

*The Robe,*  
*The Ring &*  
*The Sandals*

*The Steps to Spiritual Maturity*



**By Dr. Henry C. Hilton**



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# **CONTENTS**

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<i>CHAPTER 1</i>		3
	<b>INTRODUCTION: THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH</b>	
<hr/>		
<b>PART 1</b>	<b><i>THE ROBE</i></b>	11
<hr/>		
<i>CHAPTER 2</i>		13
	<b>WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?</b>	
<i>CHAPTER 3</i>		16
	<b>RIGHTEOUSNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS</b>	
<i>CHAPTER 4</i>		21
	<b>THE IDENTITY OF GOD AND THE IDENTITY OF MAN</b>	
<i>CHAPTER 5</i>		45
	<b>INTER-UNION WITH GOD</b>	
<i>CHAPTER 6</i>		63
	<b>THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOW JESUS DIED</b>	
<i>CHAPTER 7</i>		67
	<b>COMMUNICATION WITH GOD</b>	
<i>CHAPTER 8</i>		73
	<b>WATER BAPTISM</b>	

---

**PART 2*****THE RING***79

---

*CHAPTER 9*

83

**THE IDENTITY OF SATAN AND HIS KINGDOM***CHAPTER 10*

94

**SATAN'S DEFEAT***CHAPTER 11*

99

**HOW TO RECOGNISE AND DEFEAT TEMPTATION***CHAPTER 12*

120

**THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**

---

**PART 3*****THE SANDALS***128

---

*CHAPTER 13*

131

**WHAT IS SERVANTHOOD AND HOW IS IT ACHIEVED?***CHAPTER 14*

141

**THE HEART OF A SERVANT***CHAPTER 15*

150

**THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF SERVANTHOOD***CHAPTER 16*

155

**THE BAPTISM WITH FIRE***APPENDIX*

165

**DISCIPLING**

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION: THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

God wants sons and daughters that reflect his very person. This was his original intention when he created man and woman. In Genesis 1:26-27 when the word “man” (Hebrew *adam*) is used for the very first time, God emphasizes his intention in order to leave no room for doubt:

“Then God said, "Let us make man in *our image*, in *our likeness* .... So God created man in his *own image*, in the *image of God* he created him; male and female he created them.””

Genesis 1: 26-27

The meaning of anything and everything is wrapped up in its beginning. Man’s beginning is associated with his being made in the very image and likeness of God.

However, the fall changed man into something else. He took on a different nature, a sin nature. He no longer reflected the image of God. Man’s image was marred, sullied and corrupted. This is why Jesus declared that a person must be “born again”.<sup>1</sup> When a person is truly saved, they are recreated in the very nature of God. They are a “*new creation*”.<sup>2</sup> They have not undergone a veneered make-over or constituted into some hybrid being. They are an entirely new species of creature.

When we are born again we become, as it were, a (spiritual) baby; born now of God and no longer born of Adam. John 1:12-13 says emphatically “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”

And just as a baby learns and grows developing into the image of his/her natural father/mother, so the Bible also carefully and deliberately outlines the development that must take place in order for us to become like God - until we “...become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Spiritual transformation***

Believers are to undergo a transformation. The Bible reveals that a process is involved beginning from the moment of conversion through which we are brought into a state of Christlikeness.

Various passages of scripture show that there are three stages of spiritual development. Once a believer completes these stages they will have become mature, and reflect the very nature of their father God. These stages identify the essential elements of growth which are necessary to bring a person into the lifestyle of normal Christian living.

Unfortunately, what the scriptures convey as normal eludes many Christians. More often than not, the reason is that they have not been nurtured and guided through the necessary stages to bring them to maturity in their Christian walk. If a house is built upon wrongly laid or missing foundations it will not stand. Many Christians falter in their walk – they struggle in their relationship with God and succumb to satanic attack – because essential features of these stages are misunderstood or entirely missing.

### ***The Three Stages – Robe, Ring, Sandals***

The pattern of Christian development is portrayed in the three items given to the prodigal son upon his return:

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.'"

Luke 15:22

The three stages are arranged in an important and vital sequence: first the robe, secondly the ring and only after these two elements comes the last, the sandals. The robe represents righteousness, which is our identity in Christ. The ring represents our authority over Satan. The sandals represent Spirit-led and selfless servanthood, which is the mark of true Christlikeness. A mature Christian has progressed through each of these steps. Their lives reflect the very life that Jesus modeled upon the earth. They live in intimate relationship with God and bear much fruit.

It is impossible to progress to the last stage of spiritual maturity unless we have established first our identity in Christ and secondly our authority in Christ. These empower and sustain us in our service. Identity and authority are the legs of our spiritual walk. Without them we will be spiritually lame, frustrated and defeated. Although we try to serve God with good intention, if we have not understood, accepted and acted upon these two core truths, we will encounter a variety of problems that will hold us up back from entering into the life God intended for us. These problems can include:

- Though we will mentally agree that God is a God of love, he will appear to us to be unduly harsh and dictatorial, distant and remote. We feel he isn't pleased with us and seldom, if ever, hear him personally communicate with us.



- We will be unaware of Satan's schemes and we will be plagued with bondages to sin at different levels. Although oblivious to it, we will be on the losing end of an intense spiritual conflict. We justify ourselves, regarding ourselves as being weak and helpless to overcome these problems, and try to hide them from the view of others.
- We will always be striving to know God's will but will never be quite sure of what it really is.
- We will never feel right inside and will chase after every new teaching or revelation that might provide us with the answer.
- Although we strive for intimate relationships with others – especially our spouse – with all good intention and our best effort, we just don't seem to make it. We end up hurting and hurting others, wondering all the time why things aren't working out the way we desperately want them to.

### ***Children, Sons, Fathers***

Another passage that reveals the three-stage pattern of spiritual development is contained in John's first letter:

"I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

I John 2:12-14

The analogy of natural development – children, sons and fathers - illustrates the stages of spiritual growth and parallels exactly the same sequence of robe, ring and sandals. It adds these further insights:

The *children stage* relates to our relationship with God. This is determined by the image we have of God as a loving Father and the perception we have of ourselves as his children. Our experience of God and our relationship with him is to be personal, intimate, affectionate, instructive and submissive.

The *sons/daughters stage* deals with our relationship with our adversary – Satan. We are to walk in total victory over Satan and his schemes. The level of victory we experience over his power and influence is directly related to what we believe to be true. Our mind is the principal arena of spiritual warfare. Our beliefs and attitudes must be adjusted according to the truth of God's Word. We defeat Satan by rejecting his lies, and accepting and walking in truth as revealed and defined by God in the Bible.

The *fathers/mothers stage* concerns our relationship with others. How we practically live out our lives in Christlikeness, serving others as we walk in intimate relationship with the Father. Just as, in the natural, a parent takes on the responsibility of care for a child, this level of spiritual maturity is determined by our willingness to bear the burden of caring for others, regardless of personal cost.

The sequence of development is first children, then sons/daughters and finally fathers/mothers. That again is the normal pattern.

This process is also clearly demonstrated in the writings of the apostle Paul. For instance, Romans 1-11, Ephesians 1-3, Colossians 1-2 focus on the *truth* about our relationship with God and our authority over Satan, whereas the latter chapters – Romans 12-15, Ephesians 4-6 and Colossians 3 – deal with our *practical* lives, especially our relationships with others.

What the Bible plainly and emphatically reveals to us is that first we must know and embrace the truth about the identities of God, ourselves and Satan, the relationship God wants to have with us and the power and authority granted us to defeat Satan. Only then can we begin to talk about how we should practically conduct our lives. Why? Because *what we believe determines our behaviour*. Our public world is the product of our private world. Our beliefs and attitudes direct our actions and words. The two core beliefs concerning our relationship with God, and our position with regard to Satan, govern and control our inner spiritual lives which, in turn, determine our outer conduct and experience.

### ***Belief determines behaviour***

The Bible consistently presents the principle that belief is the cause, and behaviour is the effect. Proverbs 4:23 summarizes it in this way “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

What you believe to be true about God and true about yourself will ultimately determine how you relate to God and others. No person can behave in a manner which is inconsistent with what they believe to be true. Belief always determines behaviour.

Unfortunately, much pulpit teaching can tend to focus too little on belief and too much on behaviour. Emphasis is placed on how we should live as Christians – the latter half of the epistles – rather than what we should believe as Christians – the first half. Therefore, many people try to live the Christian life but do not possess a pattern of beliefs that will enable them to live that kind of life. Consequently, they falter, come under condemnation and resign themselves to a life of spiritual mediocrity, always wishing that they could be more ‘spiritual’ but never quite making it.

It is not to say that what is taught is necessarily wrong in itself, but that it is a truncated version of authentic New Testament teaching,

and that there should be a proper balance. There are missing ingredients in people's belief systems that cause them to fail to live the kind of life that they know they should live, and want to live. A person's beliefs must first be adjusted and then their behaviour will automatically fall into line. Romans 12:2 puts it succinctly: "*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind....*" In other words don't follow the behavioural practices of worldly people, but change your lifestyle by changing what you believe.

This truth is repeated in Ephesians 4:22-24 "*... with regard to your former way of life ... put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ... be made new in the attitude of your minds; and ...put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*" A person's change of lifestyle, from the old to the new, is dependent upon the adjustments they make to their pattern of thinking.

When a person is first saved their structure of beliefs – about themselves, God, Satan and the world at large – is mostly flawed. This pattern of core values and beliefs has developed through their own worldly experience, and is inconsistent with the truth as revealed by God. These core values and beliefs remain intact and will continue to dominate a believer's life, even though they are saved, unless they are consciously and deliberately led to choose to reject the false set of beliefs and to embrace the truth.

For instance, many come to Christ with an image of God which is simply incorrect. This occurs because we normally and naturally build an image of God, *before* we come to Christ, upon our own father. Given the breakdown in families in the present generation, that image is largely a distorted view of who God really is and what he is like. If a person's own father was distant, disinterested and uncaring, then that person is likely to project the same image upon God. Even though they are saved, that improper image of God will effectively lock them out of intimate relationship with their

heavenly Father. They will never sense his presence, nor his care and concern for them, because their own belief as to what he is like will not allow them to enter into that experience.

In summary, a person cannot reach spiritual maturity and live a normal Christian life without:

1. coming to an acceptance of the true identity of God and themselves, and thereby entering into a right relationship with their heavenly Father;
2. knowing the truth about their spiritual authority, understanding how Satan operates, being released from his control, overcoming his attacks, and being equipped to offensively advance the cause of Christ;
3. walking as Christ did in a spirit of humility, adopting a servant's attitude - not looking out for their own needs but rather looking out for the needs of others, and meeting those needs as they are led of the Spirit.

These three stages are the topic of this book.

**PART 1**

***The Robe***

The vibrant and intimate relationship that Jesus shared with his Father is demonstrated on every page of the gospels. That same intimacy was reflected in how Jesus related with his disciples. He shared his life with them, he opened his heart to them, he daily walked and talked with them, he continually revealed truth to them. He did not withhold anything that was good or that would benefit them.

Jesus' passion was to reveal the heart of his Father and the hope of his Father that people would turn to him and also walk in intimacy with him, as Jesus had done.

Jesus in fact defined eternal life not as heaven when we die but as an intimate relationship with his Father and himself now, in this life: *"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."*<sup>4</sup>

In order for people to enter into an intimate relationship with God, however, they must first be made righteous. This is what the robe is all about.

- It is about you being made righteous just as God is righteous.
- It is about you being made in the image of God, just like Jesus, so that you can have a relationship with God, just as Jesus did.
- It is about knowing God as an intimate friend, and experiencing him every moment of every day in a vital spiritual union.

## Chapter 2

# WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.'"

Luke 15:22

"I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

Isaiah 61:10

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

2 Corinthians 5:21

The robe represents the state of being righteous. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about righteousness. It is a word which has largely dropped out of common use. We never read about it in the papers, hear about it on the nightly news, nor see it modeled in Hollywood movies. Sadly, it is also often misrepresented in some churches as being mere conformity to a strict code of conduct.

The first step along the path of Christian growth is to fully understand what it means to be made righteous and accept that you have been made righteous.



***Righteousness is the state of being like God***

Righteousness is the greatest gift that God could give to sinful man. Only through righteousness is it possible for a person to connect with God.

Righteousness is the key attribute of God and therefore the essential quality of godliness or godlikeness. Righteousness is a state of being right – of being whole. The product of righteousness is a just and moral life. A person does not become righteous by doing righteous acts. You act righteously, because you are righteous. Righteousness is a state of being. A person is inherently righteous or inherently unrighteous. You are either one or the other. You can't be a bit of both.

This is completely contrary to the basic teaching of the world's religions. For example, the religions that came out of the East promote the so-called principle of yin-yang, that there is good and evil in every person and that we should try to promote the good and subdue the bad by submitting to a code of conduct. Authentic Christianity teaches something very different. You are intrinsically bad (born in sin, born of Adam) and you need to be made good (born again, born of the Spirit). And this can only be achieved through receiving righteousness as a gift in Jesus Christ. You can't accomplish it by yourself, or by adhering to certain religious rules or practices.

Before we accept Christ we are all by nature evil. The Bible says in Jeremiah "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."<sup>5</sup> In Ephesians we read, "You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan...All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature. We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's anger just like everyone else."<sup>6</sup> The essential truth is that before we received Christ, we were sinners. We were inherently bad. We were defective.

However, when you received Christ, you were made righteous; you were made a whole person. You are no longer defective. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Jesus was made sin so that you could be righteous or sinless. He was made defective so that you could be made perfect. You must accept this as truth. It is an accomplished fact...period. Otherwise Christ suffered for nothing.

Consider the example of Jesus himself. Jesus was righteous because he was born the Son of God. He did not become righteous - he was righteous. He was born in the image of his Father. When we are born-again we are born in the image of God, just like Jesus. This is why we are called sons of God and the brothers of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> It is nothing we achieve through personal effort. We have it because we are made that way.

The moment you accept the truth that you have been made righteous the consequences will be immediate and profound. Its outworking will be evident mostly in your relationships.

If you do not accept that you have been made righteous, however, you will inevitably be bound to a life of religious duty or you will never break free from destructive habits. You will be caught in one of two extremes – legalism (laboring to obey an unattainable set of rules) or license (engaging in sinful habits, justifying yourself and believing in a misrepresentation of God’s grace – “It’s just the way that I am. After all, we are just sinners, saved by grace.”)

In the next chapter we will address the question for what purpose does God want you to be righteous? What is the primary reason that you have been created in the image of God?

## Chapter 3

# RIGHTEOUSNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Primarily, the state of righteousness empowers a person to relate to God and others in the way that God intended relationships to be experienced. The Bible always speaks about righteousness in the context of relationships. Jesus said all of the righteous requirements of the law (the outward expression of our lives) are fulfilled if we are internally motivated by love for God and love for our neighbour.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, although righteousness is a state of being, i.e. being made in the image of God, it does not exist as an independent thing. Righteousness is revealed in how we interact with and relate to God and other people.

Without righteousness it is impossible to live the normal kind of life that God had in mind when he first created man. When Adam sinned, he lost that state of righteousness and its immediate impact was his disconnection from God. Its ongoing effect was to create hostility and the breakdown of relationships amongst the descendents of Adam and Eve. In the second generation Cain killed Abel. By the ninth generation the value of relationships had been so totally disregarded that the earth was “full of violence”.<sup>9</sup> Every person had become hostile to their neighbour and therefore God was compelled to destroy all those living at that time, except for Noah and his family.

Why was Noah spared? He survived because he alone “...was a *righteous* man, blameless among the people of his time, and he *walked with God*”.<sup>10</sup> Noah’s righteousness was revealed in the way

he valued relationship with God - he walked in intimacy with God. This pattern is repeated in all of the Biblical heroes of faith. Righteousness and relationship with God go hand-in-hand.

### ***The origin and value of relationships***

The most important thing in life is relationships. This is a maxim of which our present generation seems largely ignorant. Many of us grow up in dysfunctional families. Good relationship skills are not modeled in our homes. Relationships are discarded all too readily. We just do not understand the significance of relationships. Most importantly, we are not aware of God's desire for a two-way relationship, neither do we know how to achieve an intimate relationship with him, even though our hearts cry out for it.

The express reason for which we were created was relationship. God who is a community – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – made a collective decision to create a being fashioned in his very own likeness, who would join that community. Adam was created a righteous being, which is a spiritual being fashioned after God's own likeness, in order that he might enter into, and live his life in the context of, a perfect relationship with the Godhead.

God did not stand afar and watch Adam being manufactured on some assembly line. God fashioned him with his own hands and breathed his own breath of life into him. It was an act of incredible intimacy by God, right from the very outset.

Adam was the pinnacle of God's creation and given supremacy over all creation. However, his role in exercising dominion over the world was to be outworked in the context of a vital union with his Creator. God met with Adam daily, just so that they could be together and know one another. Although Adam was given a job to do – tend the garden, subdue the earth and together with Eve procreate and raise a family – his primary purpose was not to fulfill these tasks. He was

made to enjoy intimate relationship with God, to really know God. It was God's good pleasure to accomplish this for, in turn, God could enjoy that intimacy himself with the product of his own love.

Moreover, the express purpose for which Eve was created was for relationship. In all the animal kingdom there was no suitable created being for which Adam could enjoy relationship – a sense of real connectedness. Eve was provided by God to be Adam's completer. And together as they lived in intimacy with one another and with God, they would produce offspring who would also enter that community of love.

God wanted a world of sons and daughters, to which he would prove a warm, tender, kind and affectionate parent. That relationship was to be eternal, born out of love and sustained by love. The family of God was to be a beautiful, strong and healthy community with God as its rightful head.

### ***The origin and intent of sin***

When Adam sinned, he made a conscious decision to break relationship with God. It was not the eating of the fruit itself, but what that action was defined to represent. Adam understood he had a clear choice. He could remain in relationship with God (accepting and submitting to God and his authority) or choose to live independently from him (rejecting God and rebelling against his authority). The latter was made effective by a defined action - eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It was like a binding signature at the bottom of divorce documents.

The result of Adam's willful choice to break relationship with God was devastating upon all parties. God's heart was broken by Adam's rejection. God grieved when Adam willfully disobeyed. The product of his own love was casting him aside, counting his friendship worthless.

Adam was now estranged from God. The righteousness he had possessed, because he was made in the image of God and walked with God, had now been lost. He took on a new nature, a dark nature. He was now an unrighteous being. This nature no longer produced a righteous life but a life of sin. A sin nature will always produce sinful behaviour. In turn, sinful behaviour will always produce bad consequences for interpersonal relationships.

### ***The basic need for relationships***

Just as a light bulb was made to produce light by the power of electricity, man was made for relationship in and through the energizing power of God. When Adam sinned it was as if the switch was turned off. Power to live in right relationship therefore ceased at that very moment.

It is not that the desire or need for right relationship was now also extinguished. This is the basic dilemma for sinful man. He is made for relationship, however, his own dark nature forces him to do things which are harmful to relationships. He has an innate need to live in harmony with God and others but, however he tries, he cannot succeed independently of God. Just as it would prove impossible for a light bulb to generate light of itself without the power supplied by electricity, man cannot live in right relationship without being connected to God.

The bottom line in all the worldly pursuits of man – power, possessions and passion – is to fill the need for relationship. To earn the approval of others and thereby win their affection. True love, however, can never and will never be bought by human effort. True love is born out of righteousness and is a gift.

The great message of the Bible is how God implemented a plan by which man could come back into right relationship with him. How man could again be made righteous and thereby enter into right relationship with God. The consequence that flowed from

establishing the *vertical* relationship with God, was the impact upon *horizontal* relationships with others. These too would come into line with God's original plan and purpose. This is why John writes:

“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him....

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.....

“If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

I John 2:9-11, 3:14-16, 4:20-21

## Chapter 4

# THE IDENTITY OF GOD AND THE IDENTITY OF MAN

*Many who say "Our Father" on Sunday spend the rest of the week acting like orphans.*

Anonymous

### The Father Heart of God

Many live with a wrong perspective of the character and nature of God. This prohibits them from desiring and entering into a relationship with God. They won't draw near to God because they are ignorant of him. There are two basic reasons why their understanding of the nature of God is incorrect; first, their image of God is fashioned by their experience of authority figures, especially their own fathers; and secondly, the teaching conveyed by some preachers presents an incomplete picture of what he is truly like.

The primary way that God reveals himself to us in relationship is as a loving Father. Oftentimes, however, the concept of God being a father evokes feelings of anger, resentment and rejection. The way that our earthly father has treated us has created emotional wounds which act as hindrances to our comprehension of the Father heart of God. We are blocked in our relationship with God because of unresolved hurt that is concealed by time but remains a potent force in our lives. Because we have not known a kind, caring



earthly father, we have a distorted view of our heavenly Father's love.

We unwittingly project onto God the same characteristics that our earthly fathers displayed. This results in us demonstrating exactly the same behavioural patterns as those we learned as children with our own fathers. If we were withdrawn from our own father, because he was uncaring and/or abusive, we will tend to be withdrawn from God even though he is kind and compassionate. If our own father was non-communicative we will find it difficult to believe that God wants to speak with us, even though he desperately wants to communicate in a warm and personal way.

Unless we accept as true that God is a loving father, who wants to help us always and never to harm us, then we can never come into a place of intimate relationship with him. We will always distance ourselves from him.

Jesus' own disciples had difficulty comprehending the true nature of God. Near the end of Christ's time upon the earth, after the disciples had walked with him some three years, Philip, one of the younger, quieter, and perhaps thoughtful of the disciples plucks up enough courage to ask Jesus "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."<sup>11</sup>

You can almost hear Philip say this with resigned desperation, having contemplated for some time that this opportunity was eventually going to present itself.

Philip had no doubt carefully prepared himself to withstand the moment. Perhaps uppermost in Philip's mind were the images of God he had heard about in the synagogue as he was growing up. How God was a consuming fire, who appeared on the mountaintop in thunder and lightning, whose name could not be even spoken without being eternally damned. Perhaps Philip's own father had been somewhat of a tyrant who had treated him harshly and

without compassion. For these probable reasons, Philip was scared. But an inner urge drove him to this point. He had to experience God. He had followed after Jesus in order to find God and here was the moment.

How utterly incredulous this request must have appeared to Jesus, and how taken aback Philip must have been with Jesus' reply:

“ ..... "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.... “

John 14:8-10

You can hear the exasperation in the voice of Jesus. Jesus had been revealing the nature and heart of God for the last three years. To observe Jesus was to observe the Father himself. God was not distant, cruel and uncaring. He was ever-present, immeasurably kind and full of compassion – just as Jesus had shown himself to be. Philip missed it because of his wrong understanding about the nature of God. He had to change his thinking. In effect, Jesus told him “Philip, you have to change your perception of the Father. The Father is just like me. You have to believe me when I tell you this. You must change your old and wrong ways of thinking about him. He is not like what you have been led to believe. When you look at me, you are looking at the image of the Father.”

Here are some of the characteristics of God as revealed in Jesus Christ:

Patient	2 Peter 3: 15
Perceptive	Matthew 19: 16-26

Considerate	John 2:1-11, 19:25-27
Compassionate	Matthew 9: 26
Caring	John 21: 16
Tender	John 12:1-8
Gracious	John 4: 22
Forgiving	Matthew 9: 2
Just	John 8: 3-11
Good	Mark 10: 17-18
Holy	John 6: 69
Self-sacrificing	John 15: 13
Steadfast	John 18: 37
Committed	Mark 1: 38
Truthful	John 8: 45
Listening	Matthew 15: 22-28
Kind	Titus 3: 4
Forgiving	Luke 23: 34
Merciful	Mark 5: 19
Sympathetic	Luke 18:15-17
Generous	Matthew 14:13-21, 15:30-38
Strong	Matthew 17:14-21
Wise	Matthew 17:24-27
Mighty	Mark 4:35-41
Loving	1 John 3: 16

A message that can be heard from some pulpits is that God is a vengeful judge, just perhaps as Philip was taught in the synagogue as he was growing up. However, this is only partly true, and totally irrelevant as far as God's children are concerned. If God was only an unrelenting and harsh God of justice, there would be little motivation to draw near to him. It is absolutely vital to understand and accept that God no longer stands as a judge to his own children, in order to experience real intimacy with him.

**God is our Father, not our Judge**

When God first created Adam he revealed himself only as a loving father. There was no need for God to act as judge because there was no sin. And because there was no sin, neither therefore was there death. The theory of evolution, with millions of years of death and suffering before 'Adam', is a falsehood. Adam never experienced anything that was bad because everything God had made was good. Adam never felt pain or suffering, nor did he observe these things in the world around him. No animal attacked another; all of the beasts ate plants.<sup>12</sup> There was neither disease nor death. Pain, suffering and death appeared only after Adam sinned.

So everything Adam first observed and experienced, only confirmed the goodness of God. In particular:

The Bible records that God breathed into Adam and he became a living spirit. The moment Adam became a living being it was as he felt the face of God pressed against his own, filling his lungs with the very breath of God himself. This was an amazing act of intimacy.

As Adam opened his eyes whose gaze did he meet? God's face was inches from his own. What expression was upon the face of God? Sheer delight in the person he had created to be his own.

As Adam walked with God, what did God say to him and how did he say it? God spoke truth to him in gentle tones; God adored the creature he had made in his own image.

