . . . if you are a Christian, you are complete in Christ. You realize it progressively, but it is true now. (Lloyd-Jones)

We must present ourselves to experience death to sin and life to God in Christ (v12-14).

We've gotten something in our minds. We've thought it over and moved the knowledge from our minds to our hearts. *Now* we're called to do something - to present ourselves to God. How? There is both a negative and a positive aspect to this:

First, we must rebel against sin's false claims (v12-13a). Sin has no right to control us, because we are no longer citizens of his kingdom. We are citizens of Christ's kingdom and Sin's laws have no jurisdiction over us. *We must refuse to obey sin's commands.* We can refuse because we are free from it. We are *former* slaves - sin does not have the dominion, therefore do not allow it to reign.

Second, we must actively present ourselves to the rule of righteousness (v13b). Constantly rebelling against sin's claims, we must make a constant, definite, and specific decision to put ourselves at God's disposal. We must stop being sin's weapon and decide to be God's weapon.

We have changed our kingdoms once and forever. We are no longer in the territory of sin, no longer under the governing power of sin, sin no longer controls our destiny. Or if you prefer other terms, before becoming Christians we were united to Adam, we belonged to Adam and his fallen race, and all the consequences of his sin and action have come upon us. We were in Adam. But we are no longer in Adam; we are now in Christ. We have been taken out of Adam, we have been put into Christ . . . a Christian is not only a man whose sins have been forgiven, he has been transferred to the reign of grace; and the reign of grace is a very powerful reign. The reign of sin caused death to pass upon every one of us, it caused us all to sin, but the reign of grace is infinitely more powerful. If the power and dominion of sin guarantees certain results, the reign and rul of grace guarantees contrary results still more certainly. (Lloyd-Jones)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? **NO!** We are not who we used to be. What we used to be still indwells us, but who we used to be died and we are a new "who". We have truly been born again! *We are not who we used to be!*

We must know this, regard this to be true of us, and present ourselves to God for him to make this a reality in our experience. The point of Romans 6:1-14 is: *We can't live the way we used to live, because we are not who we used to be!*

The Sin Breaking Process. How can we apply this when it comes to rebelling against sin in our own lives?

First, settle the basic issue - who will be the functional king in your life? Sin or Christ?

Second, face your sin in view of the truths of Romans 6: **Know** you are identified with Christ - you died to sin in Christ, you were buried to sin in Christ, you were raised to righteousness in Christ. **Consider** yourself dead to sin and alive to God - stop thinking of yourself as you were, stop thinking of yourself only as a sinner, stop thinking only of your shortcomings, start thinking of your wholeness in Christ, stop thinking you must make yourself better, start thinking of Christ's perfections. **Present** yourself to God as his weapon - rebel against sin's claims, moment-

by-moment present yourself to God for him to make you what you truly are in Christ, concentrate on trusting him to set you free from sin and to keep you free from sin.

Third, know yourself: Refuse to partition your mind, closing off the disobedient parts from the obedient. Integrity of mind must dictate that there is no partial or false obedience. Prepare for sin in advance wherever possible - take a walk around the block to avoid tempting situations wherever possible. Seek help from others. Make knowing, considering, presenting your habitual response.

Remember: *We can't live the way we used to live because we're not who we used to be!*

Lesson 8: Facing the Flesh

We have seen some wonderful truths in this study, that we are no longer in Adam, we are instead identified with Christ and therefore have died to sin and were raised with him. Paul has given us a terrific application of these truths (*know, consider, and present*), so that we can say with Paul "Sin shall not be master over me . . ." Knowing what we know, would appear we have the key to living an obedient life. **BUT . . .**

Paul is moving from some pretty lofty truth to a really grimy reality:

For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I {would} like to {do,} but I am doing the very thing I hate... For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good {is} not... For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish...I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? (Romans 7:14, 15, 18-19, 21, 22-24)

How do we explain Romans 7 in light of Romans 6? There is a huge paradox in the spiritual life which we've touched on lightly but haven't really dealt with until now. We've been working to lay the foundation of understanding God's grace, knowing who we are in unity with Jesus, and what transpired as a result of that identification (death, burial, resurrection). Understanding those things, we must grasp and deal with the paradox today: As Christians, we understand who we are in Christ. We know that God loves us not for what we do or how good we are, but for what he did. We know that living as a believer means a moment-by-moment presenting of ourselves to God in the knowledge of who we are. *And yet, we are still not able to be free from sin.*

If you took all the sermons preached in Christian churches from coast to coast on any given Sunday and boiled them all down to their essence, to two words, do you know what they would say? "Be good." But we can't be good, not of ourselves. **According to Romans 7:14-15 we are helpless against sin**, and that means more frustration for us, not less. In fact, the believer who understands the reality of grace and the promise of identification with Christ feels the sting even more sharply. Even though he understands his identity the believer is just as helpless to obey *in*

himself after believing in Christ as he was before. **Why? Knowing what we know, why are we helpless against sin?**

Because we are *of flesh* - human, weak and limited, of finite existence, but worse than that: sold into bondage to sin - ***permanently enslaved***. Will the flesh ever change? Will it ever be subject to Christ? No - no matter how much we know or how much we want it to! Paul's example in Romans is that he is called to obey a spiritual (good) Law and the flesh produces conflict!

Remember where started this study, with Peter walking on the water? Like Peter we are called to a standard we can't meet. Doesn't your experience confirm this? How many times have you sworn off ... (fill in the blank), only to fall right back into it? Some would say that most people tend to do what they like. As Christians, we constantly do what we hate: setting out to do right, we end by working at exactly what we set out not to do.

The conflict produces confusion! I'm not practicing what I like, I'm doing what I hate, and I don't understand. We are baffled and confused by what we do, and we end up hating ourselves. We who have been identified with Christ, who have died to sin's control and raised to a new life *hate our very lives* because of what we do. We are helpless because of indwelling sin, which overcomes the best intentions.

What really hurts about all this is, **it doesn't really matter how much we want to obey - Romans 7:16-20**. Sin overcomes the best of our intentions, because the problem is in *me!* I desire to do right, but indwelling sin thinks differently - and wins! There's a war going on inside me!

So the question is, if it is sin in me and not me, *am I responsible?* After all, Paul says, "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me." (v17) Yes, I am responsible!

- "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10)
- "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

So if it is me, but there is a war within me, *are there two natures?* No, there is only one nature, only one "I." But "I" have a flesh! And that flesh is permanently enslaved (will never change - 7:14) and has nothing good in it (totally corrupt - 7:18). Note that the flesh is *not* the same thing as the body. In the Greek, flesh is *sarx* and body is *soma*.

This diagram will help illustrate the differences between the two:

Soma - σῶμα	Sarx – σὰρξ
Physical Body	Indwelling Spiritual Principle or Force
Can Be Instrument of Sin or of God	Permanently Enslaved to Sin
Can be Purified	Totally Corrupt
Can be Glorified	To be Eliminated

The body (soma) can become the instrument of God, the flesh (sarx) cannot. The body (soma) can be purified and even glorified, the flesh (sarx) must be eliminated. Sarx is an indwelling spiritual principle or force. It is human nature as it has become through sin. The flesh made man fall even when he know he was falling and did not want to fall. It made man such that he can not avoid the fascination or the power of sin. Flesh is man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and his Spirit. Flesh is evil, and it produces the fruit of death marked by frustration, guilt, condemnation, self-hatred.

We can purpose, but we can't perform: *not sinning willfully, but still sinning every time I try to practice good*. Experience confirms my enslavement to sin through the flesh. In other words **our best efforts are doomed to failure - Romans 7:21-25**.

Wanting to do good, we do evil instead. Loving God's Law, we are prisoners of sin. Think about this: The inner man (which is the new you - you in identification with Christ) loves the Law of God and wants to obey it. You are a dedicated believer who wants to live according to his word. But the flesh wages war - violent opposition - against the new you. **Who wins?** It is not possible to meet God's standard through the logical processes of the mind (our will), even when that mind is renewed by God. Information is not enough. We need more help! We cry out in conflict: *Who will deliver me?*

The more you know, the worse you feel - we are overwhelmed by the agony of defeat after such total commitment to Christ's triumph. We are making a horrible discovery: we cannot meet God's standard no matter how hard we try. We are condemned to a lifetime of defeat and failure; there is no future for us. The principle of evil is not only active, but it is conquering. It takes the soul captive. We are not its willing servant, but its miserable, helpless victim. We have no resource or ability in and of ourselves, we can't do it! Who will set us free?

We cry out in confidence: *Jesus Christ, thru the Holy Spirit!* (v25).

Getting out of Romans 7. Do we ever "get out" of Romans 7? Not by self-effort ("I will conquer this!") produces only failure, despair - self-effort is based on the flesh. These struggles are universal among Christians, irrespective of age, of maturity in Christ, of experience, of knowledge, of wisdom. If you find yourself consistently fighting frustration, despair, if you are constantly longing for change, you are relying on your flesh. You are living in Romans 7, and what you need to do is to get to Romans 8 as fast as you possibly can.

How do we "get out" of Romans 7? Is it as easy as turning the page? Yes, and no. We can be consistently free of Romans 7 by moving to Romans 8. Instead of Romans 7, where the emphasis is on the mind & flesh, which results in my desires, and my abject failure, Romans 8 concentrates on the Spirit & flesh, where through the Spirit's power, my desires become fulfilled. The next study will discuss the single greatest power source the Christian has, the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 9: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Romans 5-8, "The Gospel for Christians," gives the central truths of the spiritual life. Romans 5 shows that sin abounds and that all who are in Adam are under sin's control, but that because of Christ grace has superabounded over sin and death.

Romans 6 gives us the amazing truth that the Christian is no longer in Adam, but is in Christ, identified with him from the moment of salvation through spiritual baptism, one with his death (so that he has died to sin's control) and one with his life (so that he has "newness of life") with the result that he is to present or yield himself to God, not present his body to sin.

Romans 7 is the hard truth that even though I died to sin with Christ, and that I now have a choice that I *can* make to present myself to God, I have a major obstacle which *prevents* me from doing so – the flesh. If my only resource for living the Christian life was me, my flesh would ensure that the only result would be sin.

Romans 8 reiterates the message of Romans 6 with an important distinction – the power source that *enables* the Christian to present himself to God, the Holy Spirit. But sadly, we tend to be somewhat confused about the Holy Spirit. It is as if we don't see him very clearly. I wear glasses, thick ones, and if I take my glasses off and look around the room here I can have a rough idea of what things are and where they are, but that's about all. Everything is pretty blurry.