What was Adam's experience as to the nature of God? God had placed him in a paradise, given him a beautiful companion, and walked with them both as a father and as a friend.

All of this proved to Adam that God was a loving, kind and generous father.

Although Adam had no experience of God as judge, God made him fully aware of the consequences that would flow from him breaking relationship. Before the fall, Adam could not know the experience of death as judgement, he only had God's word on it.

We do not have the conversations recorded between God and Adam as they walked together in the cool of the day. Nevertheless, it is obvious that God would have fully informed Adam on the choice he had in their relationship. God was not a tyrannical dictator who demanded Adam's complete obedience. God made Adam with a free will, in order to be able to love. Love is a gift which cannot be earned or bought. Adam was free to love God or reject God. The only requirement God stipulated that would prove Adam's desire to remain in relationship, was not to eat the fruit from one particular tree, amongst a menagerie of trees that carried all manner of delicacies.

### **Satan lied about the nature of God**

The subsequent details of Adam's fall shows us how Satan employed a damnable lie to trick Eve, which she in turn used to convince Adam, to break relationship with God. His lie went to the heart of first the nature and character of God, and secondly to their own identity.

"...He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...."

Genesis 3:1-5

In effect Satan was declaring God to be a liar. They wouldn't die as God had led them to believe. Terrible consequences wouldn't eventuate if they ate the fruit. God was withholding from them something which was good. Therefore, the only logical inference they could draw, was that God himself was evil. Satan's portrayal of the nature of God was the complete opposite of who he really was and the complete antithesis of what Adam and Eve had experienced him to be.

### **Satan lied about the nature of man**

As to their own natures, Satan employed another lie. Although they were created in the image of God and therefore were like God, Satan's temptation carried with it the direct inference that they were not like God. God was therefore deceiving them in order to stop them from doing the one thing that would enable them to become like him. At present they were inferior to God. If they opposed him, however, and did what he said not to do, they would become like him.

Adam had a clear choice to either believe Satan or believe God. It is utterly amazing and almost incomprehensible why it appears that he didn't take time to think it through, or to call upon God to answer these accusations. Adam all too quickly bought the lie. Nevertheless, he was fully aware of the consequences of his actions. Irrespective of whether what God said was true or not, he was deliberately choosing to live independently of God. To attempt to become an equal with God was to establish another throne separate from God's rule and thereby a grab to obtain absolute independence.

### **The consequences of Adam's disobedience**

When Adam sinned declaring his relationship with God severed, God was forced to adopt a position which he never wanted to

assume. He now became judge. Whereas Adam had only experienced his love, now God had to mete out hard cold justice upon him.

The intimate relationship they had experienced was now shattered. Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. Pain, sorrow, suffering and death were now their lot.

Moreover, they had sacrificed what Satan deceitfully said they would get. They were originally made in the likeness of God. They couldn't have become more like him and yet that is the ruse Satan used: "your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God....". When they sinned they lost the nature of God and took on the nature of Satan.

It is interesting to note that God is identified with light. Although the Bible does not make this explicitly clear, it is possible that Adam and Eve in their original state shone with the glory of God. In this way they were 'clothed' and therefore felt no shame. When they sinned, however, that glory was lost. It was like the electricity supply to a house suddenly failed and its occupants were plunged into darkness. That is why Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with coats made of leaves: "...they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves".<sup>13</sup>

(Artists have through the centuries conveyed the wrong idea that only certain parts of their anatomies were covered. In fact the original Hebrew implies that they tried to cover themselves completely from neck to toe.)

They no longer shone with the glory of God. Their natures were now darkened and this was reflected in their appearance. They, who were righteous, now had become unrighteous. And righteous God and unrighteous man could not now dwell in intimate relationship.

They were now entirely different beings. God could no longer be the Father he wanted to be.

### **The consequences of the Jesus' obedience**

The central message of the cross is the necessity and means by which unrighteous man could be made righteous again and thereby come back into relationship with God. God's plan was to present himself as a substitute, to allow his punishment to fall upon himself in order to win man back. He who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we who believe might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Accordingly, and one of the most wonderful results of being saved, is that the role of God now changes back to what he was before the fall of man. He is no longer our judge, he is now again our father. That is why Romans 8:1 declares "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" and in verse 15, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."" We are no longer under the judgement of God. God is not our judge, he is our father and he wants us to walk in intimate relationship with him.

### **The source of condemnation**

Why is it then that many believers feel under condemnation? It doesn't come from God. God is not angry with us, nor will he ever be. The Bible says God will "repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes...", and again "The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies".<sup>14</sup> But never does it say God is angry with his children. The Bible does say that we can grieve his Spirit and therefore we should live such lives that we would not cause him sadness.<sup>15</sup> God does discipline us, yet it is never out of anger. Israel incurred the wrath of God because they spurned him and rejected him, just like Adam. But we who are



his children, who are born of God, are precious to him. He will never deal with us in anger; he will never turn from us, nor will he forsake us.

(God was angry with the 'children of Israel' because they had rebellious hearts. They did not love him and were willfully disobedient. The Old Testament 'children of Israel' should not be confused with the New Testament 'children of God' – those who are genuinely born again and desire to walk with God.)

The condemnation believers feel is either from Satan and/or from wrong teaching. Satan is described as the accuser.<sup>16</sup> If he can get you to feel condemned then you will wrongly perceive God to be your judge and will be prohibited from entering into intimate relationship with him. You can only draw near to God with the correct image of him as your father. It is only natural to run from God with the image of him as judge. Adam did it. We all do it. This is why the correct understanding of the nature of God is so important.

### **Condemnation v. conviction**

This is not to confuse conviction with condemnation. When we do sin, the Spirit of God brings conviction. That sense of conviction is important because it guides us in making right choices. Like a little child who learns right from wrong through the discipline of a loving parent, the Holy Spirit guides us at appropriate moments through the sense of conviction.

The difference between condemnation and conviction is that condemnation drives us from God because we feel rejected, whereas conviction drives us to God - like a little child who falls into their parent's arms weeping and saying "Sorry, daddy" after they have been punished, because they sense that they have made their parent sad and hurt their relationship with him. Conviction lets us see and experience God as a loving father whereas condemnation forces us to wrongly see God as an angry judge.

If our earthly fathers wrongly denounced us when they disciplined us they instilled in us a sense of condemnation. They did this when they linked their love to our performance. When they disciplined us, they should have immediately held us in their arms and said “I love you. You have done a naughty thing and that is why I had to smack you. I did it so that you would learn what is right and what is wrong. But I love you and will always love you. I will never stop loving you.” Rather, if they pushed us aside in anger telling us that we were a naughty boy or girl they communicated to us that we were inherently bad and defective.

Inadvertently, they conveyed to us that we stood condemned by our actions, and that their love and acceptance was conditional upon our performance. That is why many believers project upon God his rejection of them because of his perceived performance standards that they fail to meet. However, God is not like this.

### **Obedience is learned**

Obedience is learned through experience. The Bible says that Jesus learned obedience.<sup>17</sup> This is not to say that Jesus failed at any point, because he was without sin. Nevertheless, he is the model upon which we are to pattern ourselves. You can only walk in the light that you have received. Growth is progressive because truth is progressive. Just as a baby grows and becomes an adult over time, so we are transformed into the image of God as we grow up spiritually. Ephesians 4:22-24 explains:

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

This putting off and putting on is a learned process. It is inappropriate for us to place performance standards upon ourselves

which are impossible to meet, and which lead us into Satan's trap. When we make a mistake, we need not sense the rejection of God at all. Rather we should run to him. When you fall down you should be like a little child that reaches up their hand to take hold of their father's outstretched hand, who helps them find their feet again. You should not lie on the floor cringing, waiting for the blow of an angry father's hand. God is not like that. He can only help you, however, if you put your trust in him and reach out to him. The initiative must come from you. That is why it says in James 4:8, "Come near to God and he will come near to you."

God can only help you as much as you will allow him to. You can permit the emotions you feel when the pressures of life bear down upon you, to turn from God or turn to God. If you wrongfully blame him for your circumstances and are angry towards him, you will never experience his love. Your attitude based upon a wrong opinion of God will stop you experiencing real friendship with God that he desperately desires for you.

This is not to say that God will allow us to remain in habitual sin. 1John 3:9-10 says:

"No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God..."

To consciously and deliberately continue a habit of sin without remorse is impossible for the child of God. When God prompts us to deal with an issue we must respond by repenting and believing that power of sin is broken, knowing that he wants our best. (Remorse normally is not the problem. The issue is that we must understand how to overcome sin. The section on 'The Nature of Man' deals with this matter.)

**If God is so good, why do bad things happen to Christians?**

There are four reasons: first, Jesus said that we would be persecuted in this world. People will hate us and they will hurt us. We cannot escape this kind of trouble in this life. The apostle Paul pleaded with the Lord to stop the persecution that dogged him wherever he went. However, God did not take it away from him nor did he take Paul away from it, rather he gave him strength to endure it.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, we live in a fallen and corrupted world. It is a world controlled by Satan who seeks to oppress people. We will experience pain at his hand if we allow him access to our lives. Therefore, we must take a stand against him and his works. We must actively “resist him”.<sup>19</sup> We must exercise faith and overcome him. We can escape from this kind of trouble by fighting against it.

Acts 10:38 says “...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and ...he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil...”. Jesus demonstrated God’s desire for everyone to be healed. It has always been God’s desire and it will always be.

David said “Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits -- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases”.<sup>20</sup> The Bible is full of examples of God’s willingness to heal those who would exercise faith and trust him. There are hundreds of thousands of people in the world this very day who have been healed by God. God is not arbitrary. He does not heal one person, and deny another. Everyone who comes to him in faith – though that faith may have to withstand the test of time – will be healed.

Thirdly, we are free to make choices, both good and bad. Those choices have consequences. The choices we make today are like seeds that are planted, that cause us to reap a harvest in the future. When David deliberately chose to commit adultery and murder, the consequences were devastating. Although he himself was forgiven,

the child who was conceived died, and the sword never left his family.<sup>21</sup> When Ananias and Sapphira deliberately chose to lie and kept back some of the proceeds from the sale of their property, the consequence was that both their lives were cut short.<sup>22</sup>

God has given us a free-will. We cannot blame him for the actions we take and the results that flow from them. We bear the responsibility. If God were to overturn this law of sowing and reaping, then we would be denied the capacity to choose, which would make us mere pawns and robots, and the essence of who God is would no longer be love. (Even in the case of accidents, in which we make innocent as opposed to deliberate choices, there are sometimes hard consequences that we have to bear.)

Fourthly, in this world God brings judgement against the nations when it is necessary. People who love him will still experience hardship as a consequence of being a member of a nation which is under the judgement of God. Lot was forced to flee his home and live in a cave when God judged Sodom and Gomorrah. Joshua and Caleb spent forty years of their lives tramping around the desert when God judged the nation of Israel for its unbelief and disobedience. Nevertheless, in every example of a righteous person being caught in such circumstances we find that God watches over them to sustain and rescue them.

It is true that God is good, and it is also true that life is not always fair. For this reason, every child of God must learn to trust him in every circumstance. God will sustain and empower them, he will prove himself to be their healer and their source of supply. They must also learn to keep their eyes fixed on eternity, knowing that their lives here upon the earth are very very short, and any trouble that they experience here pales into insignificance to the glories they will experience in heaven for all eternity.

In conclusion, it is only by accepting the truth that God is good, that you will want to have a relationship with him. If you harbour any

bitterness towards him, you are being deceived into believing that he is not good. He is not the cause of your pain. If you persist in believing this lie, it will stop you from entering into relationship with him and you will remain a captive to the will of Satan. God is the best friend anyone could have, but he can only prove himself to someone if they will trust him and take him at his word. He will never force himself upon anyone.

## **The Nature of Man**

Intimate relationship can only be experienced with beings of the same kind. Their identities must be identical. A man cannot have an intimate relationship with a budgie. It is just not possible. That is why Eve was created. Adam was a different entity altogether to the species of animals which God had created. Another person after Adam's own likeness was necessary.

But here is the point: in order to experience real relationship with God, a person must be of God's own kind. Not that this is to convey the idea that they must also be God, rather that they only be like God. And this is of course exactly what Adam was like. He was made like God, in God's exact representation. In and only through this state of being could Adam know God.

It is important to note that an intimate relationship does not find its ultimate expression in the physical intimacy between a man and a woman. The act of sex is not necessary to experience intimate relationship, although intimacy is now often thought of only in that context. Love, real love, is not contingent upon physical pleasure. David was able to say of Jonathan that "You were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women".<sup>23</sup> David and Jonathan were covenant friends; theirs was a most intimate relationship. A man and a woman can also experience intimate relationship that has the additional element of sex.

However, a man and a woman can engage in a physical union but not be involved in a real intimate relationship.

Just as it is vital to understand the character and nature of God to enjoy intimacy with him, equally important is it to know your own identity. If you consider yourself inferior - a sinner - that perception will stop you from entering into intimacy with God. Even though you might believe God to be a loving father, if you feel you don't deserve his love you will not allow yourself to receive his love.

### **The power of rejection**

A false concept of who we are is a plague upon the body of Christ. That we remain "sinners saved by God's grace" is contrary to the plain teaching of the scriptures. This spiritual inferiority complex is interwoven with a spirit of rejection. Most Christians unknowingly suffer with rejection. This rejection stems from our experiences with parents, siblings, mentors, peers and partners.

Rejection is endemic in our culture. Satan uses this ploy as powerfully today as he did in the garden. Satan tricked Eve into believing that she was inferior. When a person regards themselves as being inferior it is automatic that they also sense rejection. They are no longer validated as a person. They are incomplete - like a defective product on the assembly line which is rejected and thrown onto the rubbish heap. This is the only internal conclusion that they can embrace. They feel that they are unwanted. And a person who feels they are not valued, cannot connect with another person in a close relationship.

### **The need for love and acceptance**

God created man with the need for acceptance. This is the linchpin in relationships. Without this need, a person could live in isolation without being troubled whatsoever. To accept one another is to embrace one another and thereby make affective genuine

relationship. To remove the linchpin of acceptance is to cause the uncoupling of relationships. This is why rejection is the principal destroyer of relationships.

A spirit of rejection is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If I feel rejected I will behave in a manner which will produce that very result. I will satisfy the requirement that I am inferior and therefore undesirable. Bondages to food, money, sex etc. are the result of trying to cover the feeling of inadequacy. Those very bondages, however, are what drives a wedge between people in relationships. We engage in self-indulgence to dull the pain of rejection but it only proves to exacerbate the problem. We never feel good enough no matter how we try to cover that feeling.

This is what Adam and Eve experienced in the garden, first by deception and then in reality. They were tricked by Satan into thinking they were inferior which prompted them to try to compensate for their deficiency through the only mechanism they were led to believe was available. If they would just eat the fruit God had forbidden, they would become perfect.

After they sinned they lost the status they had enjoyed with God. It was no longer a deception, they now knew that they were inferior, inadequate, shameful and rejected because they had become unrighteous. They tried to cover their pain with feeble attempts, and they hid from God. The linchpin of their acceptance had been removed and relationship was shattered. Nevertheless, God himself covered their shame through the skins of animals foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ and demonstrating his desire for the restoration of relationship.

Therefore, if we as Christians continue to regard ourselves as inferior, we cannot possibly overcome the sense of rejection and its consequences. We will be forbidden to enter into intimacy with God by our own perception of who we are and what we are like.



**Believers are saints not sinners**

You must believe and accept the truth of who you are in Christ. You are a saint, not a sinner. The apostles wrote letters to the “saints”, not to the “sinners”. We are no longer sinners in the hands of an angry God, we are saints in the arms of a loving father. It is this point that is repeated incessantly by the apostles in their instructions to the churches:

Romans 5:17

“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

2 Corinthians 5:17, 21

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!....God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Colossians 2:9-10

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

Ephesians 1:4-5

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—“

2 Peter 1:3-4

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in

the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

1 John 4:17

“In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.”

You are a new creation, an entirely new species of creature! You have undergone a spiritual metamorphosis. You were sin and darkness, now you are the righteousness of God and light. You have been granted fullness in Christ who reflects the fullness of God. You are a participant in the divine nature therefore you are like him.

These Biblical statements can only lead to the emphatic truth, that your identity is founded in reality that you are God’s child, made in his very image. Just as God is holy, so you too are therefore holy.

These are all statements of fact, what already has been accomplished. You cannot become like God, you already are! You can either accept this, or remain in deception and deny it. If you see yourself as inferior, you will always sense rejection. Satan will ensnare you just as he did Adam and Eve. You will always be trying to earn your acceptance from God, but never quite making it. There is no fence sitting on this issue.

### **What about sin?**

Inevitably the question arises, “What about sin? If I am like God, how is it possible that I can still sin?” Paul addresses this issue in his letter to the Romans.

In Chapters 5 and 6 he first explains that we were slaves to sin because by nature we were sinners – this being all past tense. That state of sin has been overturned. We have now been made

righteous. This is a truth to be accepted. You cannot make yourself more righteous than what you already are. You have already been set free from sin. It is an accomplished state. This is why 1 John 3:9 also declares “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”

The fundamental issue is that you are no longer sin. You still have a capacity to sin, however, ‘to sin’ and ‘to be sin’ are two very different states. So why is it then that a Christian who is made righteous can still sin? There are two important points to make in this regard.

First, if you continue to consider yourself to be a sinner, you will never enter into the righteousness of God. You will automatically continue to sin. You will never live the life of righteousness that you know is required of you. You will be forced into a no-win situation which will lead to defeat, frustration, self-hate and despair. You will have two desires operative within you: one to sin, and the other not to sin. You will find yourself in the state of the kind of person Paul goes on to describe in Romans Chapter 7:

“For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

Romans 7:19-24

This describes the situation of a person who knows the Law, and is trying to live by the Law, but is not born-again and therefore

incapable of keeping the Law. Paul is describing what he was like before he became a believer in Jesus Christ; before he was dead to sin and alive to the Spirit – all that he wrote about in Chapters 5 and 6. Paul writes in verse 1 of Chapter 7 “...I am speaking to men who know the law...”. He is showing such men how impossible it is to keep the requirements of the law, without first having died to sin and being made alive in Christ.

This description is not what normal Christian living is about – though some church leaders believe it is and teach that it is so for all believers. (This is a very wrong interpretation of scripture that keeps people in bondage to sin and estranged from God.)

Jesus said he came to give us life and life in abundance, not to bring us to a place of hopelessness, where we constantly feel "distressed, miserable, (and) wretched".<sup>24</sup> Something is very incongruous here.

To stop at the end of Chapter 7 (which too many sermons have done so) leaves a question hanging in the balance - am I to remain in this awful predicament my whole life long? Am I merely to hang onto the grace of God while I suffer in this state of torment? Could death mean my only way of escape, to be finally free from my sinfulness? No, that is not the remedy that the scriptures follow with, and it is predicated by the very last line...“Who will rescue me from this body of death?” Some One has affected my rescue, but it is necessary for me to appropriate his redemption. Chapter 8 outlines the wonderful solution:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”

Romans 8:1-2

What sets me free is the truth of what Jesus has already accomplished. I am free from all condemning charges. My sin is no longer held against me. God is no longer my judge, he is my father.

The law of sin and death is now to be supplanted by a higher law, the law of the Spirit and life. This does not mean that the law of sin and death is no longer operative. Chapter 8 of Romans goes on to explain that I have a choice: either to live according the sinful nature, which I should count as being dead, or to live according to the new spiritual nature. How the latter is accomplished is through an intimate relationship with God. I live according to the higher law of the spirit and life as I am “led by the Spirit”.

### **How to live free from sin**

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

Romans 8:5-9

Many Christians try in their own strength not to sin, while still believing they are a sinner, and that is why they fail. You cannot live a Christian lifestyle without accepting as fact that you have been set free from sin, and then relying upon God in your everyday living. It is only as we live out our lives in intimate relationship with the Spirit of God that we will remain free of the power of controlling sinful practices.

While I look to the Father and imitate him - by his own energising power within me - only then will I live a life which is truly free and pleasing to him. (There is also the important element of resisting

the devil, which is covered in Part II. Nevertheless, first and foremost it is necessary to accept the truth that you are a child of God, that you are free from sin and that you learn to walk in an intimate relationship with the Spirit of God.)

Secondly, it is important to understand that a righteous lifestyle is learned. You learn to be led by the Spirit. You learn to hear his voice and you train yourself to be responsive to him. During this process of learning, mistakes will inevitably occur. Just like a child who falls down while endeavoring to learn to walk, a new Christian will make mistakes. However, they are not bound to make those mistakes for the rest of their lives! Nor does God condemn them for falling down. However, he is grieved when they stay down and don't try to get back up again, because he is standing next to them with an outstretched hand waiting to help them learn to walk, if only they would reach up to him.

We are not to live defeated lives longing desperately to be set free. We are to live victorious lives and prove our salvation by being transformed into God's likeness: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."<sup>25</sup>

The essential key to this transformation process is the renewal of your mind. Your transformation into the likeness of God is a process that is completely dependent upon a change in the pattern of your thinking. Your mind is the control centre of your being. Only as you submit your thinking to God's truth will you undergo change. Because the Spirit is a gentleman, he will not coerce or demand change. It is your choice.

Your free-will remained intact when you received Christ. If you continue to will to sin, then you remain subject to its power and influence. (Fundamentally, our will is driven by our beliefs. If you

remain bound by sin year after year, you are in unbelief. You have not accepted the truth that you have been made righteous and holy, and that it is impossible for you to remain in sin.)

Remember Romans 8: 5: “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” What is imperative now is that you submit your intellect, your emotions and your will to the Spirit. This is a learned process. It is coming into knowledge of the truth through knowing God in all the circumstances of life, and submitting yourself to his will. You commit yourself to follow his leading in every respect, not trusting in your own understanding or judgement.

Jesus himself learned obedience: “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered...”<sup>26</sup> Although Jesus himself was without sin, he provided the example to us that obedience is experiential; it is learned in the context of our everyday lives. Moreover, his obedience was not to a fixed set of independent rules. He lived in an inter-union with his Father and was guided moment by moment by the Spirit.

Only when you truly turn away from the ‘flesh’, i.e. accept that your sin nature is dead, and embrace the Spirit of God, allowing him to fill you and direct all the affairs of your life, will you be revealed as a son/daughter of God, and reflect the very image of the Son of God:

“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

Romans 8:12-14

## Chapter 5

# INTER-UNION WITH GOD

The relationship that Jesus demonstrated with his Father was the example to us of how we should live in relationship with God. Jesus came with the express reason to connect people back to God, so it was important that he show us how we should live in relationship with God. Calvary is the bridge to God but just crossing the bridge is not the end of the story; we have to live and remain on the other side. This is why it is necessary for us to examine the lifestyle of Jesus. Where else could we look to discover how God intended us to live? Jesus is described as ‘the last Adam’ because he was the prototype of the new man in Christ. We find in him what he means to be a person fashioned in the image of God.

It is clearly demonstrated in the Gospels that the focal point for Jesus’ life was the inter-union between he and his Father. In this regard, Jesus made the following two crucial statements which summarise his position with the Father:

“...”I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

John 5:19

“For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I



know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

John 12:49-50

Jesus lived in absolute dependence upon, and absolute obedience to, the Father. He made no conscious or deliberate decision independent from his Father. He submitted himself completely and would not act or speak without the leading of the Spirit. This is how we too should live.

### ***God's design for a real human being - Jesus***

It is difficult for some to accept this because they see the Father and the Son as having a unique relationship which is unattainable for mere mortals. In one sense Jesus is unique – the only begotten Son. However, he demonstrated the way that *every* person was to live in relationship with God. He emptied himself of his divinity when he took on the form of a man. Although being God, he did not live as God upon the earth but as a man.

Jesus is our example of God's design of what a real human being looks like. Because of the fall, sin marred man's image and man became defective. Jesus demonstrates for us what we are supposed to look like – how we are to think, speak and act, only and always out of relationship with God. This is why the scriptures says: "*...This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*"<sup>27</sup>

Jesus is the model, therefore, that we are to look to and copy ourselves upon. Not that we can achieve this alone through human effort. Just as Jesus lived only in absolute dependence upon his Father, we too must do the same.

In Jesus' high priestly prayer he emphasises the importance of oneness, and that exactly the same relationship he had had with his Father would be available to us:

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, **Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us** so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.** May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and **have loved them even as you have loved me.**"

John 17:20-23

Jesus knew that complete unity with God was everything, and that this was only and ever God's intention for us. If we would come to that place of inter-union with God it would be inevitable that the world would be impacted. Just as Jesus had been revealed as the Son, we would be revealed as sons of God reflecting his person and demonstrating his power. Nothing would be withheld from us because just as the Father had loved the Son, so we too would be loved in exactly the same measure.

### ***Oneness with God, the ultimate prize***

Oneness with God is the greatest and only pursuit of man. Every other objective is meaningless, empty and dry. Solomon perhaps more than any other man, gave himself to every worldly pursuit a man could desire – knowledge, power, wealth and women (his wives and concubines numbered 1,000!). He discovered that every worldly ambition was meaningless, utterly meaningless except one:

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man."