It is as though the Spirit is blurred to us. We tend to be confused over his role, what he does for the Christian, and how he does it. We tend to rely on formulaic answers. For example, Campus Crusade's tract "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?" includes a 3-step program to be filled with the Spirit: ***desire*** to live a life that pleases God; ***confess*** sin; ***claim*** his filling by faith. John MacArthur equates Eph. 5:18 (be filled with the Spirit) with Colossians 3:16 (let the word of Christ richly dwell in you) because both verses have the same result (admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs). Therefore, to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Word of God. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, said that if we grieve not the Spirit (Eph. 4:30), quench not the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19-20), and walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), we will be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

While there is really nothing wrong with these formulae, they are too pat, too simplistic for the dynamic ministry of the Spirit Paul portrays in Romans 8. When it comes to dealing with the flesh, giving us an answer for the conflict and confusion of our struggle with sin, enabling us to live out the truths of Romans 6, the Spirit has a multifaceted ministry:

- Sets us free – 8:2

- Indwells us – 8:9, 11 – which results in "life for our mortal bodies"
- Enables us to put deeds of the body to death – 8:12
- Leads us – 8:14 (in sanctification, not in sense of direction or will here)
- Assures us of our salvation – 8:15-17
- Prays for us – 8:26-27

The core of the Spirit's ministry to us is in v11: **personal fellowship**, something new to the Christian. In the OT the Spirit "came upon" people. He visited and empowered for a time, then left. Jesus underscored the new relationship with the Spirit in John 14:17 when he told the disciples that the Holy Spirit "dwells *with you* and *will be in you*." The ministry of the Spirit is all about personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

- The Spirit anointed and filled Jesus (Luke 4:1; Acts 10:38)
- The Spirit was sent by Jesus (Jn. 16:7, 20:22)
- The Spirit would indwell the disciples assuring them that Jesus was still with them (Jn. 14:16-21)
- The Spirit would remind the disciples of Jesus' words (Jn. 14:26)
- The Spirit bears witness of Jesus (Jn. 15:26)
- The Spirit would glorify Jesus (16:14-15)
- The Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7; Gal. 4:6)
- Paul equates the indwelling Spirit with Jesus (Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 3:17-18)

The result of the Spirit's ministry is **personal transformation**, v12. 2 Corinthians 3:18 "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

But how? How do we get from Romans 8 to 2 Cor. 3? Romans 8 doesn't have any "how-to's," it just describes "what is." "How-to's aren't Paul's purpose here – I'm not sure they ever are. But we can deduce some important principles for living in the power of the Spirit. Without giving in to formulaic answers, Scripture gives a simple, clear picture of our relationship to the Spirit and how we are to live with him! Paul records four commands elsewhere regarding the believer and the Spirit. Two are positive – something we are to do; two are negative – something we are to avoid. Understanding these commands is critical to obeying them, so let's look at them now.

Be Filled with the Spirit – Eph. 5:18-19. Paul tells us we are to be filled with the Spirit. Have you ever wondered why he didn't tell us *how*? Maybe Paul didn't because it isn't a big secret – maybe it's more obvious than we realize. *Control* is the primary emphasis here. Think of a drunken man, staggering around out of his own control and under the control of his booze.

The believer who is *filled by* the Spirit is *controlled by* the Spirit. What he does, he does under the Spirit's control. How do we allow something or someone to control us? By *yielding or giving way*. How natural is that? It is not necessarily *natural at all*. We all hesitate to give up control, and the one operating under the Spirit's control *will* think and act differently. Certainly this is true when it comes to the flesh – the believer has supernatural assistance to put to death the natural inclinations of the body to sin (Romans 8:12).

Being filled with something has a result. For example, in Acts 5:28, Jerusalem was "filled" with the Apostle's teaching about Jesus. It was everywhere, there was no getting away from it. When the storm descends on the disciple's boat in Luke 8:23, the boat was swamped, literally "filled" so that it began to sink. When Mary wiped Jesus' feet with the oil in John 12:3, the whole house was "filled" with the fragrance.

Being filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18 also has a result in v19-21. What is it? *spiritual relationships*. Continuous personal encouragement, accountability, worship, and thanksgiving. Quite a change from Romans 7:24!

- Whose responsibility is "filling?" *Ours* – otherwise why would Paul command it?
- The command "be filled" is a continuous command – we are to *continually* be "being filled."
- Being filled is not the same thing as Christian maturity. It is possible for an immature Christian to be more filled (from time to time) than a mature Christian.
- Being filled results from a yielded life – We are filled by being controlled by the Spirit; we give up control by yielding, we yield by listening to what he says, giving him his way, doing what he wants us to do. Where do we hear him? The God-breathed Word.

Walk by the Spirit – Gal. 5:16, 25. "Walk" here means one's course of life or lifestyle. Several times in the New Testament we are commanded to "walk," that is live, in a certain way: in Eph. 5:8, we are to walk as children of light. In Col. 1:10 and 1 Thess. 2:12, we are to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

In Galatians 5:16 and 25, we are commanded to walk "by" the Spirit. Picture a man who needs a cane to get around with. He walks *by* that cane, he *depends* upon it. In the same way, we are to walk *by* the Spirit. We are to *depend* on the Spirit, to *need* him. What is the result of walking by the Spirit? In Gal. 5:16, *freedom from the flesh*. Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. In other words, don't walk by the Spirit and you will! In 5:22-23, *fruit* results from walking by the Spirit. Walk by the Spirit and be *fruitful*, don't walk by the Spirit and be *fruitless*.

- Whose responsibility is "walking?" Ours again.
- This command is also continuous – we are to *continually* be "walking by the Spirit."
- Walking by is not the same as being nice, or not having any particularly ugly vices.
- It is specifically a life that is totally dependent upon the Spirit.

How do we do this? Both "filling" and "walking" result from mind sets, mental attitudes, conscious patterns of thought. How much "let go, let God" is there in walking/filling? Not much, both are pretty active. Both filling and walking entail a *turning from* something and a *turning to* something. Turning away from self, Turning to the Spirit. Both are absolutely vital to the spiritual life. Filling *brings* the Spirit's control, walking by *maintains* the Spirit's control. In filling we *yield* to the Spirit, in walking we *depend upon* the Spirit.

"Be filled with" and "walk by" are the two positive commands in regards to the Spirit. There are also two negative commands, two things we are to avoid.

Do not grieve the Spirit – Eph. 4:30. "Grieve – to cause pain, grief, or sorrow." How do we make the Spirit sad? How do we cause him pain? A broad answer is "when we sin." Which is true, but I believe the command here is more narrowly focused. The context here is the unity of the body. That is the emphasis of the entire epistle, and the overall context of chapter 4. What is Paul talking about in v29-32? *believer's relationships, speech, and attitude towards one another.*

Given that context, when do we grieve the Spirit? When we fail in unity or act in such a way as to harm the unity of the body, whether in speech (v29) or in attitude (v31-32). How would hurting the unity of the body grieve the Spirit? *When the brothers and sisters in whom the Spirit dwells are hurt, the Spirit is hurt also.* Can any believer acting in this way be filled with the Spirit? Walking by the Spirit?

Do not quench the Spirit – 1 Thess. 5:19-20. "What does "quench" mean? *to put out, smother.* Can we literally "put out" or "smother" the Spirit? How? The broad answer again, is sin. But like Eph. 4:30, there is a narrower context in view here.

The general context of 1 Thess. 5 is living in the light of Christ's return. Paul is closing this letter with some exhortations and admonitions. The verse divisions are very choppy here, and understanding the sentence structure clarifies the meaning. For example, v16-18 are all one sentence: "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." God's will for us in Christ is that we rejoice, pray, and give thanks.

Similarly, v19-20 are one sentence, and v21-22 comprise a second sentence which completes Paul's thought: "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything *carefully*, hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." Paul has in view the work of the Spirit, in particular the direction and guidance of the Spirit that is given in "prophetic utterances." Paul's point here has especially to do with the prophetic gifts and

ministry of the Spirit - the "speaking" gifts: teaching, preaching, tongues and their interpretation, "wisdom," "knowledge," and the like.

How then do we quench the Spirit? When we *ignore* him, whether willfully or unconsciously. When we do not listen to what the Spirit is telling us, by not spending time in God's Word or by not putting ourselves under the Word's authority. Can any believer acting in this way be filled with the Spirit? Walking by the Spirit?

Unlike filling and walking, grieving and quenching are *actions*, not states of mind or mental attitudes. Grieving focuses on our relationship with other believers. Grieving the Spirit is more tightly focused than quenching the Spirit. Quenching focuses on our response to the Word of God. Quenching the Spirit is a broader sin, more general in nature.

Grieving is primarily sins of speech and relationships within the body, affecting its unity. Quenching is primarily ignoring the prompting of the Spirit to obedience, affecting the believer's purity. Both grieving and quenching are actions which reject the control of the Spirit (filling) and dependence on the Spirit (walking) in favor of the flesh, resulting in sin's mastery.

Is it possible to be filled with the Spirit, yet harbor some secret (or open) sin? *No*.

Is it possible to grow spiritually? *Yes* - for example, Peter with the Galatians. Our own experience confirms that we grow in some areas while others stubbornly continue to bedevil and beset us.

So what? How do we apply this practically so that we know some of Christ's triumph over sin? Think back to the beginning of this lesson for a moment, to those formulaic expressions of the Spirit's ministry. Campus Crusade's desire; confess; claim; MacArthur's Eph. 5:18 = Col. 3:16; Chafer's grieve not, quench not, walk by, = filled with.

While they are not inaccurate, they are too rote to be complete. They are inadequate to express the core of the Spirit's ministry - ***relationship***. They tend too easily toward manipulation: "Do this, and God will do that." Relationships are not defined and built by keeping lists. They are built with one key ingredient: trust, which flows from love. That ingredient of trust then has real implications for the control we give someone in our life.

How will we act with someone if we trust them? Vulnerable, open, accepting, forgiving, listen to them, talk to them. We must approach the Spirit as a person, as someone we are in relationship with, and *trust him*.

What does it mean to trust someone? *Willingness to give up control*. The level of control you grant someone is directly affected by your level of trust. How does it feel to be out of control? Do any of us have it? *No, but we all like to pretend*.

- Prov. 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand.
- Prov. 20:24 Man's steps are ordained by the Lord, how then can man understand his way?

Control is an illusion, and the need to know "why" is merely to increase our illusion of control. Gal. 5:17 says "the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." It is almost as if we stand in the middle, and can trust in the flesh of self-effort with the result being sin's mastery, or the Spirit of Life, with the result of putting to death the deeds of the body.

In reality there is no choice but to trust, to yield control, to live in relationship to the Holy Spirit. How do you destroy a relationship? Ignore them, act against them or their wishes, insist on control, distrust. Who do you trust?

Lesson 10: The Believer's Responsibility

As we begin to wrap up this study of the Spiritual Life, it is time to review where we've been. We've seen that God requires **holiness**, a requirement that we simply aren't capable of meeting. But rather than leave us in our sin, God himself makes provision for us in his **grace**. He condescends to us, lifting us through the sacrificial death of his Son to raise us to his standard. Moreover, he has given us a **change of identity**. We are no longer "in Adam," but we are "in Christ." We are identified with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection in such a way that we ourselves were dead, buried, and now raised to newness of life with Christ. Therefore we are to **present ourselves** to God.