Ecclesiastes 12:13

While oneness with God is the highest pursuit it also comes with the greatest price - death to self. To walk in oneness with God is to submit your will absolutely and totally to him. To bring every thought, every word and every act into submission to him. This is why Jesus said:

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”

Matthew 16:25

True relationship with God means the denial of self and the fusing of our will with his. We lose our personal identity, and become identified with him. This is a pivotal message of the Bible, and to best understand its importance and its outworking, it is necessary to know the meaning and significance of a blood covenant.

## **Blood Covenant**

The Bible is structured around two *Blood Covenants*:

The Old Testament records the '*Old Blood Covenant*' God cut with a man called Abram and the subsequent dealings of God with Abram's descendants i.e. the nation of Israel.

The New Testament records the '*New Blood Covenant*' that God cut with mankind through his Son Jesus Christ and its outworking through God's (new) covenant people i.e. the church.

The word '*testament*' is an old English word which means '*covenant*'. If you look up the cover sheets of the Old and New Testaments of a 19<sup>th</sup> century King James Bible you will read the words "The Book of the Old Blood Covenant" and "The Book of the New Blood Covenant".

It is surprising to many to discover that the Bible is written around a concept they have little or no knowledge about. Perhaps this is an important reason too why many Christians struggle in their relationship with God. They don't have a right foundation of understanding; they don't know the make-up of the relationship they are supposed to experience with God.

Although nations in the West have generally lost the knowledge of a blood covenant, there are certain blood covenant symbols that remain in our culture. Some examples include:

- when two persons become 'blood brothers' by cutting their palms and bringing them together,
- the raising of the right hand to swear an oath in court,
- the exchange of rings in marriage, and
- a wife assuming the surname of her husband.

The Bible itself does not explicitly explain the details of a blood covenant – why it is made, how it is made and its binding consequences - because it takes for granted that the reader would be familiar with its features. All cultures the world over have vestiges of blood covenant practices. For this reason, it is believed that God himself taught the concept to man prior to the Tower of Babel and in all likelihood in the time of Adam and Eve. Certainly, Abraham who lived just some 400 years after the flood understood it fully.

In essence, a blood covenant is the uniting of two persons to become a single entity. When two people cut covenant they each 'die' individually, and their lives become fused into one: like two rivers that flow together to become one, whose waters become indistinguishable and inseparable. It is the total surrender of oneself to another, whereby each individual willingly loses personal identity.

***A modern day example***

A good example of the practice of a blood covenant is found in the journey of Captain Stanley who was sent on a mission by the New York Herald in 1869 to locate Dr. David Livingstone. Livingstone was a famous English missionary who was the first white person to trek into some of the remotest parts of central Africa. He had not been heard from in some years so Stanley was commissioned by the newspaper to find him. Eventually, Stanley was successful and upon meeting up with Livingstone he said these now famous words “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”

On his journey Stanley cut no less than 50 blood covenants with the native Africans. Here is an account of one covenant he cut early in his adventure when he happened upon a large tribe.

The chief of the tribe sought to cut covenant with Stanley because this guaranteed that the two parties would not fight one another and remain at peace. Their custom of cutting covenant was to first exchange gifts. The chief wanted Stanley’s goat. Stanley was most reluctant because he suffered from a stomach complaint and the goat’s milk eased the pain. However, the chief was adamant and Stanley could not dissuade him. In return Stanley received, what appeared to him, to be a crude spear with a copper winding. Stanley thought he had been cheated. Then they each presented a substitute person – a member of their company - whose flesh was cut to establish covenant.

Subsequently, much to Stanley’s surprise and delight, as he travelled throughout that region and the spear was displayed, the natives would respond to them most politely, providing them with safe passage and provisions. The reason, Stanley discovered, was that the chief he had cut covenant with was very powerful and the lesser tribes recognized Stanley’s association with him when they saw the spear. The spear was a symbol of the chief and his tribe, much like the flag of a modern state. They knew that to be hostile

to Stanley would bring the wrath of the great chief upon them, who would come to fight on Stanley's behalf because of their covenant.

Blood covenants to this day are practiced throughout parts of Africa. The worst of rogues will abide by its principles because to break covenant means certain death.

### ***A typical Hebrew covenant***

The following is an account of how two people in Old Testament times would have typically cut a blood covenant together. There is no one Bible passage that contains every element in sequential order. However, each is represented in the scriptures.

Two individuals would announce to their family and friends that they were going to enter into covenant. They called them all to witness their commitment by attending a solemn ceremony in which they would cut covenant.

The first act of the proceedings undertaken by the two persons, was to exchange their coats. The giving of one's coat represented the giving of one's own life to the other. As one put on the coat of the other, he was putting on the life of the other. They also exchanged their belts and weaponry - which comprised their sword and dagger. From that moment on they were committed to the defense of each other. If one were to be attacked by an enemy, the other would come and fight, even to the point of death.

Next, an animal (usually a bull) was prepared in a very unusual fashion: it was literally split in two, from nose to tail along the backbone and the halves were separated several feet apart. The two men would stand in the midst of the carcass back to back and then proceed to walk a figure 8 to return facing each other. The significance of this act was that in walking in the midst of death, and through death, they had 'died' as individuals.

They now cut their right palms or wrists and brought them together, lifting them up and usually binding them together with a leather cord. Thus their blood was intermingled as it flowed down their united arms. Blood represented life, and by this act their lives 'flowed' together to become one: the giving of blood was the giving of life, the receiving of blood was the receiving of life. While joined together each swore allegiance to the other and pronounced a curse, pointing to the animal and saying "If I break this covenant may God do to this to me and more".

The scar that remained represented the '*seal*' of the covenant.

While standing together, the 'terms of the covenant' were read out (often by an attending priest). Prior to the ceremony they had each declared their personal assets and abilities, and the items recorded in these inventories were hereafter available to the other person if ever they had need of them.

Next, they shared a meal together and each, in turn, gave bread and wine to the other. Once again this represented the giving and surrender of one's total self to the other. The bread and the wine were symbols of a person's very being, their own body and blood.

Finally, a memorial was erected - e.g. a head of stones, the planting of a tree - which served as a reminder of the cutting of covenant.

The two persons were now known as '*friends*', and each compounded their own personal name with the name of the other person.

Note: 1. It was also common for a *substitute* to be used when covenant was cut, i.e. a nominated representative could stand in the place of one who was entering into covenant relationship. This is in fact what occurred in both the Old and New Covenants that God cut with man.

2. Descendants were also included in the covenant, if they chose to abide by its principles.

## **The Old Blood Covenant**

God cut covenant some 4,000 years ago with a man called Abram. God's intention was that through this covenant, all the peoples of the earth would come to a knowledge of him and enter into covenant relationship with him. God wanted to produce a 'kingdom of priests' from the descendants of Abram (the nation of Israel) who would minister to all the nations of the world and establish God's rule and reign.<sup>28</sup> However, Israel broke covenant with God. They rejected him and spurned the destiny he had planned for them. Eventually, God overturned the 'Old' Covenant by establishing a 'New' - and better - Covenant through his Son, Jesus Christ.

### **The Old Covenant cut**

Genesis 15: 1-18

- 1 ... the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."
- 2 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"
- 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."
- 4 Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."
- 5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."
- 6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.



7 He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

8 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I shall gain possession of it?"

9 So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated four hundred years.

14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out with great possessions.

15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age.

16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking brazier with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram ...

In v1 God offers to Abram to be his shield (promising God's own protection!) and very great reward (promising God's wealth!). In making these statements, Abraham immediately understood that God was initiating a covenant. Incredibly though it seemed to Abram, the God of the universe was asking Abram if he would enter into covenant.

At first, Abram was reticent. In that day, the most important thing in life was a son. Abram had no son, therefore, as far as he was concerned, there was no point of entering into covenant with God. All the benefit he might derive would be lost upon his death, because there was no heir to receive its heritage.

God assures Abram that he will have a son (v4-5), removing the obstacle in Abram's mind. In v6, Abram agrees to enter into covenant – *“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”* The Hebrew word translated *“believed”* literally means ‘a confident and unqualified committal of oneself to another’. Abram committed himself to God as a covenant partner, and God declared him to be righteous. Abram willingly united himself with the Lord, and he was made righteous in order for that relationship to be consummated.

Therefore, the fundamental belief that righteousness is obtained through faith is founded upon blood covenant principles. Faith for salvation must be expressed through a desire to enter into an intimate relationship with God. 2Chronicles 16: 9 tells us that God is constantly looking for persons like Abram who are willing to commit themselves to him: *“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”*

The covenant which Abram has agreed to is now cut (v9-10, 17). God asks Abram to take particular birds and animals, cut them in two and arrange the halves opposite one another. In a vision Abraham then observes two persons represented by a “smoking firepot” and a “blazing torch”, pass between the pieces. These persons executed the covenant by completing the covenant walk. They were God the Father and, a substitute provided by God for Abram, God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

God later confirmed the covenant with Abram in Genesis 17: 1-14. At this time, the compounding of the two parties names occurred and God declared what the seal of the covenant would be. Abram's

name was changed to *Abraham* and Sarai's name was changed to *Sarah*, thus their names were compounded with God's name (*Yahweh*). Hereafter, God's own name would be mixed with a man's name as he became known as the '*the God of Abraham*'. Furthermore, the seal (or sign) of the covenant was to be male circumcision, which indicated God's desire for the descendants of Abraham to be a covenant people.

The terms of the covenant contained the following elements:

God's obligations:

Make Abraham a great nation	12: 2
Bless him	12: 2
Make his name great	12: 2
Bless those that blessed him	12:3
Curse those that cursed him	12: 3
All peoples on earth blessed through him	12: 3
Be his shield	15: 1
Be his great reward	15: 1
Give him a son	15: 4
Make him the father of many nations	17: 4
Kings would be amongst his descendants	17:6
To be his God, and his descendants' God	17: 7
To give him the whole land of Canaan	17: 8

Abraham's obligation:

To walk before God and be blameless	17: 1
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### ***The covenant tested***

The only requirement of Abraham was that he walk in intimate relationship with God and remain true to their covenant, which he did. When God asked him to sacrifice his own son, Abraham did not hesitate but set out immediately to complete the task God asked of him. According to covenant, Abraham had relinquished all personal

rights to himself or to his possessions. His greatest 'possession' was his own son. Abraham was therefore required by covenant even to give up his own son.

To the Hebrew way of thinking, a son's life was in fact worth more than his father's. This was to ensure the continuation of the family line. Abraham could have reasoned away the request of God. He could have denied the request even to the point of offering himself in place of Isaac, however, all this would mean he would be breaking covenant, which he was sworn never to do.

Abraham passed the test. He offered his son, convinced that God would raise him to life again. This episode prefigured what God himself would do. He would subsequently sacrifice his own Son upon the cross of Calvary. God was obligated to provide his only Son for Abraham, and all those who would desire to enter into relationship with him, in order to satisfy the requirements of eternal justice.

Every person since Adam was born in sin and incapable of becoming righteous. It was impossible for sinful man to enter into relationship with a Holy God. Man had to once again become like God in order for relationship to be established. Jesus' sacrifice was absolutely necessary in order to provide the 'new birth' for man, and God was obligated to provide his Son.

The outworking of the Old Blood Covenant is contained in the rest of the Old Testament. The way in which God dealt with the descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel, was according to the covenant he had cut with Abraham. In particular note:

- The call of Moses<sup>29</sup>
- The escape from Egypt and the journey through the wilderness<sup>30</sup>
- The command to Joshua<sup>31</sup>
- David's defeat of Goliath<sup>32</sup>
- The Law, sacrifices, blessings and cursings<sup>33</sup>

- Israel's rejection of God, the breaking of Covenant and its consequences<sup>34</sup>

The Old Blood Covenant, however, was incomplete. God used it to point to the need for the sacrifice of his Son and the new birth. Under the Old Covenant, certain persons experienced God coming *upon* them – prophets, kings and priests - but never dwelling *within* them. God wanted to connect with man not just externally but internally, Spirit to spirit. That is why Jesus said of John the Baptist:

*"I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."*

Matthew 11:11

John died before the cross. He never experienced the new birth. He was the last of the Old Covenant prophets. He experienced the Spirit of God coming upon him – he was anointed with the Spirit while in his mother's womb! – however, he never experienced God coming into him. Jesus referred to New Covenant persons when he said "the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he". Persons who entered into the New Covenant would experience inter-union with God. They would be "temples of the Holy Spirit" themselves.<sup>35</sup> That is why even the least would be greater than John.

## **The New Blood Covenant**

The New Covenant superseded and set aside the Old Covenant. The New Covenant was cut, not in the blood of an animal, but in Jesus' own blood. Jesus was again, as he was in the Old Covenant, the substitute for man in establishing a blood covenant between God and man. Through his sacrifice the way was made open for us to receive *eternal life*, which is inter-union or oneness with God.

Jesus defined eternal life in John 17: 3: *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

The Greek word translated “know” – *“ginosko”* - does not mean merely to ‘know about’, by hearing or reading about God. Rather it means to know through actively experiencing God. Vines Expository Dictionary says “In the NT *ginosko* frequently indicates a relation between the person “knowing” and the object known; in this respect, what is “known” is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship...”

The New Covenant was built upon better promises than the Old Covenant. What the Old Covenant was not able to accomplish - freedom from the sin nature - the New Covenant achieved through the sacrifice of God’s only begotten Son.

Jeremiah prophesied concerning the New Covenant:

31 “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

33 “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The writer of the book of Hebrews confirmed that this 'new' covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, was fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 8).

### **The Terms of the Covenant**

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (and Hebrews 8: 6-13) records the astonishing terms of the covenant. Each element is focused upon inter-union with God. God wants it to be plainly understood that an intimate relationship with him is his ultimate objective.

*"I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts"* v33 - This statement prefigures the new birth. Through this birth we are made new creatures. Our 'heart of sin' is replaced with a 'heart of righteousness'. Christ now dwells *in* us and through him we are set free from sin and enabled to live holy lives.

*"I will be their God, and they will be my people."* v34 - God wants you to live in the reality of his kingdom here and now, experiencing a life of abundance as he makes his love, his power and his wisdom available to you.

*"No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."* v34 - No longer will there be intermediaries between God and people. There would not be distinct priests who speak *to* God on behalf of the people and prophets who speak *for* God. *All* would be priests and *all* would be enabled to prophecy.<sup>36</sup>

No longer would people be held back from intimacy with God, as portrayed under the Old Testament by the curtain which separated and hid the Holy of Holies. (No-one could enter the Holy of Holies where the *shekinah* presence of God resided, except for the High Priest who once a year entered to make atonement for the nation.) This 150mm thick curtain was torn from top to bottom the very

moment that Jesus died; signifying the end of separation and the way now open for man to enter into inter-union with God.

God wants to reveal himself to you personally. God desires an intimate relationship with you – no-one is exempt, ‘the least to the greatest’ encompasses everyone.

*For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. v12* - Your sins which once stood as a barrier between you and God are blotted out. There is no longer any impediment, therefore, holding you back from entering into, and remaining in, covenant relationship with God.

Your responsibilities within the covenant are carefully explained in certain passages of the New Testament (see Romans 6: 6-7, Galatians 2: 20, Mark 8: 34-38). It principally includes death to sin, self and independence, and to live a life of purity and holiness, out of a love relationship with God. You relinquish all personal rights, and lay down your own personal agenda. Your life is no longer your own. You live for God, and consent to his will and purposes. He becomes the most important object of your desire and affections. You choose to love him with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind and all of your strength. You walk in humble and reverential obedience to God, glorifying him in your body, as you are led by his Spirit. This is what it means to be an authentic son/daughter of God.



*Have you truly entered into covenant relationship with God? You may have received Jesus and decided to follow him, just like his disciples – Peter, James, John and the others - but you may never have given yourself totally and unreservedly to him. The disciples themselves only discovered what this meant after his death. They walked with him personally for three years never fully committing themselves in covenant relationship. Why not make this commitment, as they too finally entered into, right now. Pray:*

*“Father, I acknowledge that you are the God of the universe, the Creator and Sustainer of all life. I accept that you have created me for your pleasure, and that I should live in inter-union with you. Jesus Christ, you provided the way by which I might come into covenant relationship through your blood. I now willingly choose and give myself to you completely and unreservedly. I lay down my life in order to become one with you. From this moment on, Holy Spirit be my constant companion and guide. I pledge my obedience. Teach me your ways. May the kingdom of God now come upon me, and may the will of God be done in my life here and now, as it is in heaven. Amen.”*

## Chapter 6

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOW JESUS DIED

On the night Jesus was betrayed, during the Passover meal that he shared with his disciples, he took bread, broke it, and gave it to them saying "This is my body given for you...".<sup>37</sup> After they had eaten the Passover meal, he took the cup of wine that was placed for the coming of Messiah, saying, "This cup is the *new* covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you".<sup>38</sup> Jesus was hereby initiating the new covenant that Jeremiah had prophesied about. The bread and the wine were both symbols of blood covenant. Shortly, Jesus would give his own life in order to cut the new covenant.

The blood of a mere animal was insufficient to complete the transaction. Jesus had to pour out his very own blood and die. However, he had to experience not only physical death but also spiritual death as a man. He had to be disconnected from the Father and experience spiritual separation, just as Adam had become disconnected from God. This is in fact what occurred while he hung on the cross. The scriptures tell us "he became sin", in other words, he allowed himself to become like Adam after the fall. He was forcibly disconnected from his Father. The sky became dark while Jesus hung on the cross, signifying that God had hidden his face from his own Son. The Father cursed his own Son for us. It was this rejection by his own Father which ultimately killed Jesus.

Jesus did not want to go to the cross because he knew what it meant. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he cried out to his Father and asked that if it were possible another way could be found. Such was his anguish that “his sweat was like drops of blood”.<sup>39</sup> This unusual physical phenomenon – called *haematidrosis* - occurs when men suffer under extreme forms of torture. Blood cells are exuded onto the surface of the skin and, mixed with perspiration, appear as drops of blood. Jesus almost died in the garden at the thought of being separated from his Father.

Many men have faced the thought of the reality of a very painful death. Jesus’ reaction was unusual. Why? Something more was at stake, and Jesus suffered incredible anguish at the thought of it. So much so, that an angel had to be sent in order to strengthen and sustain him at that moment. Otherwise he would have died then and there in the garden of Gethsemane.<sup>40</sup>

The physical pain great though it would be, was nothing compared to the spiritual pain of being disconnected from his Father. Life was not worth living without God. Jesus had lived every moment with and for his Father. To experience rejection and disconnection was unimaginable. His Father was his life. To lose the love of his Father, was to lose absolutely everything.

Jesus had a choice – either to obey or disobey. The victory was won because of his absolute submission to his Father. He was determined: “...not my will, but yours be done”.<sup>41</sup>

As he hung on the cross, moments before he died, he cried ““My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?””.<sup>42</sup> Jesus was not asking this question for himself, expecting a response from heaven. He knew why. It was the very reason for which he had come. Rather it was, in part, a rhetorical question.<sup>43</sup> It was to get us to think. Here he was, the Son, forsaken by the Father. Why was this so?

Jesus died after hanging upon the cross for six hours. A man could last for as long as three days. It was unusual that he died so quickly even though he was in a weakened state because of his scourging. A man died upon a cross by eventually having insufficient strength to draw breath. A man's death could be hastened by breaking his legs. This is what was done to the two thieves crucified either side of Jesus. But when they came to Jesus they found him already dead. To be absolutely certain, a soldier thrust his spear into the side of Jesus. A Roman soldier was an artisan of death. Since the body of Jesus was in an elevated position, he would have aimed the blade to pass through the soft tissue in the lower torso, under the rib cage to strike the very heart of Jesus. John records that at this very moment there was a gush of blood and water. Medical science tells us that when a person dies of a broken heart, the blood and water in the heart's chambers separate. The soldier's spear, therefore, had pierced the very heart of Jesus, revealing to us the ultimate cause of Jesus' death.

Here is the significance: Jesus died because of the pain of being disconnected from his Father. The rejection he felt was too great to bear. His love was lost. He was spurned by his own Father. Their relationship was annulled at the cross. He felt what Adam felt when he sinned. Unlike Adam though, Jesus did not reject his Father, his Father rejected him: "Why have *you* forsaken *me*?" Even though Jesus knew that his relationship with the Father would be restored after three days, one second estranged from the Father was unthinkable to Jesus. Yet, he was indeed living out the unimaginable while hanging on the cross. He was completely crushed in spirit and so he died of a broken heart.

While Jesus was hanging upon the cross, it became very dark. This signified that God the Father who is light was hidden from the Son. Just as Adam had lost the glory of God when he sinned, so Jesus experienced that very same loss while hanging on the cross.

Jesus went through it not only out of obedience to his Father but also love for us. I John 3:16 says “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us...” His sacrifice meant the way would be open for us to be able to enter into inter-union with God. His incredible loss is our incredible gain. Don’t let anything stand in the way of receiving all that Jesus suffered for, otherwise his suffering was for naught.

God desperately wants to have an intimate relationship with you – it cost him the greatest sacrifice. He was willing to pay the highest price for you. However, God will never force himself upon you. You must willingly desire him above everything else. Few Christians truly enter into friendship with God because they hold misconceptions about God and themselves, and allow worldly desires to dominate their lives. They remain in unbelief though they think of themselves as believers. God is grieved about this state of affairs. He desires sons and daughters who would love him with all their hearts; who would pursue true intimacy with him; who would walk in covenant with him, willingly being led by the Spirit, only speaking and acting out of relationship with him; and, who would reveal his character, wisdom and power in the world, bringing his kingdom to the earth, as Jesus had done.

## Chapter 7

# COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

It is stating the obvious that a relationship is only made effective via two-way communication. In order to connect with another person, it is necessary to communicate with them. It is not just about telling one another, but hearing one another. We truly connect with another person when we understand them. In other words, a process must be established which produces the sharing of knowledge. The more intimate the knowledge, the more intimate the relationship.

An intimate relationship with God requires, therefore, that you be able to clearly hear the voice of God and trust that he hears you. Conversation with God is imperative. Your heart and mind must meet with the heart and mind of God.

Many Christians fail to hear the voice of God because they do not actively seek him. This stems from a root of unbelief or because there are remaining strongholds of sin. God made you expressly for relationship with him. He sent his own son to suffer and die to annul the estrangement that occurred in the Garden. You must accept by faith that God wants relationship with you. And you must not let any impediment of sin stand in the way.

Some erroneously think that God doesn't want to talk with them because they have never heard him speak to them. God has paid an enormous price to affect a relationship and open the lines of communication. However, God is a gentleman; he will never impose himself upon you, nor will he violate you will. In addition, he only responds to your faith. Therefore, if we don't want to hear or expect to hear, he won't speak to us. He requires that we take the initiative in communicating with him, as the following scriptures declare

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Jeremiah 33:3

“Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

James 4:8

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Hebrews 11:6

When we come to God to connect and converse with him, we must exercise faith. We must accept, first, his willingness and desire to spend time with us and, secondly, his eagerness to reveal himself to us and give us everything that is good; especially friendship, comfort, encouragement, wisdom and direction. We must believe that he will indeed reward us, as we seek him with fervor and set him apart as the object of our desire.

The Bible warns repeatedly about choosing not to listen:

“To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it.”

Jeremiah 6:10

"Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people."

Ezekiel 12:2

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

Acts 7:51

Therefore, we must make a deliberate choice to listen to God, and this decision is contingent upon our willingness to obey God. In other words, it is only a humble and contrite spirit that possesses ears that are open. A person who has not laid down their own agendas, who is still operating out of pride, cannot hear his voice.

God wants us to know his will, which is to know his heart - what motivates him. To know what pleases him and what grieves him. A mature Christian is someone who cries when God cries and laughs when God laughs. It is only as we really know him that we become like him.

In Ephesians 1:17, the apostle Paul commences the prayer which effectively defines the true church in this way: "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." This is the first and most important step – to be able to intimately know him. Not just read about him or hear about him, but experience and encounter him personally.

### ***Methods by which God communicates with us***

Communication can of course be verbal and non-verbal. There are a variety of ways that God can and does communicate with us. These include:



- The Bible
- Creation
- Circumstances
- Other people (prophecy)
- Dreams and visions
- Audible voice
- Silence (use wisdom or obey command already given)
- Gifts of the Spirit
- Spiritual desire
- Speaks to us in our 'inner' person

The last method is vital to understand if a believer wants to learn to be led by the Spirit. A believer who genuinely has a heart for God wants desperately to hear him speak to them directly and personally. How you 'hear' God in this way, is in your inner person. God is Spirit, and he normally communicates to you through your spirit. He impresses his words, his thoughts and his ideas directly in your spirit.

It is not an audible driving voice, but a gentle authoritative 'knowing'. It is not a process of logic but of divine inspiration. This is revelation knowledge. It is not knowledge that you receive from your five senses. It is God's Spirit communicating to your own spirit. You don't hear the audible voice of God with your physical ears, rather you 'hear' the spiritual voice of God with your spirit. And just as information that you receive from your five senses is received and processed by your mind, information from the Holy Spirit that is impressed upon your spirit is also received and processed by your mind. This is how you are led by the Spirit as God communicates Spirit to spirit.