However, we have no power to present ourselves to God, and we when we try in our own strength **the flesh** simply gets in the way, leaving us in total frustration. Again, God did not leave us without resource, and the indwelling ministry of the **Holy Spirit** enables us to obey, creating within us a desire for holiness and giving us the ability to live holy.

And that brings us to this study. Even after the magnificent truths that we have seen, you will notice that the basic call to "present yourselves" (Rom. 6:14), to live a holy lifestyle, remains. Given all that God has done for us, our question in this study is, "What is the believer's responsibility in the spiritual life?"

When Paul says to "present ourselves", does that mean we are passive in obedience? Does God work thru us or do we do the work? Does self-discipline get in God's way? Can one who is walking by faith still work to obey?

Some say no: Jerry Bridges, in his excellent book, "The Pursuit of Holiness:"

During a certain period in my Christian life I thought that any effort on my part to live a holy life was 'of the flesh' and that 'the flesh profits for nothing.' I thought God would not bless any effort on my part to live the Christian life, just as He would not bless any effort on my part to become a Christian by good works. Just as I received Christ Jesus by faith, so I was to seek a holy life only by faith. Any effort on my part was just getting in God's way.

Does that describe you? Have you had a similar point of view? Bridge answers his earlier self well:

God has made provision for our holiness and He has also given us a responsibility for it . . . God's provision for us consists in delivering us from the reign of sin, uniting us with Christ, and giving us the indwelling Holy Spirit to reveal sin, to create a desire for holiness, and to strengthen us in our pursuit of holiness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the new nature He gives, we are to put to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13)

Passive or Active?

To some, the "passive" approach, or perhaps we'll call it the "faith" approach, seems more spiritual: a "let go, let God" kind of thing. This view says that man's responsibility is to trust, God does the work. In fact, it says that man can do nothing but trust. But the big problem with that is that it doesn't hold with Scripture:

- David - Psalm 127:1 "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain."

Who is working? The Lord *and* the workers. What happens if the workers take a long lunch? Head for the river to do a little fishing? The work stops. Both are working, not the Lord only.

- Nehemiah – in Nehemiah 4:9, the Holy Spirit records what happened when the people under Nehemiah's direction found out that their enemies intended to destroy their unfinished work on the walls of Jerusalem: "But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night."

Notice their response? They 1) prayed *and* 2) posted a guard. We might know a few folks who would take the spiritual approach and pray, disdaining the presumption of taking matters into our own hands to defend the work. We can also imagine those who would hoot at the notion of praying for help when what is clearly needed is a guard to be posted! Nehemiah's approach is clear – both!

- Paul - Col. 1:28-29 "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

Talk about your paradoxical statements! Paul "labored," that is to say he toiled physically, striving (the Greek means *agonizing*). Nothing passive about this! Except, notice whose strength fuels Paul's labor? "According to His power, which mightily works within me."

Somehow we feel that grace and duty (or discipline) are opposed to one another. But they are not:

Let us consider what regard we ought to have to our own duty and to the grace of God. Some would separate these things as inconsistent. If holiness be our duty, they would say, there is no room for grace; and if it be the result of grace there is no room for duty. But our duty and God's grace are nowhere opposed in the matter of sanctification; for the one absolutely supposes the other. We cannot perform our duty without the grace of God; nor does God give his grace for

any other purpose that that we may perform our duty. John Owen, quoted in Bridges, Discipline of Grace, p. 133

When the Bible commands us to love one another, to put to death the misdeeds of the Body, to be filled with the Spirit, who is it talking to? It's talking to us – Scripture certainly is written with the assumption that we have an active role and must assume our responsibility as believers to live a holy life.

So, Self-Discipline is the Thing?

If the "faith" approach is wrong, then what about its opposite, self-discipline? No, reliance on self-discipline is as wrongheaded as reliance on passive obedience. A regimen of Bible study, prayer, witnessing, meditation, ministry - important as they are, *are not the source of our strength. Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is the source of our strength.*

We are feeble people spiritually, and we are tempted to rely on our spiritual disciplines instead of on the Holy Spirit. As critically important as Bible study and prayer are, if we place our trust in our regimen of study instead of in the Lord who reveals himself in the Word, we are in trouble! Don't get me wrong. We *need* discipline and to be disciplined, but we need to be dependent as well.

Dependent Discipline

Jerry Bridges, in Discipline of Grace, likens our responsibility in the Spiritual Life to the two wings of an airplane. One wing is discipline, the other dependence. Without either one we crash and burn! We need to be disciplined, but in dependence on God's strength and provision, because God's strength and provision is the only resource we have:

The actual aid and internal operation of the Spirit of God is necessary to produce every holy act of our minds, wills, and emotions in every duty whatsoever. Notwithstanding the power or ability that believers have received by the principle of new life implanted at salvation, they still stand in need of the divine enablement of the Holy Spirit in every single act or duty toward God. John Owen, quoted in Bridges, Discipline of Grace, p. 136

A great example of this "dependent discipline" is Jonathan Edwards, probably the single greatest theologian America has ever produced. Edwards was an extremely disciplined man, as shown by his "70 Resolutions," written when he was a boy between the ages of 19-20. These resolutions covered virtually every area of his life, for example:

1. Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory, and my own good, profit and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriad's of ages hence. Resolved to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved to do this, whatever difficulties I meet with, how many and how great soever.

5. *Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.*

6. *Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.*

62. *Resolved, never to do anything but duty; and then according to Eph. 6:6-8, do it willingly and cheerfully as unto the Lord, and not to man; "knowing that whatever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord." June 25 and July 13, 1723*

70. *Let there be something of benevolence, in all that I speak. Aug. 17, 1723*

He read each of these resolutions weekly, lived his life by them, obviously a very disciplined man. Yet note the prayer he wrote at the very beginning of the resolutions:

"Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly entreat him, by his grace, to enable me to keep these Resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to his will, for Christ's sake."

So, what is our responsibility in the Spiritual Life? Simply this: we must be disciplined in living, reading and studying, praying, witnessing, ministering to one another. We must take every step necessary to obey God every moment of every day, but we must do it all in utter dependence on his provision and his strength. Sin is more than physical actions or mental attitudes of anger, lust, etc. Self-sufficiency, an attitude of independence, is sin. And perhaps the one sin in which we most indulge.

There is a paradox here: We are saved by grace, we live by grace, yet we must work like mad in the resources God has given us to live a holy life. *Not so he will be pleased with us* (he is fully pleased with us already) but because of what he has done for us. I like to think of the John Bunyan poem quoted earlier in this series:

*Run, John, run. The law commands
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
Better news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly and gives me wings.*

Now, how do we self-sufficient, self-centered people nurture an attitude of dependent discipline? Through prayer, which is the next study in this series.

Lesson 11: Spiritual Warfare

Most would agree with the observation that spiritual warfare appears to be manifested in some Third World countries and largely non-Christian cultures much more clearly than it is here in the United States. To such an observer one might ask "What do you mean by spiritual warfare?" If you mean overt and obvious manifestations of demonic activity, I think I'd agree. But is that the Biblical view of spiritual warfare?

Why is there less of that kind of demonic activity here in the United States, or in other Western cultures? Well, I'm not sure there is any less of it here, just that it seems to take a different form here, perhaps more subtle and hard to spot.

Where does spiritual warfare fit in the spiritual life? As we come toward the close of this study, we have seen all that God has done for us in our salvation, and we conclude happily that we are not alone. On the other hand, *we are not alone!* There is real opposition to God, both earthly and supernatural, and we are in the middle of the struggle. Spiritual warfare then is a real factor in the life of a believer.

Spiritual Warfare Isn't Limited to the Satanic

Ephesians 2:1-3 shows us that spiritual warfare isn't limited strictly to Satan's activity, but is actually a three-pronged attack:

The World – This term describes the "group think" of our fallen world, our fallen flesh, and the fallen angels. "World" in this sense is a system, a force John describes it in 1 John 2:15-16 as the antithesis of the Father, characterized by the lust of the flesh and eyes, and the boastful pride of life. It is "passing away," meaning it has no future, it is in the process of dying.

The Flesh – This is the "old man" of Romans 7, unrestricted in non-believers, restrained but still operating in believers. It is that part of us that responds to sinful stimuli (Romans 7, James 1:13-14, 4:1). Note that both the world and the flesh operate independent of the devil, but Satan can and does use both in addition to direct, demonic, intervention.

The Devil – The Devil's activity is what we usually mean when we are talking about spiritual warfare. The Epistles talk a lot about demonic activity, but uses a fairly complex vocabulary. For example, all the following words refer to angels or demons:

- ☛ Powers (Rom. 8:38, Eph. 6:12)
- ☛ Principalities (Rom. 8:38)
- ☛ Authorities (1 Peter 3:22; Col. 2:15)
- ☛ Dominions (Col. 1:16)
- ☛ Thrones (Col. 1:16)
- ☛ Elemental Things (Gal. 4:3, 9)
- ☛ Rulers (Eph. 6:12)
- ☛ World Forces (Eph. 6:12)

These terms sound ambiguous. They aren't clearly words that we usually use to describe demons, but they are all terms for rulers and authorities in society or government. The question some would ask is, "If they meant demons, why not call them demons, as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 10?" The answer is in their culture, these terms for earthly powers all occur frequently in both pagan and Jewish magical texts to denote *spiritual* powers.

The popular belief was that the spiritual kingdom mirrored earthly kingdoms, with a similar structure and hierarchy of powers in heaven and in hell. These aren't merely societal terms, in fact more often than not they refer to spiritual powers. But we have difficulty seeing widespread demonic activity in the Bible as relevant to us today, because we *assume a level of ignorance and superstition on their part*.

Spiritual Warfare in Context

We need to understand the context of life in that world to understand the teaching of the New Testament on spiritual warfare. When Jesus, Paul, Peter walked and wrote and lived, what did they understand their world to be? It is difficult for us, because we are separated from their world by an immense gulf of time and of outlook. Most of all, our outlook is colored by the "Age of Enlightenment."

Spurred by advances in science (especially the contributions of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton), scientists and philosophers became convinced mankind was emerging from centuries of darkness and ignorance to a new age "enlightened" by reason, science, new respect for humanity. If man could unlock the physical laws of universe, why not all of nature and society? Human reason became central, and what couldn't be perceived by reason was either unimportant or nonexistent. Therefore "enlightened man" rejected much of Christianity and the entire spirit world.

That very secular viewpoint began among non-believers, but it moved right into the church in the late 18th century. It became popular to deny all miracles. "De-mythologizing" the Bible, stripping out all miracles, angels, demons, became the thing to do. Man was looking for the meaning behind the "myth" rather than accepting what God's word said at face value.

It's easy to test the extent to which this view sticks with us. Read Mark 9:17-18, 25-27. The text says a spirit was tormenting the boy, but if you poll any church congregation you will find that a great many believe he was epileptic. The extent to which we think "it could it be they just thought epilepsy was demon possession," we show a tendency to look first for natural, physical explanations for what the Bible says was a spiritual problem. And we wouldn't be alone.