In order to discern the voice of God our own spirit must be submitted to the Spirit of God. Our own self must not be on the throne of our lives. Within ourselves, we must consciously and deliberately place God as the focus of our being. If we have a

personal strong desire about a matter, we can be in danger of mishearing God. We have to lay that aside. We cannot let our own mind, will and emotions dictate our lives independent of God.

The voice of God's Spirit is a spiritual voice, therefore, it sounds like the voice of your own spirit. This is why, to begin with, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish his voice. For example, you don't recognize the voice of a stranger, but you instantly recognize the voice of your own mother and father, or very close friend. This is also true of the Holy Spirit. As you spend time with him, talking with and listening to him, you will learn to distinguish his voice. (Note: Satan's temptations come as a spiritual communication in the same way. He and his demons are fallen angels and they dwell in the spirit realm. He is to be resisted and his words rejected (see Part 2).)

To start off, set aside a specific time to spend time talking with God. It is helpful to escape distractions by going to a place where you can be on your own and not be disturbed. (Jesus did just this. He would regularly get away from others to spend time in prayer alone with his Father.<sup>44</sup>)

You may also find it helpful to begin by asking the Holy Spirit some question(s). Expect by faith that he will answer you and trust that what he says to you has come from him. Of course, the Holy Spirit will never tell you something that is inconsistent with the Bible. Often-time he will use verses from the Bible when he communicates with you.

Some people also find it very helpful to journal, writing down their conversations with God. This enables them to stay focused and also to value and heed what God has said to them. As your relationship with the Holy Spirit develops and deepens you will naturally converse with him at moments throughout your normal day's activities, as well as at these special meetings.

The greatest adventure in the world is the Spirit-led life. The incomparable destiny that God desires for you his child is bound up in your willingness to desire him and pursue a relationship with him above everything else:

“This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: *that he understands and knows me...*”

Jeremiah 9:23-24

May this be your boast!

## Chapter 8

# WATER BAPTISM

Water baptism is a powerful spiritual experience, when it is properly understood and acted upon by faith. God has given this practice to help new Christians accept the truth of their salvation and to launch them into a life of righteousness and holiness.

The purpose of water baptism is not well understood because of church traditions which have emptied it of its importance and significance. Water baptism is not merely the seal of entering into church membership. Romans 6: 4 expresses the meaning of water baptism succinctly: *“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*

Water baptism was already being practiced amongst the Jews before John the Baptist appeared preaching a baptism of repentance. The Jews had adopted a custom known as a *‘proselyte’s baptism’*. A non-Jewish person (called a *‘Gentile’*), who wanted to become a Jew, went through a solemn ritual. They stood in a river, lake or sea, with water up to their neck while the Book of the Law (which was part of the Old Testament) was read aloud. Then they were plunged under the water, signifying that they were dying to their previous way of life and religion. When they came up out of the water they were rising to a new life, taking on the practices of Judaism, and so becoming a *‘Jew’*.

In the early church, water baptism was understood as the moment of radical change when a new convert died to their previous life and began an entirely new and different existence. Often-time a person adopted a new name when they were baptised, representing that incredible transformation. They were no longer the 'old' person. That person was dead – they no longer existed. An entirely new person now stood in their place.

The early church also helped new converts comprehend the break and separation from the power of Satan at baptism. It is understood that they would face the person being baptised to the west as they stood in the water, signifying that as the sun sets and ends a day, so their old life and Satan's dominion over them was ending. They would have the person say out loud "I renounce you Satan and all your works and ways" and then baptise them facing the east; and so dying to their old life and rising to a new life just as a new day dawns.

New converts were helped to understand that their old life was unrighteousness and sinful, and that they were under the power of Satan. But through faith in Christ and accepting the truth of the salvation he offers, as they were baptised they would undergo a complete change, leaving their old way of life and taking on an entirely new nature, new existence and new destiny.

### ***An identity with Christ.***

When you are baptized, you are identifying that you are united with Christ's own death and resurrection. Your old sinful nature is crucified with Christ and is made powerless. And you rise, like Christ, to a new life. You are no longer a slave to sin but are now free to live a holy and righteous life. Therefore, you die to your previous way of life and enter a brand new life of freedom, power and victory.

You are now free from the dominion of sin and death. You are no longer in rebellion to God and a slave to sin. You are now in relationship with God and have the nature, and therefore the power to choose, not to sin. You were a prisoner of sin but now you are a free person - you are liberated to live life as a conquering child of God: Romans 6:3-7 says *“all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death ... we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--because anyone who has died has been freed from sin”*.

When Satan comes to tempt you, you can confidently say *“I am not that person any longer! The old (insert your name) is dead. The new (insert your name) now lives, through the power of Jesus Christ!”*

Whereas *sin* bore the fruit of pain, sorrow, torment and lack, now *righteousness* will bring you love, joy and peace. You have now entered abundant life, and all the promises of God are now available to you.

Before you were a Christian you lived in the 'kingdom of darkness' where Satan ruled. Now that you have become a Christian you have entered the 'kingdom of heaven' where Christ rules. Law and life in these two kingdoms are as different as darkness is from light:

<i>You have been transferred from</i>		<i>to</i>
<b>The Kingdom of Darkness</b>	➔	<b>The Kingdom of Heaven<sup>45</sup></b>
<i>From the Rule of Satan</i>	➔	<i>To the Rule of God</i>
<i>From Separation from God</i>	➔	<i>To Relationship with God</i>
<i>From Sin</i>	➔	<i>To Obedience</i>
<i>From Sickness</i>	➔	<i>To Health - physical, mental and spiritual</i>
<i>From Torment, Stress and Striving</i>	➔	<i>To Peace</i>
<i>From Fear</i>	➔	<i>To Faith</i>
<i>From Anger</i>	➔	<i>To Love</i>

(Note: The act of water baptism alone does not make you a Christian. You can go under the water a dry sinner and come up a wet sinner! Salvation is by faith alone. You cannot buy it or earn it. You accept what Jesus has already done, and receive salvation as a free gift. Your baptism is an outward - *physical* - expression of an inward - *spiritual* - happening. Nevertheless, your baptism is to be a very empowering moment when you choose to release faith. As you are immersed, believe that the power of God is now going to give you an ability to overcome sin, so that, when you emerge, wrongful habits or bondages will be broken.)

If you have already been baptised but without full understanding, you could release faith right now to accept what took place at that occasion and begin to walk in liberty and holiness from this very moment on. Why not stop reading now and pray, accepting what Christ accomplished for you and expressing faith that indeed you are a new creature, that the old has passed away, that you are free to live a holy and righteous life, and that you have been set free from sin and Satan's controlling influences.)

### **The fruit of the Spirit**

The result of a genuine conversion experience which encompasses the richness of water baptism will be demonstrated in your life by a radically altered lifestyle. (False conversions are a plague upon the church. People are 'receiving Jesus into their hearts' without genuine repentance and faith. They continue to live like everyone else in the world, and it is impossible to distinguish their lifestyle from that of unbelievers about them.)

As a creature born in sin, your sin nature was evident by the fruit which it bore. Galatians 5:19-25 records the acts of the sinful nature and contrasts these with the fruit of the Spirit:

*"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*

Trees produce the fruit conscripted in their DNA. If you are truly born of the Spirit you will carry the DNA, so to speak, of God himself. It will be impossible for you, therefore, to continue to sin. 1 John 3:9 says emphatically *"No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God."* You must instead reflect the character and nature of God as revealed by the 'fruit of the Spirit' - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.



*Examine yourself and be ruthlessly honest. If you cannot say that these qualities are evident in the measure that they should be, you must*

*(1) genuinely repent and believe that God has saved you from sin and that you do belong to Christ Jesus*

*(2) believe that the Holy Spirit resides within you, and that he empowers you to live a life free from sin*

*(3) willingly choose to die to self and pride, and promise instead to listen to Holy Spirit, obeying him and keeping 'in step' with him*

*These elements are equivalent to the experience known as 'the second blessing' that was taught by the Holiness Movement in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, led by such men as John Wesley and William Booth. It is a moment when you release faith, and believe that you have been made righteous and holy, and indeed have been set free from the power of sin rather than just having been forgiven for your past sins.*

*Pray: "Father, may your kingdom come upon me now, may your will be done in my life as it is in heaven now, and from this day forward. Jesus Christ, I proclaim that you are the sole authority over my life. I submit my entire being – spirit, soul and body – to you. I renounce Satan and all of his works and ways. Sin shall no longer be my master, for I have been born of God. I am his child forevermore, and his Spirit and power resides within me."*

## PART 2

# *The Ring*

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith ....”

1Peter 5: 8-9

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7

The ring represents the second stage of Christian growth. It symbolizes the authority that every believer has in Christ. This is a derived authority. It is something which, like righteousness, is not earned or achieved through personal effort. It is granted by God as an integral component of the gift of his Son. Those who have received Christ automatically receive a position of authority.

Rings worn in New Testament times bore the family insignia, just like a king's ring in medieval times bore the seal of the realm. When an order was stamped with the king's seal, it carried the full authority of the king, backed up by the military force of the entire realm. When you became a Christian you were given a 'ring', which carries the insignia of the God of this universe. The authority you have is the same that Jesus exercised when he walked upon the earth. Acts 10:38 records that "...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and ...he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil..." The authority we are to exercise is power over the devil and his kingdom of darkness....just like Jesus.

At one stage, Jesus appointed 72 persons other than the 12 apostles, to go ahead of him preaching the gospel and healing the sick. They returned "with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons

submit to us in your name".<sup>46</sup> To which Jesus replied "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you".<sup>47</sup>

This is the church's mandate which will continue until the end of this present age. Every believer must take a stand against Satan. He is your enemy and he wants to control, manipulate and oppress you. If you do not resist him, you will be defeated. It is just not possible to plead ignorance and hope he won't bother you. Satan rules the world in which we live, and you became a hostile opponent to him when you received Christ. Satan will do everything in his power to continue to exercise authority over you. He will try to subjugate you, by every means at his disposal. He is bent on your destruction, and if he can't destroy you he will endeavor to make you ineffective in your faith.

Although every believer has been granted authority not every believer exercises that authority. It is a choice to act by faith upon it. Ephesians 6:10-13 says:

“...be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground...”

To put on the armour and resist the devil is a deliberate decision we must make. Just as we must accept the gift of righteousness (represented by the robe) by faith and live in it, so too we must accept the authority that is granted to us (represented by the ring) by faith and walk in it. Jesus has defeated Satan utterly, and it is our responsibility to enforce that victory. A believer cannot possibly live

the Christian life God intended for them without knowing their authority over Satan and overcoming him by availing themselves of that authority.

## Chapter 9

# THE IDENTITY OF SATAN AND HIS KINGDOM

### *Satan's origin*

Satan was an angelic being created by God being called Lucifer. He was given the highest position in heaven as guardian of the throne of God. Ezekiel 28:11-19 explains Lucifer's origin and downfall. In this passage he is referred to as the "the king of Tyre":

Ezekiel 28:11-15

"The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created."

Lucifer was perfect in all his ways, the highest-ranking heavenly being, the most beautiful and wise of all God's creation. He was in perfect harmony with God; along with the other angels at this moment in the history of the universe. There was no rebellion, nor

was there any dissent. God's rule was accepted and his will alone was obeyed. Everything was harmonious and unified in heaven, until Lucifer became proud and desired to become like God himself: "... till wickedness was found in you ....Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor....." (v 15 & 17).

Isaiah Chapter 14 also records this event and explains more about the rebellion of Lucifer. In this passage, Lucifer is referred to as the king of Babylon and morning star in this passage:

Isaiah 14:12-15

"How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "*I will* ascend to heaven; *I will* raise my throne above the stars of God; *I will* sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. *I will* ascend above the tops of the clouds; *I will* make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit."

Lucifer's pride led him to desire independence from God. His five statements each beginning with "I will", emphatically declared his decision to reject God's sovereign rule. His ultimate desire – to "make himself like the most High" - in effect meant he sought to establish another throne coequal to God's from which he would rule. Other angels joined Lucifer in his rebellion. The harmony in heaven was destroyed. God had no other choice than to banish Lucifer and his cohorts.

The passages in Ezekiel and Isaiah go on to record Lucifer's downfall

Ezekiel 28:16-19

"..... I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones ..... I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings ..... I

made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching .....All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more."

Isaiah 14:11-17

"All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you ..... you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit ..... Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?"

Lucifer now became Satan and took on an entirely different nature. He lost his magnificence and became utterly degraded. The imagery used could not be more powerful. He became the stench of death.

The Bible discloses much about Satan's corrupted nature and character. Just as the names of God make known God's nature, so the names of Satan reveal what he is like:<sup>48</sup>

### ***The names of Satan***

*Satan*<sup>49</sup>

Means "adversary, opponent or enemy". He rules over a kingdom of darkness organized in opposition to God, his people and his creation.

*Devil*<sup>50</sup>

Means "accuser or slanderer". He places people under condemnation by bringing all manner of accusation and slander against them.



*Father of Lies*<sup>51</sup>

John 8:44 says "...He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." This title signifies he is the source of all falsehood and error. It is impossible for Satan to tell the truth. All cults and false religions are inspired by him and ultimately lead to the worship of him. He will tell lies of any kind in order to achieve his end.

*Tempter*<sup>52</sup>

He tempts people into sin. His desire is to lead people into rebellion and independence from God by promising them rewards of delight, power or knowledge like that of God.

*Accuser of the brothers*<sup>53</sup>

Satan continually seeks to defeat Christians through condemnation. This is one of Satan's principal schemes directed against the church. When a Christian wrongly believes they stand condemned it automatically leads them to distance themselves from God, robbing them of life, power and victory.

*Serpent*<sup>54</sup>

This signifies his subtle craftiness in deception.

*Dragon*<sup>55</sup>

This symbolizes the vicious rage of Satan, his aggression and ruthless oppression.

*Beelzebub*<sup>56</sup>

Means "lord of the flies" or "prince of devils". He rules over all demonic powers, directing their efforts to oppress mankind, and sustaining the rebellion against God.

*Evil One*<sup>57</sup>

He is the source and inspiration of everything that is evil.

*Prince of this World*<sup>58</sup>

This title depicts Satan as the ruler of the systems of the world. The word “world” is translated from the Greek word “kosmos” meaning world-systems or world-order. I John 5:19 says “We know that we are children of God, and that *the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*” God is the creator and owner of the world, however, he is not the present ruler.

*God of this Age*<sup>59</sup>

Satan is the supreme ruler of this age. It will end only when Christ returns. Galatians 1:4 describes the current age as “this present evil age”. This reveals again the tremendous control and power that Satan is exercising over the whole world.

*Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air (or Prince of the Power of the Air)*<sup>60</sup>

This signifies that Satan’s kingdom is an unseen spiritual kingdom and that his powers are over-arching.

In summary, Satan’s names reveal to us that he is the embodiment of all that is evil. He is criminally insane, cruel and unyielding. He has no morals, nor conscience. He is the inspiration and power behind all that is wicked in this world. He dominates and rules the world, in opposition to God and the church.

***Satan’s kingdom***

When God created Adam and Eve he gave them authority over the earth. They were to exercise that authority out of relationship with God and, therefore, in cooperation with God. Essentially, the Creator - who was the owner of the earth - gave mankind a perpetual lease over all that he had made. They were to impose his will – which was only for good – on his behalf. Just as a judge

enforces the law of the land but does not himself make the law, so Adam and Eve were to enforce God's law in the earth.

However, Adam committed high treason when he willfully rebelled against God. In so doing, Adam relinquished control of the earth to Satan. Whereas the will of God was the dominant influence upon the earth before Adam's rebellion, now Satan's influence supplanted God's will in the earth. Adam and Eve became subjects of Satan. They lost the righteous-nature of God which God originally endowed them with, and took on the sin-nature of Satan.

The Bible records that when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, "...the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."<sup>61</sup> Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus because Satan possessed them. Jesus did not dispute this fact. Satan is declared in the scriptures to be the present *prince of this world* and the *god of this age*.<sup>62</sup> I John 5:19 says, "*the whole world is under the control of the evil one*".

Nevertheless, God is still the owner of the earth and he has not abandoned his creation. God ultimately will wrest control from Satan, but for now he acts upon the world by two means:

Firstly, he intervened to reintroduce his authority back into the earth through the two blood covenants. These were his initiative. When a person enters into covenant with God, they are invoking his rule over them, and are thereby granted authority to establish God's will and overthrow Satan's power. This is why Jesus instructed us to pray, first and foremost, that God's kingdom would come and that his will would be performed upon the earth as it is in heaven.<sup>63</sup> Through these covenants people could escape Satan's dominion, enter the kingdom of God and experience the rule of God.

Secondly, when people utterly reject the offer of God refusing to enter into covenant with him, or break covenant as the nation of Israel did, he acts in judgement upon them. For example:

The flood was a world-wide judgement upon all of mankind. The inclination of every person's heart, who was living at that time, had become completely wicked; with the exception of one man, Noah, who "walked with God".<sup>64</sup> The whole of mankind, except for Noah and his family, had become corrupted beyond remedy.

God sent enemies against Israel to annihilate them, except for a faithful remnant, because of their disobedience and contempt for his covenant: "The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left."<sup>65</sup>

The sovereignty of God is therefore operative according to these two means. His rule is enforced by the faith and the obedience of people who walk according to his covenant. God does not act out of character, nor does he act contrary to his word or laws. His ways are not mysterious for he is knowable through covenant relationship. However, he will bring ultimate judgement upon the heads of those who utterly reject him.

Eventually, God will end Satan's rule over the earth when Jesus returns. In effect, God has decreed that the lease he had originally handed to Adam, who in turn handed to Satan, will expire on that day. Then, Jesus will assume control over the whole earth taking it from Satan's grasp.<sup>66</sup> Satan's time is said to be short.<sup>67</sup> God will, in the near future, take back his creation as his own.

### ***Satan's Rule***

Satan is not omnipresent - that is, everywhere at the same time - as God is. Nor is he omniscient and omnipotent - that is, all-knowing and all-powerful - like God. So how does he rule over the earth? He exercises control through an evil spiritual empire made up of a vast network of demon-spirits. There are various levels of authority referred to in the Bible. These include:

#### *Rulers*<sup>68</sup>

This is translated from the Greek word “*arche*” meaning first in rank. These are prince demons that rule over principalities with many other demon powers under their control.

#### *Authorities*<sup>69</sup>

From the Greek “*exousia*” meaning the exercise of power and control.

#### *Powers*<sup>70</sup>

From the Greek “*kosmokrater*” meaning world-ruler.

#### *Spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly realms*<sup>71</sup>

“Heavenly realms” literally means “in the sky”. These evil entities do not operate out of heaven but again like the former are spiritual powers that exert influence over regions.

#### *Demons and Evil Spirits*<sup>72</sup>

These evil entities seem to be the most numerous and there are frequent encounters with them recorded in the New Testament. These are the kinds that are in direct contact with people. They fall into 3 main categories: religious, mental and physical. They are entities that seek to indwell persons in order to inflict suffering.

Jesus gave this instruction concerning demons:

*"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I*

*will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."*

Luke 11:24-26

This passage explains certain important facts about evil spirits:

- They have an individual identity
- There are different levels of demons
- They seek to indwell people and torment them
- They can think, plan and make decisions
- They can consolidate i.e. several or many can jointly inhabit a person

The origin of all of the demonic entities listed above is found in Satan's original rebellion in heaven when he convinced a large number of angels to join him.<sup>73</sup> They are spiritual beings created by God, who have all rejected his rule and authority. They are all ultimately destined for the 'lake of fire'.<sup>74</sup> For the time being they have access to the world and the people who live in it.

### ***Satan's objective***

Satan's objective is two-fold: first, he opposes God and seeks to maintain a counterfeit throne from which he rules over the world - "*the whole world is under the control of the evil one*".<sup>75</sup> Secondly, he oppresses mankind. Satan delights in cruelty. He desires to kill, steal and destroy. He torments and oppresses people's minds and bodies, through his network of demons.<sup>76</sup>

Jesus Christ appeared specifically to overcome Satan and defeat his objectives:

*"...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."*

I John 3:8

*"...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil...."*

Acts 10:38

Jesus brought the kingdom of God to the earth and he conferred that kingdom upon the church.<sup>77</sup> That kingdom coexists for the time being alongside of Satan's kingdom in the earth. These two spiritual kingdoms are hostile to each other. Either God's will or Satan's will is performed in all of the affairs of mankind. It is the church's responsibility to advance the cause of God's kingdom.<sup>78</sup> We must first learn to defeat Satan in our own lives, and then help others escape his power and control.<sup>79</sup> Our objective is, in part, to defeat Satan's objective.

### ***Satan's strategy***

Satan uses particular schemes and strategies to accomplish his purposes. He is not a being who can outwit us, unless we allow him through ignorance and unbelief.<sup>80</sup> He uses exactly the same methods today as he has always done throughout the history of the world.

His basic ploy is this: through deceit and lies he takes people captive to his will. He keeps unbelievers blinded so that they cannot understand the gospel and escape his control.<sup>81</sup> He seeks to subjugate believers, making them ineffective, or destroy them through opposing God's word.<sup>82</sup> All that is necessary for Satan to overpower you is to trick into believing his lies. He endeavors to get you to doubt the word of God and cause you to live in an area(s) of unbelief.

***Satan's destiny***

Satan's reign of terror will not continue forever - and he knows it. God has decreed that Satan and his angels will receive everlasting punishment:

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

Matthew 25:41

"And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Revelation 20:10



## Chapter 10

# SATAN'S DEFEAT

It is absolutely vital for you to understand and appropriate what Christ has accomplished for you at the cross. Jesus did not die for himself. Jesus was sinless and Satan had no power or authority over him. Jesus death meant the defeat of Satan on *your* behalf.

Jesus, as a man, was just like Adam when Adam was first created – perfect and sinless. Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Jesus was not of the ‘seed’ of Adam, but rather of the ‘seed’ of God. He did not carry the fallen Adamic nature; rather he bore the exact image of God. He was not, therefore, under the sentence of death. Death is the direct consequence of sin. God said to Adam that the day he *sinned* he would die.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, Jesus, who was not under the sentence of death and would have lived forever, permitted Satan to kill him. This is why he said “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”<sup>84</sup>

He laid down his own life by choice. Christ died for *you*. Jesus suffered so that *you* might be set free. However, this freedom is not automatic. You can still allow Satan to exercise power over us. You have to appropriate Christ’s victory by faith, and walk in the freedom he purchased for you with his own blood. This requires you to actively renounce and resist Satan. Only then is he rendered powerless in your life.

The first step in learning to exercise our God-given authority is to recognize Satan's complete defeat by Jesus. Jesus has conquered Satan in three realms:

- in heaven
- in the earth
- in hell

### ***In heaven***<sup>85</sup>

Despite having lost his position in heaven as a consequence of his rebellion, Satan was still able to approach the throne of God, and talk with God. He used this privilege to accuse people before God. When Christ died on the cross, Satan lost all access to heaven, because his charges were completely annulled. The blood of Jesus paid in full the penalty for all our sin. Therefore, Satan has no right to bring accusations or judgements against us. This is why the scripture can say "...there is now *no condemnation* against those who are in Christ Jesus".<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, Colossians 2:15 says "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." The imagery employed here is that of a victorious military general who returns to the adulation of his own people, parading in chains the king and nobles of a subjugated people. Satan and his kingdom were utterly defeated by the cross. He who was the captor of the world now became the captive. The spiritual world was monumentally impacted and would never be the same ever again. If Satan had have known what the consequences would have been he would never have killed Jesus.<sup>87</sup> I John 3:8 says emphatically "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work".

***In the earth***<sup>88</sup>

Jesus defeated Satan at every point when he walked upon the earth. Firstly, he overcame every one of Satan's personal temptations. The Bible says Jesus "... was tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin".<sup>89</sup> Jesus demonstrated how a human being could live free of sin.

Secondly, he healed everyone who came to him, and freed them from Satan's oppression. Acts 10:38 says "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and ... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil..." Much of Jesus' time was spent doing these works. Jesus was not a son of Adam and therefore subject to Satan's domination. As one who was born of the Spirit, he possessed authority over Satan, and he exercised it through the power of the Spirit.

***In hell***<sup>90</sup>

In death, Jesus confronted Satan who held the power of death. The eternal Son of God had crossed the line and entered into death, standing face to face with the Satan. Satan had been tricked. He had killed the Son of God who was innocent and, as the murderer of an innocent man, Satan now himself stood condemned.

Now, at this point in time, Jesus literally stripped Satan of his power and authority.<sup>91</sup> Jesus declares in Revelation 1:18 "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." Immediately following his crucifixion, Jesus confronted Satan, overpowered him, and took these keys from him. Hebrews 2:14 (NLT) says "Because God's children are human beings-- made of flesh and blood-- Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death."

When Jesus rose again he said to Mary not to touch him because he had not ascended to his Father.<sup>92</sup> Afterward, he encouraged his disciples to touch him.<sup>93</sup> Having confronted, subjugated and stripped Satan, Jesus was now ascending to his Father to present his blood as High Priest.<sup>94</sup> That is why he instructed Mary not to touch him. Jesus had not yet returned to heaven, to enter the Holy of Holies with his own blood sacrifice. He had been busy disarming the powers and authorities. He had fulfilled what had been prophesied about him in right back in Genesis – that he would ‘crush the head of Satan’.<sup>95</sup> And, on the way to the throne in heaven on the third day, he stopped to speak with Mary, he comforted her and told her to tell his disciples that he was alive.<sup>96</sup>

(Some teach that Jesus suffered in hell. The sufferings of Jesus prophesied in the scriptures are best understood – in particular Isaiah 53 – as relating to the cross and finishing there. The “suffering of his soul” (Isa 53:11) was the torment of separation from his Father he experienced when he hung on the cross. His cry “It is finished” (John 19:30) meant, in part, his sufferings had now ceased and he again took up the mantle of his Godhood, condemned Satan for his crime and subjugated him on our behalf. Colossians 2:15 stipulates the victory was won at the cross: “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them *by the cross.*”)

Satan would never have killed Jesus if he had known what the consequences were going to be: “None of the rulers of this age understood it (God’s wisdom), for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”<sup>97</sup> Satan was completely defeated by Jesus who now possesses all authority, in every realm. Christ’s victory was won *for you*, in order that you would be set free. And Jesus has delegated his authority *to you*.<sup>98</sup>

For the time being, Satan is allowed to continue to exercise control over the lost and wicked, those who remain in rebellion and reject Christ. Satan is still the god of this age. Only persons who have

received Christ have been given authority over the power of the enemy, and can escape his rule and oppression.

However, it is necessary that we learn to exercise that authority. For example, imagine what our society would be like if the police force, which had been delegated the authority to maintain peace and order, did not exercise that authority. What if thieves, murderers and rapists were not restrained in any way? It would create a terrible state of fear, oppression and anarchy. In exactly the same way, unless we stand up and exercise the spiritual authority delegated to us, we will be oppressed, weak and overcome by Satan. We cannot plead ignorance nor can we turn a blind eye. We are literally at war. Those who fight will win, and those who don't will suffer loss.

# Chapter 11

## HOW TO RECOGNISE AND DEFEAT TEMPTATION

Satan is the tempter. All temptation comes from him. Temptation is not sin. Often-time believers are confused about this. For example, a man might innocently happen upon the image of a scantily clad woman and immediately be affected by that image. That is the way God has wired men up. That initial response is not sin. It becomes sin when he fixes his eyes upon that image, meditates upon it, and begins to fantasize. (Many Christian men feel condemned because of this initial sight attraction. That condemnation is from Satan in order to make them feel weak and sinful, and make them live distant from God, in order to trap them in sin!)

The truth is, what we constantly think about we will eventually act out. The mind is the control centre of our being, and what we allow our mind to be fixed upon will control our lives. This is why temptation must be put down right at the very beginning.

Many Christians still struggle with areas of sin because they have never understood how temptation operates, nor have they been equipped to stand against it. They remain oppressed by Satan, living defeated lives. They want to obey God, because they love God, but the ability to do so eludes them. They must learn to recognize and defeat temptation if they are mature into the image of Christ, bear

the fruit God intended them to, and be filled with great joy. This is what God wants for all his children. He has promised that when temptation comes to us, he will always provide the way of escape.<sup>99</sup> In order to find that way of escape, and to have and to hold that joy – the joy of obedience and fruitfulness - we must deliberately and continually resist the devil.

### ***The basis, purpose and nature of temptation***

All temptation finds its basis in legitimate needs. Sin is, in effect, our efforts to meet legitimate needs in illegitimate ways. These needs include our bodily appetites – mostly, for food and sex - and our desires to be loved and to feel significant and secure.

God created us with these needs. It was his design and purpose. This is a fundamental fact of our humanity. God never intended us to deny those needs, nor to fulfill them independently of him and the way he intended them to be satisfied.

When Adam and Eve sinned they became disconnected from God and therefore were unable to fulfill their needs in the right and proper way. Instead of looking to God they were forced to look to themselves and the world in which they lived. But these things could never satisfy them fully and looking to those things instead of God would become a destructive force. Sexual bondages, workaholicism, alcoholism, drug dependency, intellectualism, worship of false gods etc. etc., are all the consequences of man's disconnectedness from God.

The purpose of temptation, therefore, is to get you to disbelieve God so that you will live independently of him. When we take our eyes off God and look instead to ourselves and the world we automatically lose our capacity to walk in righteousness. Righteousness is that intrinsic quality that enables us to live the life God desires for us.

Temptation works through three areas. These are listed in I John 2:16 (NKJ) “For all that is in the world-- *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*-- is not of the Father but is of the world.” The lust of the flesh refers to appetites, cravings and bodily passions. The lust of the eyes has to do with the selfish acquisition of people and things; for a person’s own self indulgence. The pride of life relates to self promotion and self exaltation. These three elements are evident in both the temptation of Eve in the Garden, and the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.<sup>100</sup>

### ***The battle for your mind***

Many scriptures show us that the centre of spiritual conflict is the mind:

Romans 8: 5-7

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have **their minds** set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have **their minds** set on what the Spirit desires. **The mind** of sinful man is death, but **the mind** controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”

Romans 12:2

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of **your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Ephesians 4:22-24

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in **the attitude of your minds**; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”



2Corinthians 10:3-5

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive **every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.”

John 8: 31-32

“.....Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will **know** the truth, and the truth will set you free.””

2 Corinthians 4:4

“The god of this age has blinded **the minds** of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, **your minds** may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

Before you became a Christian, strongholds of bad habits and sinful thought patterns were established which you learned when you lived your life independently from God. Your non-Christian environment taught you to think about and respond to life in a particular way, and those thought patterns and responses were ingrained into your mind. Your mind contains your beliefs and attitudes which direct your choices and therefore the outcome of your life.

When you became a Christian, however, nobody pressed the “CLEAR” button in your mind. Your old sinful habits and thought patterns were not erased. Therefore, your beliefs and attitudes

must be adjusted so that you can make the right choices, and change your life to that which God desires for you. That is why the scriptures tell us “*to be transformed*” and “*to put off your old self ... and to put on the new self*”.<sup>101</sup> You have a responsibility to be transformed. You have the responsibility to become the new self. It does not happen automatically when a person is first saved. It is something that must be worked at. So how is this transformation process accomplished? What areas of our minds and understanding must be altered?

Firstly, you must recognize and accept what God says is true. You must accept what God says about himself, the world – especially the history of the world - and you in particular. You must change your foundational belief structure. You must see things as God has revealed them, which is the truth.

Crucially, you must also believe what God says is true about you. You are not a sinner. You are no longer the product of your past. You are a saint, a new creation in Christ Jesus. You are now primarily the product of what Jesus accomplished upon the cross. You are God’s child, born of the Spirit, recreated in his image that you would reflect his person and walk in righteousness. If you continue to see yourself as a sinner you will never be transformed. It is just not possible. You will remain a captive to sin, because sin will remain an automatic response. If you will see yourself as ‘*the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus*’, however, you will be enabled to live the kind of life that is pleasing to him and to you.<sup>102</sup>

Secondly, you must take a stand against Satan and his purposes for you, which he accomplishes through infiltrating your thoughts with his thoughts. Satan has access to your mind. Your mind is the principal spiritual battleground. Temptation, which comes from Satan, appears first as a thought in your mind. Many Christians simply are not aware of his activity in this regard. They think all of their thoughts are their own. Satan is cunning. Often-time, he will speak into your mind in the first person, so that you will accept the

thoughts as your own – “I am nothing....”, “I feel....”, “I want....”, “I need....” etc.

This is a war that you simply must engage in. You must do what the scriptures tell you to do: “*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*”.<sup>103</sup> The fight for the supremacy of your own mind is the most important battle of your life. The thoughts Satan introduces are lies to counter God’s truth. If he can get you to believe a lie then he can control your behaviour, and cause you to be impoverished and ineffective in your Christian walk.

If you don’t conquer Satan’s temptation right at the threshold of your mind, you will begin to mull his thought over, consider it right, justified or the only alternative, and choose to act upon it. Repeated acts form a habit, and that sinful habit over time turns into a full blown stronghold. Once a stronghold is established you have lost the ability to control your behaviour in that area. The way to defeat these strongholds is not to attempt to stop the behaviour but to change your thinking. You can’t stop that sinful activity just by trying to stop, or telling yourself to stop. This is not what the Bible tells us to do. You don’t attack the fruit – if the trunk remains the fruit will reappear - you attack the root. You must change your patterns of thinking by accepting and applying the truth. If you see yourself as a hopeless addict you will never be free of your addiction. But if you see yourself as a victorious child of God, for whom God and all his resources are available, how can you fail?

Proverbs 4:23 says “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” We have to learn to guard our heart and protect it from Satan’s attacks in order for our lives to be conformed to the pattern God desires for us.

To better understand how patterns of independent thinking and behaviour were established and how to overcome them, it is important to know the make-up of a person before and after they become a Christian.

The Bible tells us that a person is made up of three elements – *spirit, soul* (mind, will and emotions) and *body*.<sup>104</sup> The mind is the control centre of a person’s being. Our minds receive information from our senses in the natural realm, and from God and Satan in the spiritual realm. What we accept and believe to be true determines our actions and responses. Desires to feel or to know, are also directed by a person’s world-view i.e. what they regard to be true. A person satisfies their physical, emotional and intellectual needs according to their core values which are predicated upon how they view God, themselves and the world in which they live.

## ***In Adam***

Before I accepted Christ I was of this world, I was a sinner, I was “*in Adam*” and my spirit was dead because I was disconnected from God.<sup>105</sup> Consequently, in my mind I felt:

- *Rejected*: Therefore, I had a need to belong.
- *Guilt and shame*: Therefore, I had a need of self-worth.
- *Weak and helpless*: Therefore, I had a need for authority and control.

In order to satisfy these needs, I looked to things in the world – *power, possessions and passion* – and I used my body as an instrument in their pursuit.

Because I was alienated from God, I lived independently of God and I was therefore a slave to sin in both my mind and my body. I lived only for self-gratification and/or self-promotion.

The internal pain I felt, however, could never be resolved by worldly pursuits. Instead they produced in me dissatisfaction, unhappiness, conflict, frustration, anger, bitterness, malice and insecurity.

Patterns of wrongful thinking and behaviour were established in me, which kept me bound in a bitter cycle.

## ***In Christ***

Now that I have become a Christian my state of being has been completely changed:

- I am no longer of this world because I have been born of the Spirit.
- I am no longer a sinner because I am a child of God made in his likeness.
- I am no longer in Adam because I am now in Christ.
- My spirit is alive because I have become connected to God.

Now I have

- *Acceptance* – My sin no longer stands as a barrier between me and God
- *Worth* – I am a child of God, made in his image
- *Security and strength* - Nothing can separate me from the love of God. The Spirit of power, love and wisdom resides within my very being.

However, and this is the point, my established pattern of thinking is not automatically changed when I first receive Christ, therefore, it must be renewed.

My mind is like a computer. It is the control centre of my being directing my actions and reactions. I have already allowed past experiences to program my mind. Much of this programming has taken place during my early childhood. My pattern of thinking has gone on for so long and is so ingrained it appears to be the core of who I really am. But this is not true.

When I become a Christian I bring the baggage of past patterns of thinking and behaviour with me. Now I must deliberately and conscientiously change them. I now have an obligation to walk not according to the old patterns (the flesh, the sinful or Adamic nature) but to walk after the Spirit. Romans 8:5 explains the key to achieving this result: "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their *minds* set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their *minds* set on what the Spirit desires."

The fact is that a Christian can still walk according to their old nature. They can maintain their past pattern of thinking. Such a person is a 'carnal' Christian. They are born of the Spirit but are not living by the Spirit. On the other hand, a 'spiritual' Christian has renewed their mind and is led by the Spirit.

Only the mind controlled by the Spirit reflects love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. A carnal Christian will not exhibit these spiritual characteristics.

It is possible for a Christian to have changed some areas of their thinking but remain bound to Satan's domination in others. The solution remains the same. They need to bring every thought in subjection to Christ. This is achieved through genuine repentance and forgiveness, and actively resisting the devil.

### ***Breaking free of the past - genuine repentance and forgiveness***

In the early church, when a person accepted Christ they were also taught and helped to break free from Satan's dominion over their lives. In the records of the early church we learn that new believers made this confession: "*I renounce Satan and all his works and ways.*" They understood that they had lived in the kingdom of darkness and that they had been under Satan's control. It was therefore necessary for them to deliberately break free from his

control as they entered the kingdom of God. This was achieved by renouncing him and his influence upon them.

Satan and his devises have not changed. Although belief in Satan is ridiculed in our society he is as active as he ever was. It is most important that you recognize that he had power over you and that you deliberately choose to break free from his control and influence. The first step is to genuinely repent and genuinely forgive everyone you have a grievance against.

### *Repentance*

To repent literally means to turn your back and go in the opposite direction. You must deliberately renounce every sinful practice that you have engaged in over the course of your life, when you lived without Christ. You must come to Christ and you must leave Satan. You must enter the kingdom of God and you must leave the kingdom of darkness. You must put Jesus on the throne of your life, and take Satan off that throne. You must announce Jesus the Lord of your life and denounce Satan who was your lord.

Many people come to Christ but because they never renounce their past lives, they continue to be oppressed by Satan. They gave him access to their lives through sinful practices. They opened doors to their lives to him because of past choices and those doors must now be shut.

### *Forgiveness*

We all experience hurt at the hands of others, and sometimes even ourselves. The hurt may or may not be deliberate, but the effect is the same. It produces anger, an emotional sense of being wronged and that the person who offended us should pay for their offence.

Unresolved hurt is evident by a state of emotional woundedness. It produces a weakness in our being that will cause us to falter in our relationships, both with God and others. One or more of the following will be evident:

- ungratefulness – we are never fully satisfied or content
- bitterness – we are harsh and angry
- unteachable – we are unyielding and stiff-necked
- critical and judgmental – we look down upon others
- manipulation – we try to control others
- withdrawal and isolation – we distance ourselves from others
- possessiveness – we hold onto things and people inappropriately

Jesus taught much about forgiveness. He likened it to releasing a person from a debt.<sup>106</sup> Unforgiveness, therefore, means an unwillingness to release a person from the 'debt' they incurred when they offended us. We want them to somehow pay us back for the hurt they have caused us.

Unforgiveness produces deep-seated feelings of anger, bitterness and revenge in the offended person. It is an emotional wounding which does not heal. These feelings may be suppressed, however, they can surface when we are vulnerable or the wound is touched i.e. when we are reminded of the offence by something which triggers the memory of the offense.

You may feel that you can't forgive because the pain you felt (and still feel) is so strong. However, forgiveness is a decision of your will. It is not an emotion. Contrary to what many are led to believe, you don't wait till you feel you can forgive someone for hurting you. You will never feel like forgiving them because you carry extreme pain that was caused by them! You simply choose as an act of your own volition to forgive.

This is not to deny that the event(s) happened nor is it an attempt to push it out of your mind. But when you forgive the power of that sin over you will be defeated. In the parable of the unmerciful servant, the consequence of his choosing not to forgive meant he was placed in the hands of jailers to be tortured.<sup>107</sup> Satan has access



to people's lives through their unforgiveness. Only when you forgive will you be released from his driving influences upon your life and the healing power of God allowed to flow into your being. If you choose not to forgive, however, Satan will continue to have power over you to torment you.

When you forgive someone this does *not* mean that you must now *trust* them. They may still be as evil as ever. Forgiveness and trust are two very different things. Trust is only given to people who are proven faithful and true, not to those who are abusive and sinful.

Forgiveness may not always reconcile us to the offender as they also individually have the right to choose between good and evil. We cannot make another person accept us or love us.

Just as our sins must be confessed and renounced, every person we hold unforgiveness against must be named and their offences against us released, in order to render Satan's power over us broken and extinguished.

### ***Living free in the present - victory over temptation***

The scriptural remedy to gain victory over sin and temptation is a simple one - embrace the truth of God and reject the lie of Satan. The key verse is James 4:7 *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

We have a duty to actively resist the devil. This means that we cannot be passive or dismissive. We must continually guard our minds by judging our thoughts according to the Word of God. We cannot entertain any thoughts that stand opposed to the truth expressed by God. We must act like custodians of a city who watch over it to keep it and protect it from hostile forces that surround it. That city is our mind, we are the custodians and the kingdom of darkness is the surrounding hostile enemy. We must be constantly on alert to Satan's attack and learn to thwart him at every point.

Satan is aware of your background. He knows what circumstances you have been through, your family upbringing, the times of your life when you were emotionally wounded. He preys upon the weaknesses that are evident from your past. He pushes your buttons in order to get you to take your eyes off God and operate out of your natural self. Many types of sinful practices arise as coping mechanisms to ease the pain of emotional hurt, or to gain acceptance from our parents or our peers. He will prod you in those areas in an attempt to get you to trust in your old defenses. In other words, he will endeavor to get you to again take up your past sinful practices or your offences, by once again believing lies about yourself. For example, he will introduce seed thoughts into your mind such as

- “I really need this...”
- “I can’t live without....”
- “He hurt me so much, I haven’t forgiven him and I can’t forgive him....”
- “I deserve this...”
- “This would be so much fun.....”
- “Just a little, just this once more and then I will really stop.....”
- “I’m just made this way, I’ll never change....”

Moreover, his attacks will often come when you are vulnerable and weak. He does not fight according to Queensbury rules. He will kick you when you are down. When current circumstances are adverse, when you are emotionally tender, when you are under pressure and tired that is when his attacks will be the most ferocious. (Some people are vulnerable when they experience blessing. When they are on an emotional high because of spiritual, financial or relational success they can be affected by pride.)

It is at this point that you must rise up and stand against him. He cannot sustain his attacks indefinitely because the promise is that when you resist him he will flee from you.

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is a model for us. It lasted only a short time. Satan targeted the three areas of vulnerability but found no opening. Jesus resisted him every time by quoting from the Word of God. They did not engage in a *power* encounter but rather a *truth* encounter. Jesus overcame Satan by the truth, not by force. Satan had to leave when he was denied access. He would try again later returning at another opportune time.<sup>108</sup>

We are to follow Jesus' example. When an attack comes we are to stand firm upon the truth. In this way we are submitting to God. We are accepting the truth as expressed by him. As we do this we are simultaneously rejecting the lie of Satan. And as we resist him he must leave us. I John 2:14 demonstrates the connection between submitting and holding to God's Word, and victory over Satan:

"I write to you, young men, because you are strong (*Greek "ischuros"*), and the word (*Greek "logos"*) of God lives in (*Greek "meno"*) you, and you have overcome (*Greek "nikao"*) the evil one."

*ischuros* (*is-khoo-ros'*) from *ischus* (*is-khoos'*) means forcefulness: ability, might, power, strength

*logos* means "word, speech or utterance" - the whole counsel of God

*meno* (*men'-o*) means to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): to abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry

nikao (nik-ah'-o) means to subdue: conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory. It is from the primary word nike (nee'-kay) which means conquest or the means of success

The New Living Translation translates this verse:

*"I have written to you who are young because you are strong with God's word living in your hearts, and you have won your battle with Satan."*

The Amplified:

*"I write to you, young men, because you are strong and vigorous, and the Word of God is (always in your hearts) abiding in you, and you have been victorious over the wicked one."*

Finally, we are never to fear temptation that is beyond our ability to recognize it, nor are we to fear being inadequate to deal with it. Satan is not inventive. He uses the same schemes over and over again: 2 Corinthians 2:11 says "...For we are not unaware of his schemes." And 1Corinthians 10:13 declares "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

### **The power of our words**

Because victory over Satan is achieved by submitting to God's Word which is the truth and rejecting Satan's lies, the battle is fought by the means of words. There is a direct relationship between the value we place on the Word of God and our commitment to line up our own words with God's Word, and the authority we are able to exercise over Satan. Jesus overcame Satan's temptation by quoting scripture – "It is written....." he stated each and every time he was tempted. He lined up his own words with what the scriptures said.

Moreover, he healed the sick and cast out demons by the spoken word.

The Bible teaches much about words because *“The tongue has the power of life and death...”*.<sup>109</sup> The words of your mouth direct your life, whether you like it or not, or whether you believe it or not. Your words determine your future. The fulfillment of God’s destiny for you, the amount of his power that will be exercised in your life and the degree to which you will be victorious over Satan is directly related to your willingness to submit your tongue to the truth as revealed by God.

Words are an extension of our very being. They are produced out of our own hearts. Jesus said *“...For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks”*.<sup>110</sup> What we believe will always surface through our mouths. Consequently our words are inextricably interlinked with the essence of who we truly are. Jesus himself is described as *“the Word”*, and he defined his own words in the following way *“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life”*.<sup>111</sup>

Faith-filled words carry an active, creative power. Words are the agency by which God himself accomplishes his purposes:

*“And God said, “Let there be .....,” and there was .....”*

Genesis 1:3

*“For the word of God is living and active.”*

Hebrews 4:12

*“...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

Isaiah 55:11

*“He sent forth his word and healed them.....”*

Psalms 107:20

Just as God ordained his own Word to be the agency of his power, so he has established this pattern also for us. A lesson Jesus taught explains the connection.

“The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he *said* to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it....

“In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone *says* to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he *says* will happen, it will be done for him.'”

Mark 11:12-24

Jesus sets out a principle for us to observe in this passage. Notice, it wasn't sufficient just for Jesus to think – he had to speak. And his words were the expression of faith. When he spoke, it was not immediately obvious to the disciples that what he had spoken had come to pass. The fig tree withered from the roots up, so the immediate impact occurred under the ground. It wasn't until the following day that, with astonishment, Peter realised what Jesus had said had come to pass.

When we speak by faith, it may not be immediately obvious to our natural eyes that what we have asked in prayer and declared to be true, has occurred. It is not as is often said “What you see is what

you get". Rather, it is true that "What you say is what you get". It is by faith that we know that God has acted on our behalf.

Jesus is described in Hebrews 3:1 as "the Apostle of our confession". This means that he watches over the words of our mouths to accomplish the things that we say. He puts himself at the service of our words. He is waiting to be the apostle or "one sent" at our request.

Of course, he will not respond to fleshy, self-seeking motives. Our confession must line up with his will and purposes. The Greek word translated confession is *homologia* (hom-ol-og-ee'-ah) which is a compound word made up of *homou* (hom-oo') which means "the same" and *logos* (log'-os) which means "word, speech, talk". Therefore, when our words line up with God's Word, he has committed himself to act upon our words. God watches over his Word to perform it.<sup>112</sup>

Of course, the Word of God can be made ineffective through unbelief, which is inactive faith because of ignorance. Or disbelief, which is willful refusal to believe, choosing instead to be skeptical. Under these circumstances we will not speak in line with the truth, but rather we will essentially be siding with Satan believing error rather than truth, speaking contrary to the Bible and experiencing the consequences. (Just reciting the Word without faith is also an error. This is what James calls "selfish ambition".<sup>113</sup> It is a form of witchcraft and an attempt to manipulate God, in order to receive things from God on the basis of wrong motives.)

### *The Power of Attorney*

Jesus has given us the power of attorney. That is, we are commissioned by Jesus to speak and act on his behalf. We are to actively exercise his authority over Satan. Our words carry the same authority as if spoken by Jesus Christ himself. Jesus labored this point:

*“And I will do whatever you ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.”*

John 14:13

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask (Greek “aiteo”) whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

John 15:5, 7

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then *the Father will give you whatever you ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name.*”*

John 15:16

*“In that day you will no longer ask (Greek “erotao”) me anything. I tell you the truth, *my Father will give you whatever you ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name.*”*

John 16:23

*“In that day you will ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”*

John 16:26-27

The Greek word translated “ask” is *aiteo* (ahee-teh'-o) which Strong's Greek dictionary says *“is strictly a demand for something due”*. This compares with *erotao* (er-o-tah'-o) which Strong's explains *“properly means a request as a favor”*. In other words we are not asking in a worldly kind of hope that maybe God will hear us and concede to our request. Rather we are asking with absolute confidence and we are fully expectant that we will receive the answer to our request.



The Great Commission clearly expresses the granting of the power of attorney:

“He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

“And these signs will accompany those who believe: *In my name* they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

Mark 16:15-18

### **Conclusion**

In order to experience victory over Satan we must speak the truth. Revelation 12: 11 says “They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and *by the word of their testimony....*” Our fight against Satan will be won or lost according to our confession. Just as Jesus responded to each of Satan’s temptations with “*It is written...*”, when thoughts of fear, lust, doubt, jealousy etc come, we should respond “*It is written...*”:

- No weapon formed against me will prosper, and I will refute every tongue that accuses me. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is my vindication from God (Isaiah 54: 17).
- I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1John 5:18).
- I am more than a conqueror through him who loved me (Romans 8: 37).

- I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2Timothy 1:7).
- Neither demons nor any powers can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8: 36-39).
- I have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1: 13).
- I am seated with Christ in the heavenly places far above all rule, authority, power and dominion (Ephesians 1:20-21; 2:6).
- I am always led in triumphant procession in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14).
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4: 13).
- I am in Christ and I believe, therefore, the incomparably great power of God is available to me (Ephesians 1: 13, 19).
- I have been given authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm me (Luke 5:18).
- I have been given authority to cast out demons (Luke 9: 1, Mark 16: 17).
- The weapons I possess are not the weapons of this world. They have divine power to demolish strongholds (2Corinthians 10: 4).
- I overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony (Revelation 12: 11).
- I have renounced secret and shameful ways (2Corinthians 4:2).
- I have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Colossians 2: 10).
- I resist the devil and he must flee from me (James 4: 7).