For example, the Tyndale commentary series, an excellent evangelical, fundamental, conservative, set of commentaries on each book of the New Testament, describes this scene as dealing with an "epileptic boy," as does my New American Standard Reference Edition Bible. We simply have a naturalistic, reason-oriented bent that is difficult to shake.

Even though we still tend to think along these lines, our whole cultural landscape has changed in last 20 years – we are in the dawn of the New Age. In some ways we are between two worlds: 20

years ago there was little or no popular belief in angels, demons, or the devil. God, yes – the rest, no. For example, when Billy Graham "Angels" was published in 1977, it was hooted at by most secular and "religious" forces. The notion that an educated man like Graham believed in angels merely point out the absurdity of his faith. But today, we are at the end of the Enlightenment, the beginning of the New Age. Our world today is beginning to look at life more like the ancients did.

The powers and the pagan world

The ancient world was a scary place, populated by many powerful, unseen beings, literally filling the air around you, inside, outside, some evil, some good (or at least not prone to violence), but all stronger than *you*. And therefore there was a desperate need for protection. *How do you get protection from someone more powerful than you?* 1) Get somebody bigger still or 2) Get him on your side – which is where *magic* comes in.

In essence, magic was practiced to placate, manipulate, or control the spirits. It was not primarily illusion or trickery. There was a real dependence on the ability to manipulate good or evil spirits to help or to harm. In this sense, it was an everyday part of life, and especially intrinsic to pagan religions.

There are numerous texts still existing from 2,000 years ago and more, of incantations, potion recipes, amulets, charms, curse tablets. Many combine the names of gods and goddesses from all kinds of religions, and even include the names of Yahweh, Solomon, and David.

The Powers in the New Testament

But magic was not limited to pagans, Jews used it, and so did some new Christians. The book of Acts shows magic in a variety of settings:

- ☛ Simon of Samaria (Acts 8:9-13, 18-24). Samaria worshipped Yahweh, but was also into magic.
- ☛ Elymas Bar-Jesus of Crete was a Jewish magician (Acts 13:6-12).
- ☛ Slave Girl of Philippi (Acts 16:16-18).
- ☛ Believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:13-19).

While the above anecdotal evidence is instructive, the following is the basic teaching of the New Testament on spiritual warfare:

1. Spiritual warfare is real (Eph. 6:12). "Our struggle" is not incidental, not imaginary. Rather, it is an intrinsic part of Christian life, and not primarily *physical* – *these are real spiritual powers he is talking about*.
2. Satan is both *real* and *personal*. That is, he is not a force, not the personification of evil, but a real, personal, being. In Luke 22:31 Jesus tells Peter that "Satan has demanded to

sift you like wheat." Shows real emotions of desire, hatred, violence. In Matthew 4:1-11 Satan appeared personally in bodily form to tempt Jesus.

3. Satan works to *hinder* God's purposes. As mentioned above, he tempted Jesus to sin in Matthew 4:1-11. In Mark 8:33 Jesus equated Peter's admonition not to go to the cross with Satan's advice, because he was "not setting his mind on God's interests." In 1 Thess. 2:18, Paul says Satan thwarted him in his attempt to see the Thessalonians.
4. Satan works to *extend* his own kingdom. The New Testament describes this in vivid language: *Binding* unbelievers so they won't believe the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). Having blinded unbelievers he *enslaves* them to the "elemental things" (Gal. 4:3, 8) used in secular language of spirits, in Galatians like the false god of legalism, holding them captive to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26).
5. Satan works by *fear* and *deception*. **Fear** (Heb. 2:14) Fear of death, whether rational or irrational, bodily or spiritual harm, tempting us to avert all possible danger to self or family, even against God's will. There are many other ways he uses fear – wallowing in guilt, dabbling in astrology, and still more besides. **Deception** (2 Cor. 11:3) What was the serpent's deception of Eve? *You can be like God*. One major deception that he uses over and over again is *you can be like God*. You're okay! You don't need God, you don't need anybody! On the other hand, 1 Tim. 4:1-3a shows almost the opposite deception. You need everything you can get! Works, abstinence, legalism, any trick you can to get God to accept you!

Satan is a deceiver (John 8:44 – "a liar and the father of lies") and he deceives the world into thinking 1) that he doesn't exist (causing us to rely on our reason), or 2) he's everywhere (like "the force" of Star Wars), or 3) he can do anything (making us believe he is God's match, his opposite number, using duplicate miracles, fakes, real magic to substantiate his claim), or that 4) he's cool, sophisticated, fun! Hell is often pictured as a more interesting place to be than heaven. What a deception!

The next lesson, Lesson 12 – How Not to be Satan's Breakfast, will take this basic teaching of the New Testament on spiritual warfare and draw some practical applications.

Lesson 12: How Not to be Satan's Breakfast

The previous lesson dealt with the difficulty we sometimes have with the whole concept of demonic powers. This lesson explores more fully the teaching of the New Testament on spiritual warfare and makes application from it.