## Chapter 12

# THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

In order to destroy the works of Satan we need spiritual weapons. Jesus began his ministry only after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Jesus received power when the Holy Spirit came upon him and he said to his disciples that they too would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This power enables us to advance the kingdom of God, and to take territory from Satan. The Bible defines this power as the 'gifts' or 'manifestations' of the Spirit which include the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues.

### **What is the "baptism in the Holy Spirit"?**

The purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to empower believers for service. God has works he has planned for you to do, and you require special abilities to perform them. These works are the very same that Jesus did when he walked upon the earth.

The Bible says that *"... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and ... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with them."*<sup>114</sup> And Jesus said *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing."*<sup>115</sup>

When you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, you will receive power just as Jesus did. This will enable you to do good works and to destroy the evil works of the devil.

There is no mention of cleansing or forgiveness of sins in relation to this baptism. In this experience, the believer receives supernatural power which enables them to perform the supernatural tasks expected of believers - to share the gospel, to bind up the broken-hearted and to perform signs and wonders.

Jesus' own life demonstrates this fact to us. Mary supernaturally conceived in her womb the baby Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus was truly 'born of the Spirit'. However, until the Holy Spirit descended upon him at the river Jordan – when he was about thirty years old - he did *not* perform any miracles. In all respects he was a common man. There was nothing special about him:

- he grew up in a carpenter's shop;
- he was like any other child in the neighbourhood;
- he went to the local synagogue (the place Jews met for their prayers, teaching etc.);
- everything about him was really quite normal.

But then this all changed. When Jesus was baptized in the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River, all hell was shaken! Only *after* this event do we read in the Bible that Jesus was "*full of the Holy Spirit*", that he was "*led by the Spirit*", and that he operated in the "*power of the Spirit*".<sup>116</sup> Although Jesus himself was God, he lived as a man and he performed signs and wonders not by his own power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus showed us how God the Father wanted his children to live, demonstrating his wisdom, his power and his love.

### **What accompanies the baptism in the Holy Spirit?**

The supernatural abilities we are empowered with are listed in 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11. These include

- a word or message of wisdom, (*not wisdom in general, but rather a particular insight for a particular set of circumstances*)
- a word or message of knowledge, (*not knowledge which is learned, but rather a particular piece of information supernaturally given*)
- faith, (*not faith which is given to all and which can grow, but a special faith to deal with a specific situation*)
- gifts of healing, (*not a doctor's acquired ability, but a supernatural impartation that overpowers a particular sickness*)
- miraculous powers, (*the intervention of the supernatural in the natural realm, whereby the physical laws are momentarily suspended*)
- prophecy, (*a message from God either forth-telling his will in a particular situation or fore-telling a future event he wishes to disclose*)
- the discernment of spirits, (*especially the identification of demon spirits and their activities in a particular person or set of circumstances*)
- the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, (*the communication of a prophetic message from God in a language unknown to the speaker, and generally the audience*)
- and the interpretation of tongues (*the interpretation of a message given in tongues, spoken in the common language of the audience*)

The Holy Spirit gives these to us as the need arises and as we earnestly seek them from him. The key point is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the entrance to the operation of these spiritual gifts.

There are just five accounts in the book of Acts when a person or persons were baptized in the Holy Spirit:

**(1) The Day of Pentecost** *Acts 2: 1-12*

"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven ... tongues of fire ... came to rest on each of them... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

**(2) Paul** *Acts 9: 1-19*

"Then Ananias ... Placing his hands on Saul ... said, "Brother Saul, the Lord ... has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again."

**(3) Cornelius' Household** *Acts 10: 1-24, 44-48*

"While Peter was still speaking ... the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The ... believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God."

**(4) The Ephesians** *Acts 19: 1-7*

"When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied."

**(5) The Samaritans** *Acts 8: 5-19*

"Then Peter and John placed their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles hands..."

From these passages we can see that although a variety of things happened when people were baptized in the Holy Spirit, *one* evidence stands out - speaking in tongues. It occurred on three of the five occasions and the remaining two occasions do not rule out speaking in tongues. In the case of Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian church he wrote "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." and "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues ..."<sup>17</sup> And in the case of the Samaritans, Simon the sorcerer

“saw” something happen when the apostles laid their hands on the believers. It is unlikely that what he saw was healings and deliverances from evil spirits, because these had already taken place. It is quite possible he witnessed the new believers speaking with tongues as they were filled with the Spirit.

Therefore, you should expect that, when you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, you too will speak in tongues. It is a part of the package.

### ***What is speaking in tongues?***

Speaking in tongues is praying in a language which is unknown to the speaker. The person is simply speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit. They do not go into a trance or lose control of their own tongue, nor are they in an emotional state. It is the Spirit of God enabling their spirit to communicate supernaturally. 1 Corinthians 14: 14 says "For if I pray in a tongue, *my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.*" We do not understand what we are saying when we pray in tongues. The Bible tells us the language may be of men or of angels.<sup>118</sup> At times, therefore, the language may be understood intelligibly by some listeners. There are examples of English speaking missionaries working in foreign countries, hearing natives praying in tongues in perfect English!

There are two lines of communication when using this gift:

(1) What is often described as a 'personal prayer language' is when our spirits praise and worship God, and the Holy Spirit intercedes for others through us. This line of communication is from our spirit to God. On the day of Pentecost, visitors from many different lands to Jerusalem heard the 'Galilean' believers who had just been baptized in the Holy Spirit, "*declaring the wonders of God in (their) own tongues!*"<sup>119</sup> The believers were not preaching but rather praising. They stopped speaking in tongues and Peter began to preach to the visitors the gospel in a language common to all. (Most of Jesus' disciples were from the region of Galilee and had a distinct

accent. They were generally poor and unschooled and therefore could not have possibly learned the languages that they were speaking. The visitors were "amazed and perplexed" at hearing them speak many different languages.<sup>120)</sup>

When we use our prayer language, we are therefore mostly declaring the wonders of God from the depths of our spirit. Also, Romans 8: 26-27 says "... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express ... the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." Sometimes when we are praying 'in the spirit', i.e. in tongues, the Holy Spirit will move us to pray for our own needs or someone else's needs. The person praying is often made aware that they are interceding by a deep sense of urgency, and they could remain praying for some time until the Holy Spirit lifts from them and they sense a breakthrough has been accomplished.

(2) The second line of communication is from God to us. This gift normally functions in the church or when ministering to someone, and is always accompanied by the 'gift of interpretation'. In these circumstances, God wants us to understand what he is saying, so it is necessary to interpret the message into the intelligible language of the listeners. This interpretation is also supernatural: the Holy Spirit supernaturally enables a person present (not necessarily the person who gave the message in tongues), to repeat the message in the language of those present. 1Corinthians 14: 26-40 gives instructions on a typical church meeting, and regarding tongues it says that "two - or at the most three - should speak (in tongues), one at a time, and someone must interpret." A message in tongues in the church is a sign to any unbelievers that are present of the presence and workings of God in the lives of believers.<sup>121</sup>



### **Should all Christians be baptized in the Holy Spirit?**

In the Bible, there are two direct promises and one indirect promise that cover *all* believers:

"...Repent and be baptized .... And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Acts 2:38-39

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will you give him a scorpion? ... how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

John 11: 11-13

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved .... And these signs will accompany those who believe ... they will speak with new tongues..."

Mark 16: 16-17

These verses show that in order to receive the gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit you must be a believer, and that you have to ask.

### ***Some things to remember***

- A person is born of the Spirit when they receive Christ.<sup>122</sup>
- The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a subsequent experience to salvation.<sup>123</sup>
- A person may be water baptized and saved but not yet be baptized in the Holy Spirit.<sup>124</sup>
- Some believers may receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit before they are baptized in water.<sup>125</sup>
- Jesus himself is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit.<sup>126</sup>

- The gift of the Holy Spirit is a promise for all who ask.<sup>127</sup>
- Any believer may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>128</sup>
- We receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us.<sup>129</sup>
- Speaking in tongues is the one experience that is common to the New Testament examples of believers receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>130</sup>

*If you have never been baptized in the Holy Spirit why not ask for this gift right now. Pray: "Heavenly Father, I realize I need your power to help me do the things you want me to do. I now ask you Jesus to baptize me with the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit fill me and help me as I now begin to speak in tongues by faith."*

PART 3

*The  
Sandals*

The final stage on the path to spiritual maturity, is identified by the last item the father gave to his prodigal son – the pair of sandals. They represent sacrificial service. When a person's feet are covered, they are then ready to go to work.

Warning! Before you venture out into a life of service, you must first be in possession of the robe and the ring, or you will be sure to fail. You must be confident in your relationship with God, walking in an intimacy with him, able to hear him and be submissive to his direction. And you must be knowledgeable about Satan and his devious, victorious in your own private life, and able to help others to be set free from his oppression. The Word of God must be very precious to you and it must dwell in you richly. These things must be established before you can ever hope to be effective in your service for God.

For if you struggle in your relationship with God, and have difficulty hearing his voice, how can you possibly be led by him? Your efforts, though born out of good intentions, will be in vain. You could be busy doing what might be called *'the work of God'*, however, you would be engaged in work he never commissioned for you personally to do. There will be no life in it for you; it will be religious duty, dry and empty. You will always be questioning God's will for you. Deep down you will be uncertain and unsure. Sadly, at the end of it all, after perhaps years of exhausting and sacrificial work, there will be no reward waiting for you in heaven because what you have accomplished has been by and through self!<sup>131</sup>

Or if you are ignorant of Satan and his devious, how easy will it be for him to thwart your efforts to serve God? Every servant of God will face Satan's fierce opposition. It comes with the territory. If you don't know your enemy or his means of attack, he will easily and simply knock you down every time you attempt to step out. Your thought life will be troubling to you, and the bombardment of Satan's temptation will inevitably wear you down. You do not know how to resist him, and he will subdue you by his ferocious attack.

Once you have crossed the line and fallen to his temptation, his efforts are intensified to bind you up through besetting sins. This will leave you in a constant state of mental, emotional and spiritual exhaustion, and you will simply be unable to serve. At worse, you will give up, accept his lies, live in denial, and be unfruitful and distant from God.

Only those who wear both the robe and the ring, will be in a position to take upon themselves the high office of servanthood. Not that achieving this status is the ultimate goal. God wants *you*, not what you can do for him. Relationship with God is everything.....everything! If you have God you have everything; if you don't have God you have nothing.

Nevertheless, for those who walk in covenant with God, and in victory over Satan, God wants them to be an effective instrument, through which he can communicate his love, power and wisdom to others. As Jesus declared in the parable of the vine and the branches, through relationship with him we will bear fruit.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, it is to the Father's glory that we bear much fruit.<sup>133</sup> God wants you to be productive as a consequence of relationship with him. It is faith first, then works. We don't earn God's approval through works and therefore obtain his favour. That is the way of human pride. We don't sing songs in order to come into God's presence. He personally lives in us, and is constantly with us, therefore, we sing. We don't gain access to God through our own efforts. It is through faith in the completed work of Christ upon the cross that we boldly enter in and sit down and talk with God. Then, out of that intimate connectedness with the living God, his love compels us and his Spirit directs us into action to serve others.

## Chapter 13

# WHAT IS SERVANTHOOD AND HOW IS IT ACHIEVED?

“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:25-28

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:5-11

**Servanthood is an attitude**

Servanthood should not be thought of as the role of the poorly educated or oppressed who lie at the bottom of society and perform menial tasks at the behest of others. Servanthood is an attitude that will propel you to greatness. Through it you will be revealed as a very child of God himself, made in his image and likeness, a perfect person, attaining to the whole measure of the stature Christ!

The Bible concept of servanthood is not about, position, title or skill. It is about a state of mind that determines firstly, how you will interact with God and others, secondly, the course and consequences of your life upon the earth, and thirdly, the reward you will receive in heaven.

Servanthood is contrary to the spirit of this age. The attitude of the present generation is "What's in it for me?" - it is completely and utterly self oriented. This generation seeks self-gratifying power, pleasure and passion. People do not pursue God, or the things of God, rather they chase after the things of the world. They believe "He who has the most toys, has the most fun." They believe that life is found in the abundance of possessions, which is in total opposition to the words of Jesus:

"Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.""

Luke 12:15

This all pervading ethos of our current culture, must be renounced and resisted by every believer who seeks to achieve spiritual maturity. We are not to serve ourselves, but rather to serve others. We are not here to gain riches, build our superannuation schemes, relax and take it easy. Rather we are to die to ourselves, abandon personal pursuits and live out our lives for the gain of others.

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.”

Galatians 5:13

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Philippians 2:3-4

Our destiny is to become like Jesus and, therefore, to be revealed as servant-kings. Jesus said:

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

John 14:12

What did Jesus do? Jesus said he came to serve, not to be served.<sup>134</sup> He lived and laboured for others. Even the miracles that Jesus did were acts of service – they were always used to benefit others. He did not use them intentionally as a display to attract attention to himself. Often, he said to the person who was healed “Don’t tell anybody about this.”<sup>135</sup> When the Pharisees requested him to perform a miracle to prove he really was a sent from God, he denied their demand.<sup>136</sup>

Servanthood is not drudgery, it is a joy. Why? Because it sets in motion the eternal laws of sowing and reaping. What we give, we receive in return. If we give our life away to others, we find life itself. When we honour others - when we regard others as valuable and esteem them highly, serving them - we in turn are honoured by God himself:



“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”

John 12:25-26

### **Servanthood is the sacrifice of self**

Servanthood does not drop out of the sky, like a gift from above. Servanthood is the relentless denial of our ‘selves’. It is first recognized as an eternal truth to embrace, secondly, established by a quality decision of our will, and finally, practiced by strict discipline.

Jesus said: ..."If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me".<sup>137</sup> The responsibility lies with us to deny ourselves. We cannot pray, "Lord make me more humble" or "Lord, take selfish desires from me". It is our job to humble ourselves, and to crucify our own selfish desires and ambitions. This is a daily practice of turning from what the world has to offer and what would serve our own interests, to do what the Spirit of Christ tells us to do. The cross symbolizes sacrifice. The sacrifice of what we personally want for ourselves, or what we personally want to do.

It is perhaps comforting to note that Jesus' disciples themselves had a hard time understanding him when it came to the issue of servanthood. For three long years he had hammered away at it with them, but they completely failed to see it. It was only after his death and resurrection that they eventually came to a realization of what it was all about and consequently gave their lives in service and sacrifice.

Why did the disciples first join up with Jesus? Was it because they recognized who he was and instantly submitted themselves to him as their Lord and Master? Or did they see him fulfilling some personal agenda and their attachment to him would mean personal gain?

We can't be absolutely certain why Judas joined up as a follower of Jesus. There is no special encounter recorded between Jesus and Judas like that of Peter, James and John or Matthew. We do know that there was a large entourage that accompanied Jesus - no doubt attracted to him by the miracles they saw him perform and thrilled at the things they heard Jesus saying which challenged the religious elite. Judas was a member of that throng. He was selected out of that group as an apostle, along with eleven others. He was elevated to a special position to be personally tutored by Jesus.

We can glean from the gospel records a personal agenda of Judas for personal gain. It became evident over the years that he accompanied Jesus. We are expressly told that he was a thief. He was the designated treasurer of the twelve, who was charged with the responsibility of carrying the common purse. He would take money out of that purse for his own personal use, without authority from Jesus. The night he betrayed Jesus, some of the others thought Judas had left because Jesus had requested him to give some money to the poor. This is likely to have been a regular practice and, therefore, an easy conclusion for the others to draw as they watched Judas leave after an exchange between Jesus and Judas at the table.

When Mary came and poured oil upon Jesus' feet some days prior, Judas was livid because it was worth a significant sum of money, a whole year's wages. He protested that she should not have been permitted to perform this act, but rather that the oil have been donated to them and sold, so that the proceeds could be used to give to the poor. His interest in charity, however, was a lie. His outward display of indignation masked a dark hidden motive. He

wanted the funds in order to steal some. Such a large sum given at one time would afford him a great opportunity to steal handfuls of coins out of the purse, without others noticing.

Judas was driven by an agenda of ‘What’s in it for me?’ The pride of life had him in its grip. He saw his association with Jesus as an opportunity for personal gain. We don’t know what he was doing with the money he stole. Nevertheless, the love of money had clearly seduced him and he was given over to it. This is the motive for Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. The price he was given by the religious authorities – thirty pieces of silver – was to be bonus money for him. He was an insider with an opportunity that presented itself and he took hold of it with both hands.

It is also possible that he thought Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah who had appeared - it was (wrongly) believed - to free Israel from the shackles of Rome. Israel had suffered a long persecution under Rome, not exactly the same but the parallels with Israel’s enslavement under Egypt were inescapable. Just as Moses had been sent by God and supernaturally delivered Israel from the cruel tyranny of Egypt, many were waiting for the promised Messiah, the Son of David, who would do the same they believed under their current circumstances. Moses himself had prophesied that a Prophet like himself would appear (Deuteronomy 18:15). This is what a group of people in the Jewish community at that time believed was about to take place. They were called Zealots and Judas was connected with the Simon the Zealot, another one of Jesus’ twelve disciples (Matthew 10:4). Many things indicated that Jesus could well be this conquering Messiah that they had been waiting for. In Judas’ mind, therefore, perhaps he was expecting Jesus to begin the overthrow of Rome’s rule at any moment. Being now in Jerusalem itself, the seat of power and the location of the temple of God, and having entered the city with the adoration of Jesus proclaimed by the crowds as the “Son of David” and the “prophet from Nazareth”, maybe this was going to be the moment

when Jesus would rise up. And Judas was taking it upon himself to just speed up the process.

For whatever reason Judas entertained, it didn't go exactly the way Judas had thought it would. Because we are told that "When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." (Matthew 27:3-4) There is no way that Judas imagined that this is what would happen to Jesus. A nightmare was unfolding before his eyes and he had started it. He wanted to stop it but it was out of his control. Very importantly, the remorse he felt was not godly sorry. There is a very real difference between the two. He was only sorry for the way things had turned out. He did not demonstrate godly sorrow because he did not repent. He did not lay down his life before God in humble submission begging His forgiveness and cleansing, turning away from his sin. Admission of sin is not necessarily the desire to be free from sin. He still loved money and he wasn't wanting to change. His sinful nature was still master and he remained devoted to it. He never submitted himself to God though he had had ample opportunity every step along the way and if ever there was a crossroad for Judas this was the moment. Yet he took matters into his own hands and went out and hung himself. Suicide is self-murder and the ultimate act of selfishness and defiance against God, the giver of life.

What about Peter? He had proved to be Jesus' right-hand man. He was the chief spokesman out of the group, one of the favoured three who got to go on special assignments with Jesus. Why did Peter join up with Jesus? Certainly he knew that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. When Jesus asked his disciples the probing question "Who do you say I am?" it was Peter who unhesitatingly spoke up pronouncing Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God.<sup>138</sup> However, was it the knowledge of who Jesus was and a desire to therefore serve him, that caused Peter to

leave his fishing business to follow Jesus? What motivated him to respond to Jesus' invitation to become a 'fisher of men'?

The evidence is ample, and the very next episode that unfolds clearly shows what was driving Peter. Immediately following Peter's proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he was going to suffer at the hands of the religious rulers in Jerusalem and that he would be put to death. Peter was extremely troubled by this, he took Jesus aside and forbade him to talk about this possibility.<sup>139</sup>

Peter was on a high. He was upwardly mobile, and extremely so. He had somehow stumbled into the position of being the right-hand man of the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord of the Universe. Jesus had chosen him over others. He was even now hearing from God personally, like Moses or Elijah. Jesus himself had said so: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."<sup>140</sup> What prestige, what power, what prominence now awaited him? All his childhood dreams of preeminence and privilege were now within his grasp. The uneducated son of a fisherman, who had no connections and no hope of attaining a position in life, was on his way to the top. But now, to contemplate Christ's rejection by the ruling elite to the point that he would suffer a criminal's fate, even death upon a cross, would mean the collapse of the grand vista that surely awaited him. Positive Peter could not and would not entertain such a negative thought. He was rattled to the core of his being. He was indignant and angry that Jesus would consider such a possibility. He wanted personal achievement and fulfillment like any man, and he was first in line to get it and nothing was going to get in his way now – not even Jesus.

What was Jesus' response? Jesus cut Peter to the heart, revealing his selfish and devilish motivation. He rebuked Peter calling him Satan, and said he was chasing after corrupt desires, not God's objectives:

“Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."”

Matthew 16:23

Jesus could have not stated more clearly the wickedness of independent human pride, which Peter had demonstrated. It was in total opposition to God. Its nature and character was of Satan himself. It could not be entertained for a moment, but had to be ruthlessly exposed and put down. Peter was still thinking in terms of his own agenda, not God’s agenda.

Jesus went on to explain the remedy for this human heart condition:

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Matthew 16:23-26

The purpose of human life is not to live for self. It is not to seek self-fulfillment, self-satisfaction or self-gratification. It is to lay aside one’s own personal agenda, to enter into relationship with God, and serve him and others according to his agenda and his direction. Any and every other pursuit than the selfless pursuit of God is meaningless and empty; and results in eternal death.

The point of the analogy is poignant. Jesus did not want to go to the cross. He pleaded with his Father in the garden of Gethsemane that another way be found. But there was none, and he humbled himself to walk in simple but costly obedience.<sup>141</sup> In this, he modeled for us the right and only way.

Had Peter learned the lesson? No. The importance of servanthood could not have been more clearly stated by Jesus but still Peter and the other disciples could not see it. Jesus would yet use still further opportunities to press the point home.

Moving forward to the climax of Christ's time upon the earth, we find Jesus together with his disciples assembled together for the Passover meal, however, something was wrong.<sup>142</sup> It was customary for a lowly servant, and typically a woman, to wash guests' feet prior to an evening meal. These meals were relaxed and prolonged affairs, and people ate in a reclined position. Smelly, grubby feet - which had trampled first-century refuse and dung laden streets - positioned right next to your face, was not very conducive to an enjoyable meal-time experience! But no one had been there to wash their feet as they entered the room. They would have been no doubt annoyed and perhaps a little apprehensive, but no one was willing to condescend to take the task upon himself. They would just have to put up with the predicament.

How shocked they were then as they watched Jesus disrobe and take up a basin and towel and proceed to wash their feet. An uneasy silence would have fallen which was broken only by Peter's indignant and caustic question "Lord, why are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus responded gently and still hopeful, yet inside a little exasperated! He said "You don't understand this now but later you will." After all this time he had spent, laying out the principle of servanthood, Peter together with all the others, still failed to grasp it. Any one of them should have been quick to jump up and wash their friends' feet but they were all too full of pride. Each of them was still self-seeking, not seeking the benefit of others. They just didn't get it.

Peter was yet again, rattled to the core, angry and mystified by the servant actions of Jesus. As Jesus moved towards him, Peter demanded "No don't do it" to which Jesus replied "Peter I must. If

you don't allow me too it will mean that your relationship with me will be severed."

Peter was falling apart on the inside. What he was observing just wasn't adding up. If Jesus was down on his knees, what might be expected of him? He wanted to rule and he thought he was next in line to Jesus. But if this meant he was going to end up on the floor with his hands in muck...this was going too far. He was hoping and expecting others to wash his feet and more, not the other way around. He wanted to be the celebrity who was feted and served by others, he certainly hadn't signed up for this kind of duty.

And now he is faced with a monumental dilemma because Jesus has given him an ultimatum. Either let me wash your feet or get out of here, and don't come back. Not wanting to turn his back on Jesus and not ready to die to his self just yet, he blurts out "Then wash my hands and head also!" Jesus eases the situation, and takes the focus off Peter while washing his feet, and points the finger at the real rebel, the one who would betray him.

Having washed all the disciples feet, Jesus

".....put on his clothes and returned to his place."Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.""

John 13:12-15

Once again he personally demonstrates and explains the attitude of servanthood, and once again, the disciples miss the point. For shortly, they will all abandon him to save their own necks. In particular, Peter will disown Jesus repeatedly in order to escape.



Of course, it is at this time that the disciples witness the ultimate example of servanthood, as Jesus lays down his own life as a sacrifice. Even after this incredible act of selflessness, Peter still pursues his own self interest. He gives up and goes back fishing.<sup>143</sup> However, Jesus knows he is at the point of crossing over.

After the resurrection, Jesus meets him on the shore and asks him, "Peter, do you (agape) love me?"<sup>144</sup> What Jesus is asking is, 'Peter will you lay down your life for me? Will you surrender yourself, wholly and unreservedly to me?' Peter is reluctant. He replies "Lord, you know that I (phileo) love you."

There is an important distinction evident in the original Greek. Agape love and phileo love are quite different. Agape love is self-sacrificing love. It is given without expecting to receive anything in return. Phileo love is friendship love, only given in the knowledge of receiving something back in return. Phileo love means "I'll scratch your back, if you'll scratch mine".

In other words, Peter is saying 'I am a friend of yours, but my friendship with you goes just so far. I'll only do as much as I am willing to. I still want to know what's in it for me, before I commit myself. I am reluctant to give myself unreservedly and sacrificially to you.' Jesus knows, however, that he is almost there. Jesus tells him 'Peter, take care of my followers. I'm trusting you with them. There is no other way. You must lay down your life in service for others and I'm expecting that you will do what I ask of you.'

Peter does humble himself. He joins back up with the other disciples and they wait patiently and obediently for the coming of the Spirit. Their journey begins as they commence to walk in submission to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus to serve. When they are persecuted and imprisoned, they consider it a privilege. In the end, most of them will also pay the ultimate sacrifice with their very lives. Peter, himself, after years of faithful and selfless service, is crucified.



## Chapter 14

# THE HEART OF A SERVANT

True servanthood is based upon certain internal qualities. These are necessarily reflected in behaviour and actions, however, external performance alone does not constitute true servanthood. 1 Corinthians 13:3 says “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing”.

It is not enough to make sacrifices. People make sacrifices all the time for the wrong reasons. The young men that commandeered planes and flew them into the twin towers of the American Trade Centre paid the ultimate sacrifice, but their beliefs, motives and desires were wrong.

Many people work for the church, sacrificing time, money and effort, however, if their motives are impure or improper they gain nothing. They themselves will enter heaven, if they are genuinely saved, but all of their works will be consumed by the fire:

“But there is going to come a time of testing at the judgment day to see what kind of work each builder has done. Everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value. If the work survives the fire, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builders themselves will be saved, but like someone escaping through a wall of flames.”

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 NLT

The test of true servanthood is the motives and intents of the heart. All of the Old Testament and New Testament heroes possessed these heart attributes; these qualities of the soul. All of them humbled themselves under the hand of God, and walked *with* him, in submission *to* him. In Acts 13:22, David is declared by God as “*a man after my own heart*” because “*he will do everything I want him to do*”. Therefore, the heart of God is the heart of a servant. God is love and love is revealed by selfless giving to others: “*God so loved the world that he gave.....*”.<sup>145</sup> To match your own heart with God’s will bring you into the place of true servanthood.

Here are five internal characteristics of true servanthood:

1. *A true servant puts others first.*

Servanthood is placing others ahead of yourself, and your own personal needs and wants. It is an intentional act of laying your own life down. Instead of thinking about yourself, you think about ‘them’ - *What are their needs? How can I help them?*

It is not just putting your own agenda aside, it is throwing it away, and becoming oriented to other people’s predicaments. You don’t live to make yourself a success, you live to make other people successful.

Romans 12:10 says “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves”. To honour someone is to value them highly; to esteem them to the highest degree. When we honour someone *above* ourselves we value their needs, desires and success above our own. We sacrifice our own interests for their interests. We give up our own comfort, to put them at ease. We spend ourselves – time, energy and money – to enrich them.

What if they don’t respond in kind? What if they take what we give them and give nothing back in return? That does not factor into the

equation. Jesus said “Love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you”.<sup>146</sup> Our objective is simply to serve. Whether people respond or not is immaterial. Our reward is from God, not them. We don’t look to receive back from those we serve. If we did, we would be an employee rather than a servant. We would be operating for personal gain, rather than out of selfless giving. The mark of true servanthood is to give with no personal hidden agenda, no strings attached.

When finally a believer steps into this state of death to self, then they attain the full measure of the stature of Christ. Then their heart is fashioned after God’s own heart and they are revealed as a true child of God.

## 2. *A true servant possesses the confidence to serve.*

Servanthood is reflected in personal security. A person who willingly serves is confident in their own identity and personhood. An insecure person is always wondering about what others are thinking about them, so they must act and look important. It is impossible for an insecure person to serve, or to serve with a right motive.

A true servant gladly abandons all personal ‘rights’ and desire for self aggrandizement. They don’t have to appear superior to anyone. They know they are accepted and acclaimed by God their Father, and that is their source of internal peace and confidence.

This is why the ‘robe’ is essential. The source of your identity is as a child of God. The fabric of your being is wrapped in an intimate relationship with God. You don’t need any person’s approval to give you a sense of being someone.

When Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, he certainly didn’t get Peter’s approval. But it didn’t matter to him what his disciples thought of him, so long as he was doing what God wanted him to do.

No one expected the real Messiah to die on a cross. He was to be an all-conquering deliverer. But it didn't matter to Jesus what others thought, only that he did what his Father asked of him.

Like Jesus who *"made himself of no reputation"*, a true servant does not expect or need a reputation.<sup>147</sup>

### 3. *A true servant initiates service to others.*

True servants are on the lookout for opportunities to serve. They see these opportunities and seize them, serving without hesitation. They do not wait to be asked. They demonstrate initiative of the highest caliber. Nothing is too great or too small. And they do it with gladness.

It was Jesus who took the initiative when he washed the disciples' feet. No-one asked him to do it, or expected him to do it. There was an obvious need and Jesus responded to that need. There was an opportunity to serve and Jesus jumped up, eager to serve.

When addressing the church elders the apostle Peter wrote:

*"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve."*

1 Peter 5:2

True servanthood is characterized by an eagerness to serve. We are not to drag our feet, with an "If I have to" attitude, looking to avoid entanglement and personal cost. Rather, we are to be enthusiastic about helping others, and to put our hand up, offering our service quickly and cheerfully. A true servant demonstrates the same attitude as the prophet Isaiah who willingly volunteered saying "Here am I. Send me."<sup>148</sup>

4. *A true servant is not position-conscious.*

True servants don't care for titles or position – they just want to see the job done. And they don't care who gets the credit for it.

People who want a position or title are operating under worldly principles. They want to be the big-shot who gets noticed because they get to lord it over others. This is the antithesis of servanthood. It is what Jesus spoke directly against in contrast to genuine servanthood:

“Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him.

"What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you

must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."''

Matthew 20:20-28

Why did the mother of James and John approach Jesus with the request to elevate her sons to positions next only to Jesus himself? What was her motive? Like any mother, it is likely she wanted her sons to prosper, but was it because she could then boast “They are *my* sons! I gave birth to them and raised them. I made them what they are today”. We can’t be certain about her motives, but what about James and John? It appears that the matter had already been discussed between James, John and their mother, because Jesus didn’t continue to address their mother directly, but rather dialogued with the two men. Perhaps they thought if their mother would ask, it wouldn’t seem too direct and Jesus would more willingly accede to the request. What is clear is that they wanted the highest office that was attainable and they were sneakily getting in first. They had kept their plan hidden from the other disciples who were ignorant of their grab for power.

When Jesus asked if they were willing to pay the price to secure these positions they were quick to agree – even though they had no idea what he was talking about. What was the ‘cup’ he had to drink? We know now it was the cup of a servant’s life-sacrifice, but typical of the disciples, whenever Jesus employed a metaphor to enunciate a truth they had no concept of what he was driving at; he was always having to explain to them what he was talking about.

The reaction of the other disciples was predictable. They wanted those positions just as much as James and John, and no doubt thought they had at least an equal right to them. They were extremely angry, and trouble was brewing. This was again an ideal opportunity for Jesus to lay out the principle of servanthood and its defining place in the kingdom of God. Authority in the kingdom is



not obtained through title or position. Authority is derived from the content of a person's heart which reflects God's own heart.

Servanthood is the key to greatness in the kingdom. The way up is achieved by going down, the complete opposite of how greatness is achieved in the world. Power in the world is attained through conquest and control. It reflects Satan's own motives and attempted means when he sought to overthrow God's throne. There is nothing more corrupt or wicked. God detests it with anger. Citizens of God's kingdom cannot operate via self-promotion. They must be of a humble spirit which promotes the interest of others, at personal expense. They must exhibit the heart of the lowliest servant, and be willing to serve all. Position is meaningless; servant action prompted by a servant heart is paramount. God declares:

*"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit..."*

Isaiah 66:2

5. *A true servant serves out of love.*

Servanthood is motivated by love for others. It is not a romantic kind of love; it is not soppy or sentimental. It is an intense desire to benefit others through giving of ourselves to them. People can be paid to serve, or forced to serve, but a true servant volunteers to serve. The reason he or she wants to serve is because they are motivated by an extreme compassion for others.

Love is not a feeling. Love is a decision. Feelings always follow the decision we make to give our lives over to something or someone. Jesus put it this way "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."<sup>149</sup> What we choose to treasure, what we decide is of value, we will pursue. Having made that choice, our feelings and emotions will follow accordingly.

Jesus displayed emotions according to that which he valued. For instance, it seems uncharacteristic of Jesus to act violently by driving out the money-traders from the Temple with a whip. But the Temple was the place where people met with his Father. He valued people's desire to connect with God. The purpose for which he came was to bring people back into relationship with God. His emotional outburst was tied to that which he valued above everything else.

The most intense display of emotion by Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before he was crucified. He sweat drops of blood, because of the emotional anguish at the thought of being separated from his Father. He almost died then and there. Nothing could be worse, because the most important thing to Jesus, the reason he lived, was for his Father. On the cross he knew his relationship with his Father would be severed; something he had never experienced for all eternity. Even though he knew it was only momentary, the thought of it was overwhelming. However, what drove him to the cross was his decision to obey his Father at any cost – “not my will, but yours be done”<sup>150</sup> - coupled with his love for you. 1John 3:16 says “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us...’ and Galatians 2:20 says Jesus “loved me and gave himself for me”.

Thus, the believer who

- puts others ahead of his/her own agenda,
- possesses the confidence to serve,
- initiates service to others,
- is not position-conscious, and
- serves out of love

has attained the whole measure of the stature of Christ. It is this for which they have been prepared for – to serve. Their hearts are pure and they minister with right motives. Their hearts have come to resemble the very heart of God himself: they laugh at the things he

laughs at and cry when he cries. They are considered great in the kingdom of God and great is the reward that awaits them in heaven.

*“The measure of a man is not how many servants he has, but how many men he serves.” D.L. Moody*

## Chapter 15

# THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF SERVANTHOOD

It is well understood that becoming a Christian involves an exchange: our sin for Jesus' righteousness. He takes our sin upon himself and supernaturally imparts to us his own righteousness. This occurs at one miraculous moment at the point of conversion. However, throughout the gospels Jesus outlines not just a point of conversion (when we are 'born again') but a whole life-time of exchange. He said "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."<sup>151</sup> The act of 'taking up our cross daily' sets in motion a continual trade-off. It functions out of a denial of self which is obedience and servanthood.

Jesus offers us the following: I will grant you eternal-life (which is experientially knowing me and my Father<sup>152</sup>) if you will surrender your self-life. I will give you unspeakable joy if you will give up your pursuit of earthly pleasures. I will give you immeasurable riches in heaven (and supply all your needs right here and now) if you will stop chasing after worldly possessions. I will give you kingdom authority if you will end your quest for earthly power, recognition

and position. In other words, there are benefits and costs of entering into servanthood.

## **The Benefits of Servanthood**

The benefits of servanthood are numerous:

### *Protects you from pride*

What we accomplish is not by our own hand. We are just carrying out orders from a higher authority. We cannot sit back and exclaim 'Look what I have done.'

The true servant recognizes everything he is, and has, is a gift from above. He owns nothing and deserves nothing. He is a mere servant who has no rights of or in himself. However, he also recognizes that *in Christ* he has abundant provision, all authority, every blessing, and absolute right to live in the presence of God and walk in intimate relationship with him.

### *Lets you live everyday fulfilled*

Those who live for self are chained to an incessant treadmill. Because the fulfillment of lusts is only temporary, their cravings are never fully satisfied. They are constantly driven to seek the next thrill, then another and another and another...*ad infinitum*. The self-life is exhausting and boring.

A person who is dead to self, however, has been released from these chains and stepped from this treadmill. They simply do not live to fulfill their own lusts. Therefore, they live every moment of everyday fulfilled because their life is not lived in the context of self-satisfaction, but rather lived for God and for others.

They subdue their own lusts and rule over their own bodies. They give the members of their bodies as instruments of righteousness. They offer themselves to the Holy Spirit to allow rivers of living water to flow out from within them to affect change in the world. The gifts of the Holy Spirit flow from them and the fruit of the Holy Spirit grows in them – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control. Life is lived for giving, not getting.

*Sets you free from other people's judgements*

A person who has died to self, and lives as a servant of God, does not need nor do they seek a reputation. It does not matter what others think of them, only what God thinks of them. They only want his approval. They know that in this life they will be misunderstood, reviled and persecuted by others; just as Jesus was.

They do not have to acquire a financial empire or attain celebrity status in order to win the approval and adulation of others. They do not have to build a name for themselves, for they only lift up the Name of Jesus. God has written their name in the Book of Life; and this is all that matters personally to them.

*Brings you to wholeness*

Man was created for relationship. Consequently, wholeness and a sense of well-being are derived from relationships. A selfish person looks inward whereas a selfless servant looks outward. Therefore, it is the servant who finds wholeness because they deliberately and with a right intention connect themselves to God and to others through service.

*Produces in you an unworldly joy*

The true servant experiences genuine joy. Joy springs out of a sense of internal wholeness and completeness. Whereas happiness is dependent upon happenings, and therefore transient, real joy abides whatever the circumstances.

Immature Christians, like little children, are happy only when things go their way. On the other hand, mature Christians have learned to be content in whatever circumstances they find themselves. Their eyes are upon God and the next world. Every circumstance they find themselves in is an opportunity to serve, so they win every time.

*Elevates you to a place of greatness and honour*

True servanthood elevates you to the status of a mature son or daughter of God. There is nothing greater than this. No amount of money, no title, no position, no possession, nothing compares even remotely with this. You reflect God's very person. You are clothed with his majesty and his glory. You are given a crown and are seated upon a royal throne. You are honoured by God himself, who considers you his friend and he praises you.

*Builds for you inestimable treasure in heaven*

Rewards in heaven will be given to those who have acted out of right motives. Therefore, it is only true servants who will receive rich rewards.

**The Costs of Servanthood**

The costs of servanthood can be summed up in one word - sacrifice. My money, my possessions, my time, my career, my choice, my

comfort, my life – they are no longer my own. As a servant of God, I renounce all personal claims. Everything is laid upon the altar of sacrifice. I live completely out of the context of relationship with God, absolutely committed to do only what he asks of me.

The real disciple of Jesus will follow his example and walk the path of selfless obedience and sacrifice. The Amplified Bible translates John 5:30:

“I am able to do nothing from Myself - independently, of My own accord; but as I am taught by God and get His orders. [I decide as I am bidden to decide. As the voice comes to Me, so I make the decision.] Even as I hear, I judge and My judgement is right (just, righteous), because I do not seek or consult My own will - I have no desire to do what is pleasing to myself, my own aim, My own purpose - but only the will and pleasure of the Father who sent Me.”

This is the life every disciple of Jesus is called to live.



# Chapter 16

## THE BAPTISM WITH FIRE

John the Baptist declared that Jesus "... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire".<sup>153</sup> Chapter 12 discussed the baptism with the Holy Spirit, this chapter deals with latter aspect, the baptism with fire.

There are two sides to the baptism with fire.

First, fire represents refining and cleansing. When gold is purified it is fired again and again. Each time, dross comes to the surface and it is skimmed off. Molten purified gold is like a mirror. Once you pass through the baptism with fire you will reflect the very image of God himself.

Hebrews 5:14 defines a "mature" believer as one "who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." The "constant use" refers to the "truths of God's word" (v12). Over and over again, through the refining fire of life's circumstances, you have the opportunity to apply God's truth or whether to ignore it and cling to earthly wisdom. You can respond in the Spirit, or in the flesh.

The mature believer has learned to accept, rely upon and implement the truth contained in God's word, in whatever circumstance they face. They have learned to be led by the Spirit of truth, and not to respond out of their old carnal nature.

The second side is related to the first. Fire also represents persecution and pain. Once you have become mature and take a stand for the truth you will face persecution. This persecution comes directly from Satan who opposes the truth at every point. He will persecute you with any and every means available to him. The persecution will come via the world and from “false brothers”.<sup>154</sup>

The apostle Paul refers to “a messenger of Satan” who doggedly followed him and brought all manner of hostility and persecution against him.<sup>155</sup> Despite Paul pleading with the Lord that this demon spirit would be stopped from harassing him, God allowed it to remain in order to fulfill the exceptional purpose for Paul in the plan of God. Although Paul’s case was special, persecution is something all true believers will face. In Paul’s second letter to Timothy he states “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”.<sup>156</sup>

Jesus himself warned “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also”.<sup>157</sup> Jesus faced the fiercest opposition not from the ruling civil empire of the day, but from Israel’s religious leaders whom he denounced as hypocrites.

The point is this: once you take a stand for the truth you will be hated and rejected by the world and by religious hypocrites. Ultimately, Jesus was killed for this very reason. The Jewish leaders and the crowd despised and hated Jesus, not for any crime, but for speaking the truth. They bayed for his blood at his trial. The last statement Jesus made to Pontus Pilate before he was led away to be crucified was “....In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, *to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*”<sup>158</sup>

Despite this hardship, the mature believer welcomes it knowing that persecution encourages perseverance in the word of truth.<sup>159</sup> It makes them strong spiritually. Just like a body-builder uses weights

to build strength, persecution is the force of resistance which the believer pushes against and grows spiritually stronger.

Moreover, a rich reward awaits them in heaven. Jesus assures us: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."<sup>160</sup>

### **The identity of hypocrites in the present-day church**

Facing persecution from the world is much more easily identified and resisted, compared to persecution that may come from within the church. Opposition from within - from false believers who are hypocrites - is much harder to recognize and stand up against.

Jesus was careful to distinguish the teaching of the hypocrites of his day with the truth. Time and time again, when teaching his disciples or the crowds, Jesus said "I tell you the truth..." In contrast to the truth, Jesus was resolute to expose error which was contrary to the truth. The source of all error he declared was Satan whom he called the father of lies, and in whom there was no truth.<sup>161</sup> The people whom Satan used to chiefly promote and enforce error were the Jewish religious leaders - the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus said that the devil himself was their father.<sup>162</sup> (The Pharisees and Sadducees thought that *they* were the champions of the truth and that God was *their* Father!) Jesus warned his disciples to be on their guard against the 'yeast' of the Pharisees, meaning the error they taught was subtle and would end up influencing a person's total perception and practice.<sup>163</sup>

In turn, the apostles all warned the church against the same type of threat posed by false teachers, false prophets and false apostles. The early church continually faced danger from these 'false brothers' infiltrating the church in order to introduce their destructive heresies. One dominant error they presented in the

early church was that grace had to be supplemented with works in order to be saved, however, this is not the only form of heresy that the church can succumb to. Both Peter and Jude addressed another type of heresy. Peter warned of the error of lawlessness. Similarly, Jude wrote regarding “godless” men who had secretly infiltrated the church “who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord”.<sup>164</sup>

What was driving these men to accept and promote heresies? The bottom line is that they distorted the truth for their own personal gain and honour. They ambitiously pursued positions of leadership and control over the church. Paul warned the Ephesian church, which was then vibrant and strong - in every way a model church - that “wolves” would come in and “not spare the flock” and “even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them”.<sup>165</sup>

Therefore, there exists a continual and abiding threat that hypocrites will assume positions of power and influence in the church, in order to secure a personal platform and following. It is important to understand that their method remains the same, by cleverly and secretly distorting the truth in some way they distinguish their teaching and therefore persuade others to follow them. They mix their error in with the truth (like yeast added to a batch of dough) and so corrupt the word of God. By twisting the truth ever so slightly, it is possible to steer people into abject apostasy.

It is our own responsibility to be on our guard and avoid being caught in their deception. God did not say he would unilaterally protect us by striking such men down before they could wreck havoc upon the church. Instead he warned us to be careful and avoid being trapped.

It is a difficult and disturbing question but is it possible that such men have positions of influence and power in the present-day

church? How can we tell if, like certain of the Ephesian church elders, leaders amongst us have gone into error and are, at this very moment, leading many astray? Is there wrong-teaching which has taken a church, or groups of churches, captive?

The mature Christian must take a stand for the truth which simultaneously means that they must take a stand against error. Their baptism with fire will continue for as long as apostasy is active in the church. They cannot sit idle without protesting the infiltration of false doctrines. Ultimately, they may have to stand apart from the church, if it becomes utterly and irredeemably apostate.

### ***What are the identifying characteristics of a hypocrite?***

As mentioned above, the Bible identifies two kinds of hypocrites, – the *legalist* and the *amoralist* – according to the two principal errors the church is at risk of falling into - legalism on one hand and liberalism on the other.

The *legalist-hypocrite* lives his whole life by a set of rules. He lives outside of mainstream society creating an isolated, idiosyncratic and binding society. He emphasizes *separation and exclusivity*.

The *amoralist-hypocrite* lives without any rules. He lives inside mainstream society and his life is indistinguishable from the secular. He emphasizes *unity*, actively promotes ecumenicalism and shuns doctrinal truth (because doctrines divide).

Hypocrites selectively teach from the Bible, distorting the truth. They believe and say that they abide by the truth, however, they have become blind to the real truth. They present a different gospel and a different Jesus.<sup>166</sup> The *legalist-hypocrite's* gospel perversion is salvation through works. The *amoralist-hypocrite's* gospel perversion is salvation for all. The core teachings of both types of hypocrites focus upon self (although they would claim otherwise).

The *legalist-hypocrite* sees God as distant, holy and judgmental. The *amoralist-hypocrite* sees him as being near, tangible and forgiving; and experiences him through mystical practices and/or conjures his 'Presence' through music, the eucharist, or other religious rite. The God of the *legalist-hypocrite* and the *amoralist-hypocrite* is not the one true God. They are blindly unaware that they are serving the devil himself. Both are denying Jesus Christ who calls them evil-doers and, on the day of judgment, will cast them from himself.<sup>167</sup>

How does a person come under the influence of a hypocrite-leader? They listen to their false teaching without testing it against the truth and so are led astray. Hypocrisy is like a cancer that, to begin with, is small and hidden but then invades the person's whole being making them (spiritually) weak and eventually killing them (spiritually). This is why Jesus warned of the 'yeast of the Pharisees'.

The hypocrite has intentionally and willingly left the path of truth. He loves the different path he is now walking and is self-justified. He has become dead to the truth and cannot see it. It is impossible for him to return to the truth.<sup>168</sup>

The hypocrite uses biblical words and terminology, but applies them improperly. They mean something different to him than what truth defines them as.

The hypocrite says that he is living to please God, and that he is doing the will of God. However, his works are empty and vain. The hypocrite runs his own race, setting his own agenda, and so like Judas betrays the Lord. He does not truly know God or hear his voice. If he indeed knew God he would know the truth and run the right race.

Hypocrites always seek worldly honour, through the recognition of men. They want the world to acknowledge that there is something different and special about them - that they are 'good' and that 'the hand of God' is upon them.

In consequence, hypocrites are infected with the worldly quest for power and control. They make pacts with worldly authorities in order to gain acceptance and exercise control. They believe God supports their quest for headship. They believe they possess a God-given right to rule.

***Antagonism towards truth-seekers***

Hypocrites disdain *truth-seekers*. *Truth-seekers* love the truth, diligently search out the truth and live by the truth. They know God and walk with him. Their righteousness, their hope, their comfort and their joy is found in Christ alone. *Truth-seekers* have become dead to this world and look with passionate longing for the next. They correctly interpret the scriptures and refuse to compromise truth... absolutely.

The *legalist-hypocrite* incorrectly calls *truth-seekers* compromising amoralists. The *ammoralist-hypocrite* incorrectly calls them anti-intellectual legalists. Just as the hypocrites opposed Jesus, present-day hypocrites oppose *truth-seekers*. And just as Jesus exposed the hypocrites and condemned their teaching, *truth-seekers* in this day root out the error of false teachers. *Truth-seekers* and hypocrites cannot and do not walk together. Consequently, *truth-seekers* stand opposed to the present day ecumenical move to unite Protestant and Catholic churches, which was initiated at Vatican II and is being driven to this day by hypocrites. *Truth-seekers* point out its deceit, its false unity and its hidden agenda to gain control by distorting the truth.

The Catholic Church is a cult, it is *not* Christian. It preaches a different Godhead (which effectively includes Mary), a different Jesus (the Eucharist) and a different gospel (salvation by works - the Sacraments - purgatory, penance and indulgences). It claims exclusivity (that it constitutes the one true church) and that it has been entrusted with the 'truth' (which is not the Bible alone but includes the Church's Traditions - the Magesterium's interpretations of and additions to the Bible which are contrary to the plain teaching of the Bible). It promotes the errors of idolatry, necrolatry, a priest-craft and a papacy. The Catholic Church is *not* compromising its doctrines to accommodate the ecumenical movement. It is craftily and wickedly convincing members of the Protestant churches to compromise their own doctrines for the sake of 'unity', to come under the wing of the Catholic Church and to accept the Pope as their head. In order to advance or protect its power and position, the Roman Catholic Church has shed more blood than any other known institution (conservatively 50 million). It historically and abidingly stands opposed to Jesus Christ, his church and the truth.

Hypocrites look down their noses at *truth-seekers* because they are ridiculed and snubbed by the world and its authorities. This opposition arises because Satan is the ruler of the nations of this world. *Truth-seekers* are at war with Satan and the kingdom of darkness, and they exercise the authority God has granted them to personally overcome him. Satan employs every device to attempt to subdue *truth-seekers*. Satan has hypocrites in the grip of his power.