Spiritual Warfare in the New Testament

1. Spiritual warfare is real (Eph. 6:12). "Our struggle" is not incidental, not imaginary. Rather, it is an intrinsic part of Christian life, and not primarily *physical* – *these are real spiritual powers he is talking about*.
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Some Concerns

Before exploring Scripture further, there are some emphases today that appear unbalanced and unhealthy. "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare" (SLSW) is one. SLSW has to do with confronting higher-ups in the demonic order who are said to direct Satan's war against God's people, centers around territorial spirits, which are high-ranking demons assigned task of keeping large numbers of humans enslaved: neighborhoods, cities, nations; also industries, religious groups. Through spiritual mapping and naming the territorial demons (discovering which demons control which areas of the world) SLSW prays specifically against in order to bind the demons so the gospel can flow. Problem:

- There is very little evidence of such territorial spirits in Scripture. Teaching on territorial spirits centers around Daniel 10:13, 20, but these "princes" of Persia and Greece, may just be kings.
- There is *no* example of learning demon's names to pray against them in Scripture. Paul did not map a city to win it. This emphasis is based by admission on many non-scriptural sources (such as Frank Peretti's entertaining "Darkness" books) and based on specific messages claimed by some individuals to come from the Holy Spirit.

Can a Christian bind Satan and his demons? Much is said and prayed these days about binding Satan, but I'm not sure about this one either. There are two cases where Satan or his demons are said to be bound: Matthew 12:25-29, Jesus uses strong man as example – to rob a house guarded by a strong man, a tough guy, you'd better be tougher still, and tie him up. And so Jesus is and does – but where is the believer's admonition to bind Satan here? In Matthew 16:19, Jesus is speaking directly to Peter, but this was considered an apostolic directive by the early church, and was never directed at Satan or the demons in Scripture. Note, neither verse talks about binding Satan. One verse that does is Revelation 20:2. Satan is not bound yet, but he will be, by an angel, not by man.

How Do We Fight?

Satan's tactics are more mundane than spectacular, so how do we fight?

First, we fight like people confident of victory (Colossians 2:8-15). Satan has been defeated. There is no doubt as to the outcome, but we are in the "mopping up" period of the war. Like in World War II, from D-Day, June 6, 1944 to VE-Day, June, 1945, the war was won, just a matter of finishing it off and declaring victory. But there was still a fierce enemy to fight, still many lives lost and much damage inflicted by the enemy fighting a desperate, losing battle. So it is today. Satan is defeated but still active. What is the Bible's word on fighting the war?

Second, we must take up the weapons of our warfare and put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-18). What do we have to do to put our armor on? *Not much, just recognize resources.* First 5 elements of armor: truth, righteousness, gospel, faith, salvation – are already ours in full. Paul is exhorting the Ephesians to recognize their resources and their responsibility to stand firm against the adversary. The last 2 elements are tools that we have the responsibility to use and exercise – the sword of the Spirit (Word of God) and prayer.

How to be Satan's Breakfast:

While most of us may already have this down pat, consider this list of ways to ensure that you are defeated spiritually at every turn:

1. Resent and resist authority (at home, at church, at work, in the government)
2. Be proud (view yourself as the favored of God, a pillar of society, first among equals)
3. Seek praise (per your own schedule, on your own priorities)
4. Be anxious (worry over trivial details, performance – act as though you are the critical component to all success)
5. Question God's care for you (blame God for your life, assume no responsibility for your decisions, or the consequences that follow)
6. Be unbalanced in your thinking (doubt God's control of life)
7. Be self-focused (spend your time on yourself, make sure your needs are met first)

This is pretty much a foolproof list of ways to ensure that you too can be Satan's breakfast, because it is actually just Peter's advice of how *not* to be Satan's breakfast reversed.

How Not to Be Satan's Breakfast (1 Peter 5)

1. Subject yourselves to authority (1 Pet 5:5; God's, man's)
2. Be humble (1 Pet 5:5-6 – how? By becoming obedient, as Jesus did in Philippians 2:8; humble with each other, humble under God)
3. Seek God's praise according to God's schedule (1 Pet 5:6 – at the proper time. Who chooses the time? God alone.)
4. Don't be anxious (1 Pet 5:7) – instead,
5. Be sure of God's care for you (1 Pet 5:8).
6. Be sober-minded (1 Pet 5:8, know that he is in control, no matter what appearances may be)
7. Be spiritually-alert (1 Pet. 5:8 – knowing Satan is prowling around out there, looking for an easy meal).

If these things mark your life, Peter says you won't be Satan's breakfast! In the end, it all comes down to who you seek to please, self or Christ? Are you driven to perform, or do you have drive? Are you depending on the Lord, or on your own strength? The need for absolute dependence on him is greatly underscored by the reality of spiritual warfare.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The final lesson in this series, Lesson 13 – Now That We're Spiritual, will both sum up where we've been and point us to the road ahead.

Lesson 13: Now That We're Spiritual

Consider: What does the average Christian have in common with Ponce de Leon? To answer that one, you'd probably need to know who Ponce de Leon was. He was a Spanish explorer and governor of Puerto Rico who heard the native's tales of an island called Bimini, where there existed a fountain whose waters would restore youth and strength to all who drank them. He took an expedition in search of Bimini and its fountain of youth in 1512. You know what he found? Florida. He thought it was the island of his search, and so he continued to search for the fountain until, by circumnavigating south around Key West and north up the West Coast, he discovered his mistake.

Like Ponce de Leon, many of us spend our lives in search of something that doesn't exist. In our case, that's not a fountain of youth, but "the switch." Which switch, you ask? The one that by flipping we become spiritual, mature, and effective Christians.

The heart is the issue

Do you recall how we opened this study? We followed the 12 through the gospel of Mark, with an especial eye to their hearts. We found that Mark shows Jesus in opposition to two groups of hard-hearted people, the Pharisees and the 12 (one such example is found in Mark 6:52 and 8:17). Hard-heartedness is marked by the drive for significance, reliance on self, the need to be God's indispensable man or woman.