Hypocrites, of both types, are found amongst the religious leaders of the day (although one faction will tend to dominate at any one time, in a particular church or association of churches). At present, amongst evangelical churches, the *ammoralist-hypocrites* are prevalent (in Jesus' day it was the *legalist-hypocrites*). They comprise a diverse movement and fall under the titles of contemplative, spiritual formation/disciplines, emerging and



missional.<sup>169</sup> They teach a *liberal theology* – that denies principal truths such as the fallen nature of man, the penalty paid by Jesus at the cross and the existence of hell – they believe in *universalism* – that all religions lead to God, and Jesus is just one way, not the only way – and practice *mysticism* in order to experience God – that is an occultic practice that brings about an altered state of consciousness and an openness to the demonic realm.

### ***Five key distinguishing marks***

Although hypocrites say they are spiritual in a Biblical sense, they practice worldliness and occultism and teach others to do the same.

Although hypocrites say they believe the word of God, they selectively use the scripture and distort its meaning in order to support their own position.

Although hypocrites say that heaven is their home, their heart is not there and they find their satisfaction, hope and comfort in the things of this world.

Although hypocrites say that they are in the will of God, they do not do what he wants nor do they seek him to find out what it is that he requires of them.

Although hypocrites present themselves as possessing a form of godliness, they possess no power and the true Holy Spirit and the genuine works of God are absent.

### ***Conclusion***

The true church of the living God is described as “the pillar and foundation of truth”.<sup>170</sup> Mature believers take their stand with Jesus on the side of truth. They affirm the inerrancy of Biblical truth, and call God’s people to embrace the truth, reject the lie and separate

themselves from all hypocrisy. Therefore, they willingly and joyfully undergo their baptism with fire whatever the personal cost.

## Appendix - Discipling

In the pages of this book I have endeavoured to lay out the key elements of spiritual growth. If you have read this far and you recognize that you are still somewhere along that path, you will want to know if there is something practical that you can do to spur you on and complete the process.

Alternately, if you can judge yourself and see that you have travelled that path and are living the life of a mature Christian, you will naturally want to help others and would like to know how you can practically assist others grow spiritually.

The very practical way that facilitates growth to spiritual maturity is that which Jesus himself modelled which is *discipling*.

In this appendix, some principles and practices of discipling are explained. These concepts were born out of my own experience as God led to me into discipling others.

As I looked back at my own experience, very early on as a new Christian there were two men who disciplined me though I did not understand its importance at the time. Later when I joined a cell-based church I learned the great significance and influence of small group participation in Christian growth and development.

What I have discovered is this: when a person first comes to Christ they should be disciplined one-on-one by a mature Christian, to help them navigate the basics of Christian beliefs and practices. In this environment they are encouraged and directed to adopt the lifestyle of a Christian, making the necessary adjustments to their behavior as the Holy Spirit leads.

Subsequently, they should join a small group comprising 3-4 in total, with at least one mature Christian present (most likely the person who first disciplined them). It is in this setting that they are self-

accountable and continue to make strides towards spiritual maturity.

Why a group of 3-4? I found this the optimum size. 5 was too many, it did not allow time or space for the necessary relational interactions. Jesus himself took three aside – Peter, James and John – whom he gave special time, at a level of intimacy that others did not witness. This is the optimum number.

(In addition, I have found that one-on-one discipling and the small discipleship groups should be based upon gender-lines. Mixed groups just don't work.)

Other larger group settings directed at equipping, teaching and instruction are effective in communicating God's word, but they cannot replace or be a substitute for the dynamic which occurs in a small group setting.

Even as a mature Christian, you should also meet with a small group comprising other mature Christians. It keeps you sharpened and focused, and facilitates what the Holy Spirit is wanting to achieve through the church.

### **Example from history – the Methodists<sup>171</sup>**

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, John Wesley spearheaded one of the most remarkable revivals in all of history. England was ripe for social tumult, just as France had experienced in its bloody revolution. Even secular historians acknowledge that England was saved from such a terrible consequence because of the efforts of one man – John Wesley - and the movement he founded – Methodism.

Wesley was able to take the worst of sinners and transform them into saints who in turn changed the social landscape of England. The movement he initiated was responsible for the establishment of schools, hospitals, orphanages, unions and care for the

underprivileged. It proved to be the groundswell of social opinion to reform prisons, overturn slavery, end child labour and other onerous work-place practices, and set England on a path to be a nation-leader in the world.

What is crucial, and why the movement got its name, was the *method* that he adopted. His method grew out of his own life experiences. Wesley, as a child, was disciplined by his mother, Susannah. She would deal one-on-one with each of her children on a regular basis and enquire as to the state of their soul. Later on in life, at Oxford University, he joined with his brother (Charles), George Whitfield and others in a group which became known as the 'Holy Club'. In this group they made themselves accountable to one another to live out genuine holiness. These experiences, and others, led him to institute a particular structure for the church movement that grew up around him.

He established a set of interconnecting small groups, which has elements comparable to the three stages of spiritual growth outlined in this book. First was the *class* meeting. When a person was saved they were immediately placed in a class. Later in his ministry, Wesley would not conduct an evangelistic campaign if there were no classes in that area ready to take new converts. In this regard he remarked "why should I beget babies just to cast them to the devil".

In the class, twelve people gathered weekly with a mature leader and each in turn would give an account of their spiritual walk that week; where they had won and where they had succumbed to temptation. The leader would encourage and guide, and they would pray for each other. The emphasis of the class meeting was to adjust a person's behaviour, to set aside sin and become godly in conduct.

Henry Ward Beecher said, "The greatest thing John Wesley ever gave to the world is the Methodist class-meeting."

Dwight L. Moody gave a similar appraisal “The Methodist class-meetings are the best institutions for training converts the world ever saw.”

The next small group was the *band*. It was a homogenous group – by sex, age and marital status – comprising 5-10 persons. It was the original group that early Methodism adopted, from which sprang the others. (With the establishment of classes, a new convert started in a class and having demonstrated spiritual advancement, faithfulness and commitment moved on to join a band.) The central function of the band was to permit what Wesley called “close conversation”. This was an intimate soul-searching aimed at unveiling a person’s motives and desires. Whereas in the class meeting, the leader quizzed each member and acted in a pastoral role, in the band, although a leader was present, each participant took responsibility to divulge their private thoughts and reveal their growth towards inner holiness. The emphasis here was the change in a person’s thinking; the relentless pursuit of godly attitudes, motives and desires.

The next group was the *select* group. It comprised those who had distinguished themselves and shown the greatest aptitude in the class and band meetings. They were handpicked by Wesley and they became the leaders of the other groups. The select group met with no designated leader, even Wesley submitted to members of a select group. Wesley saw this group as affording the environment for the fulfillment of 1Corinthians 14:31 where “ye may all prophesy one by one” (KJV). Few records remain of the select group. One of the conditions of the group was that all deliberations were to be held within the group itself. Of the information which is available from Wesley’s own journals, they appear to have comprised both men and women, and had numbers up to 25.

The importance of this structure which aided spiritual growth to maturity cannot be emphasized enough. George Whitfield, one of the greatest evangelist the world has ever witnessed, who preached

to greater crowds than Wesley and amassed greater numbers of converts, lamented the fact that most of his converts fell away all too quickly and easily. Whitfield called his converts “a rope of sand”. Wesley remarked concerning the difference between Whitfield’s failure and his own success was Whitfield’s lack of “discipline”. Discipling is *the* key practice to bring believers through to spiritual maturity.

### **What is Discipling?**

The most important way that we serve others is to fulfill the command of Jesus to disciple others. The mature believer recognizes and accepts that they have a fundamental mandate from Jesus to make disciples. Ultimately, this is the chief objective of our life upon the earth as a committed and mature believer. The mature believer will naturally take on the role of a ‘spiritual’ parent.

Jesus presented the method by which new believers would be brought to spiritual maturity i.e. discipling. Sadly, discipling is not expressly practiced in many churches. Church models are built more around events (the Sunday service, Sunday school, weekly prayer meeting and conferences) rather than intentional discipleship relationships.

We must return to the method Jesus modelled, if we are to successfully help others to spiritual maturity. The truth is we only grow in relationship. Mere church attendance in large group gatherings cannot and will not produce real spiritual growth. We grow in interaction with others as we make ourselves accountable and transparent, permitting the Holy Spirit to bring about the necessary transformation. This can only occur in a small group setting.

The mature believer will invest themselves in others. They will seek out those whom God gives them and enter into a committed relationship to help them grow to spiritual maturity. Jesus chose,

under the direction of the Holy Spirit, twelve men who were his disciples. Out of the twelve there were three – Peter, James and John – whom he selected for special instruction. They were the ones for instance who witnessed his transfiguration and whom he asked to stay and pray with him in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus intentionally engaged himself with these men in a deep intimate relationship.

Therefore, as Jesus himself demonstrated, discipling is fundamental to authentic Christianity. Those who have been effectively disciplined will in turn disciple others. Jesus said to his disciples just before his ascension

..."All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

He commands us to make disciples, not get decisions! There is a world of difference between getting someone to make a "decision for Christ" and walking with them in a discipleship process. And having made disciples we are to teach them to do what he commanded: "...go and make disciples..."

(The following discussion addresses one-on-one discipling with a new convert who has made a genuine commitment and desires to grow. If you are a new convert, or an 'older' Christian who still has not reached maturity, you should look for someone who is mature and ask if you could meet with them on a regular basis to help you grow to maturity. Ideally, that group should evolve and see the further addition of one or two more who are committed to the same cause.)



## The Essential Elements of the Discipling Process

### Model

The first and most important aspect of discipling is to recognise that the new Christian will model him or herself upon you. You are the expression of Christ to them. What they observe in you, they will identify with what it means to be a Christian. They will automatically imitate you.

You are a spiritual parent to the young believer. Your example will create a lasting impression upon them. You will help establish a belief system and certain patterns of behaviour.

The apostle Paul's advise to Timothy, a young man he discipled - who in turn was now to disciple others - was this:

"... set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."

1 Timothy 4:12

Paul understood the law of spiritual reproduction. He wrote to the believers at Corinth:

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

1 Corinthians 11:1

The priority of the discipler is to walk in relationship with God. The discipler looks to Christ as their model. They walk a life of intimacy with and dependence upon God. They know *experientially* what it is to be a child of God. The greatest influence in their life is their heavenly Father. It is this which gives them the confidence and the ability to disciple a new convert.

A discipler does not exercise control over another person. They do not 'push' by reason of authority but rather 'pull' by reason of their example. Your job as a discipler is not a title or position from which

to exercise power. Your job is to influence the new convert to follow your example. Most people learn by what they observe.

The cry of the world is for positive role-models. Tragically, many people in our society have never had someone close that they could look up to. Disciplers are absent in the family, in school, in business, in politics and in the church. This is not to say people never experience 'authority', but it is not the kind that they will gladly and confidently follow.

The greatest scourge upon this generation is the misrepresentation of God by fathers. (As a discipler, you represent a spiritual 'father', and possibly you will become the 'father' that the new convert never had.)

The new convert is going through dramatic changes in their beliefs and lifestyle. It is a fact that most people find change awkward and uncomfortable. The discipler coaxes and coaches them through these adjustments. A discipler inspires another person to follow their example and helps them to adopt the necessary changes.

A discipler must win the trust and respect of the new convert, if they are to positively influence them. This trust and respect is earned through:

- integrity – the discipler demonstrates that they live what they say
- empowerment - the discipler is a source of encouragement, belief and hope
- relationship - the discipler is genuinely interested in and cares about the new convert

### **Empower**

A discipler enables a new convert to undergo spiritual transformation. In other words, the discipler is the vehicle of God's empowerment. In order for this to happen, the discipler must be

someone who the disciple admires and likes. If you are to be a positive role-model you must demonstrate by your words and actions that you have something worth copying.

When you first launch out to disciple someone, you will most likely struggle with feelings of inadequacy. (That's quite normal – much like a new parent that holds a brand new baby in their arms who has had no experience of being a parent, and feels overwhelmed at the responsibility they now own.) You defeat these by

- absolute obedience to the Holy Spirit
- exercised faith that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you
- integrity of spirit
- faithfulness to convictions
- works motivated by love

When we are established in these things we can confidently present ourselves to someone else, carrying an air of (real) authority about us that says *“Follow my example - it's worth following.”*

Empowerment occurs when the new convert gains confidence in you, when they eventually accept that you do indeed love them and believe in them, and want to help them to undergo change and grow spiritually.

The four essentials of empowerment are:

(1) Express belief in your new convert. Look for their spiritual potential, not their present imperfections. Affirm and applaud them when they make positive steps forward in their spiritual walk. Often time you will find the new believer will take two steps forward and then one step back. They will learn from their mistakes provided you do not give up on them. Be optimistic always.

(A critical and judgmental attitude will be quickly assessed by your new convert, and you will forfeit your ability to help them.)

(2) Open your heart to them. You draw people to yourself by sharing your own heart with them. When they are drawn to you, they can stand upon your shoulders and go forward. (However, this does not mean that you load them up with your problems! You must find God as your own comfort and encouragement, so you can help the new believer with their problems, and point them to the Source of their answers.)

(3) Live life with them. Empowerment occurs through relationship and shared experiences. The new convert needs to understand who you *are*, what your internal pattern of beliefs and attitudes, which are founded upon the truth of God's word. But before they can understand those things, they only observe what you *do*. As they observe you – your words and actions – the confidence you have in God becomes evident to them, and they become open to adjust their own patterns of beliefs and attitudes and align them with the truth.

(4) Prayer. Pray *with* the new convert. They will learn to communicate with God in exactly the same way that you do - just as a child mimics their parent(s) as they learn to communicate. Pray *for* the new convert. Know their needs and their hurts. Also, there is an awesome power in the 'blessing'. The impact of laying hands on another person and praying prophetically is life transforming.

### **Nurture**

To dictionary defines nurture "*to nourish, rear, foster, train, educate*". The hallmark characteristics of a good parent are their attitude and aptitude to nurturing. Your principal objective as a discipler is to nurture the new convert so that they might grow spiritually.

The best analogy of your role is that of a parent who cares and provides for a brand new baby through to the infant stage. Such a child is totally dependent upon his/her parent for love, warmth,

protection, food, clothing, cleaning etc. The child learns their sense of significance and belonging in the arms of their loving father and mother. They identify who they are by the affection and affirmation of their parents.

The apostle Paul declared himself to have acted both like a father and a mother to the church of Thessalonica:

“For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

“... we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

Paul successfully disciplined the members of the church of Thessalonica and so was able to write:

“You became imitators of us and of the Lord ... And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.”

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7

A new convert's most pressing needs, which you as a 'spiritual' parent supply, are as follows:

- love and acceptance
- spiritual 'milk'
- protection
- affirmation of identity - *who I am*
- demonstration - *what I do*
- encouragement

### Spend time

You must devote time to your new convert. Nurturing requires careful and close contact. It is just not possible to nurture from a distance, or by occasional and casual meetings. A parent of a new born attends to their baby's needs with deliberate and regular attention; they are on constant call, and never far away.

You choose to invest your time where you want to. If you give yourself to your new convert and make yourself available to them, they will sense you are genuine and that they really are important to you.

Through this simple sacrifice of your time, you will activate a most important spiritual truth - that as you give your life away to others then you yourself will receive life.

### Give encouragement

Your new convert needs constant encouragement. They need positive reinforcement that they have made the right choice and that they are doing the right things. Look for anything and everything that you can praise them for. Tell them repeatedly, "You're doing great!" Don't set impossible standards for them to meet. Remember they are just spiritual babies. Don't emphasize their inadequacies and mistakes, emphasize their victories.

A common reaction of new converts is to think "*I could never be as strong as you*". Their own failings are obvious to them. Just like a little child who is overawed at the size and strength of their Daddy. In their eyes they seem so small and incapable of the same standards. Help them understand that you have gone through adjustments in your own life, and that you too felt like them once. The Holy Spirit is intentionally leading them on a path of putting off the world and the putting on holiness. This takes time and difficult adjustments in workplace/lifestyle/friendship choices for the new convert.

### Be consistent

Your new convert will learn mostly through a process of consistent demonstration. They come to know what to expect from you, and they themselves are therefore able to respond to situations in the same way. Just as a child mimics their parent, your new convert will take on behavioural patterns that they have observed in you.

Be careful not to carry moods with you when you visit your new convert. If you are down, you will drag them down with you! Leave your own problems at the door, and smile as you greet them. Be excited and enthusiastic about being with them. As mentioned before, never off-load onto your baby Christian. You must be built up in faith, in order to help your new convert rise above their own problems.

### Build trust

Trust is the most important factor in your ability to influence your new convert. People only follow those whom they trust. Trust is not given automatically, it is earned. Trust is defined in the dictionary in the following way: *“firm belief in reliability, veracity, justice and strength.”*

You will win their trust if you always keep your word to them, never betray their confidence, demonstrate a continual concern for them and never give up on them. If you show genuine interest and care for them that involves personal cost, together with integrity of character, they will entrust themselves to you, and will follow your example. It is quite likely that you will ultimately only win their trust when they see that you haven't given up on them after they have gone through a difficult time.

Tell them that *you will never do anything consciously to offend them*. And ask them to tell you if they feel offended by something that you say or do. If they take offense and don't deal with it, it will fester and cause them to lose trust in you and they will distance

themselves from you. Emphasise the importance of forgiveness with them and explain its role in maintaining healthy relationships.

This does not mean that you pander to their weaknesses. At times, you will say things that are tough. As the Holy Spirit shines the light on sin in their life you must be quick to respond and affirm that God is dealing with the issue. And help them see the way out from under it. Speaking the truth *in love* is the key.

Touch them in an appropriate fashion - a pat on the back or a hug. Physical touch is a powerful element that bonds us together.

Give them hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11 says: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

Hope makes people willing to undergo change and go forward. Hope instils strength in them and causes them to reach beyond themselves.

Many people make their commitment and receive Christ in the midst of life's turmoils. One of the crucial things you must impart to your new convert is hope - hope that life will be different, hope that God is interested in them, hope that they are important and significant to Him, and that He will guide, protect and care for them. You must help them understand God's incredible love for them, who they were as a sinner and who they are now as His child, why they are here and the direction of where they are going. Nevertheless, don't tell them that life will now be a bed of roses for them. Rather, tell them that in life's circumstances God will be with them, as a willing helper if they will put their trust in Him explicitly.

Exhort them to cast all their cares upon the Lord, and live free of anxiety (Philippians 4: 6-7, 1Peter 5: 7).



## Teach and Train

*“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6*

You as a discipler must understand the incredible opportunity and awesome responsibility that you possess in discipling a new convert. The impact you have upon them will last their whole life-time. You are the nurse-maid whom the baby Christian first looks to for nourishment and protection. What you give them will determine their spiritual health. A good foundation will allow them to grow quickly and true.

You are like a stake in the ground that a young sapling is tied to. The juvenile tree grows according to the shape of the stake and when storm winds blow it is not broken and destroyed.

Your job is to lay a right foundation teaching your new convert their new identity and training them to put on new behavioural practices.

A person's conduct is ultimately determined by their belief system - their world view, their understanding of God, who they think they are and what they think is expected of them, and what happens to them after they die. The most important message to convey to your new convert is that they are now a child of God, and God is their loving Father. You must help them establish their connection with God. That connection is made possible as they reorient their thinking to a Biblical belief system:

Romans 12:2

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind.***

Ephesians 4:22-24

*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **to be made new in the attitude of your minds;** and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

**TEACH** - *Truths to explain***SALVATION**

- the basic story of creation/fall/redemption
- they must grow up spiritually i.e. learn obedience to and dependence upon God, and become like him
- when they die they have assurance of acceptance into heaven

**WATER BAPTISM**

- identification with Christ in water baptism
- the kingdom of darkness v. the kingdom of light

**DESTINY**

- their new destiny; to accomplish the purposes of God by aligning themselves with the will and plan of God, and walking in the power of God

**BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- what the baptism in the Holy Spirit represents
- what power is available to us as children of God

**THE CHURCH**

- what the church is
- their place in God's family

**TRAIN** - *Skills to demonstrate*

## The basics of

- how to communicate with God
- how to walk in dependence on and obedience to God
- how to walk in faith releasing the power of God
- how to read the Bible
- how to handle criticisms from other people
- how to witness

The way in which you explain and demonstrate these things must be structured around core doctrine (see Foundations Course) but 'tailor-made' for the new convert. You must be entirely reliant on the Holy Spirit to help you. Go to your meeting with the new convert totally prepared, but don't just preach to them. Share with them the deep truths of God as you look to and rely upon the Holy Spirit for his guidance. Answer their questions. Gauge what are important emphases for the new convert.

Think how you learned basic life skills when you were a child. It was in the normal course of everyday activities. In the same way, make your new convert's faith a reality in the midst of their circumstances. Ask them questions, discuss their perceptions and attitudes, and continually encourage them to trust God and grow in faith and knowledge.

### **Overcome obstacles**

Seldom does a discipling process go smoothly. There are inevitably obstacles that are encountered along the way. The new convert will have numerous adjustments to make as they "put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires ... and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24) It is normally not a matter whether they will fall or not, but how quickly they will get back on their feet.

Remember, they are babies. Babies mess up. It is the parents' job to clean them and train them not to mess up. It is your job to persist with them.

Help your new convert understand that overcoming problems is a normal part of growing up spiritually. Tell them these illustrations:

#### *Illustration 1*

When you receive Jesus it is like this: He comes through the front door of your house and is standing in the entrance. Now the house

is your life. What Jesus wants to do is to come into every room and put it into order.

Mostly when we become Christians our lives are a mess, just like an untidy house. We must invite Jesus into every room. First into the living room, then the kitchen, next the bedroom then the laundry etc. Room by room he puts our "house" into order.

However, he is a gentlemen. He will not force you to do anything against your will. It is only as you invite him to take charge that he is able to bring the necessary changes.

He wants to help you put your whole life into godly order, putting off sinful practices.

### Illustration 2

When a little child takes its first steps and falls down what does his mother do? Does she run over and smack the child around the head exclaiming "You stupid boy. You stupid boy. You can't walk. Look at you, what a disgrace. You take just two steps and fall down. You'll never make it."

Of course not! She runs over and picks the child up saying "Good boy, good boy. You can walk. You can walk!"

Now think about it - the little fellow has taken two steps and his mother is acting like he'd just scaled Everest! She'll probably run next door and tell the neighbour or ring her own mother up with the good news. She is just so excited.

This is the same with us and God. We take our first few steps and fall down. And we think God is waiting to hit us over the head with a big stick. But he is not our judge. Jesus suffered our punishment on the cross. What is God to us now? He is our loving Father. He rejoices over us when we take our first steps. And when we fall he

reaches down and picks us up onto our feet and says "You can do it. I know you can do it. Come on. Hold my hand. I'll help you."

### Illustration 3

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear....

Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Tell them that this parable explains that they have obstacles to face up ahead. First, they have a spiritual enemy who is the devil, and he wants to keep them locked in sin and estranged from God. They must resist him and his temptations. He will send people to them to lure them back into their life of sin. He will also try to get them to take their eyes off God and onto the cares of this world, and entice them to pursue riches rather than pursue God. Furthermore, they are likely to face criticism from friends, workmates and family

members. Some might eventually become quite hostile towards them.

Nevertheless, encourage them to "*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7) And that "*... God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*" (1Corinthians 10:13)

Be ever conscious that the devil has just lost someone from his kingdom and he will do everything in his power to entice them back into the world. He will push their buttons as hard and as fast as he can. Persevere with them if they go through troubled times. Pray for them without ceasing.

It is necessary for them to overcome their problems by faith. They have to learn to lean on God and trust him to deliver them. This is an essential part of their spiritual growth. Some find it easier to break through than others. Help them understand that God wants to be their strength. That they *can do all things through Christ who will strengthen them* (Philippians 4:13).

(Note: The parable of the sower and the seed reveals that not everyone you disciple will remain in the faith. One of the saddest experiences is to see someone you have poured your life into walk away. Jesus of course had a traitor amongst his twelve disciples. The apostle John wrote of those who "went out from us" (1 John 2:19). Some might backslide and return. Others might walk away and never return. Time will tell. Above all, don't make their failure your failure.)

### **Relationship**

Disciplers love people. You can't be a discipler if you don't love them. People only follow people who love them and ... who they love. Bonding is so vital.

Three ways you can communicate your love:

- show genuine interest in them
- don't give up on them
- give yourself to them

It is a fact that unless a new Christian finds real relationships in a church they will not stay.

A healthy discipler/disciple relationship will go through various stages:

- Parent/child
- Parent/teenager
- Parent/adult (parent)

The new Christian makes a succession of decisions which lead to greater levels of commitment to God and involvement with the church. As each decision is made, the intimacy of relationship with the discipler deepens. Each decision is made upon the basis of trust because each decision puts the new convert out of their 'comfort-zone'. In the early stages this trust is primarily placed in the discipler, whereas later it shifts onto God.

Christianity is principally about relationships – relationship with God, relationships with believers and relationships with non-believers. Yet most of us do not understand what successful relationships look like because we were never taught how to relate, and good role-models were absent from our lives.

The key ingredient is identified throughout the whole Bible. God wants us to have healthy relationships and he has provided us with ample instruction. We only have to put it into practice. Healthy relationships are built upon the principle of *honour*. When we honour another person we hold them in high esteem. We regard

them as important – so important that we consider their needs ahead of our own.

God also shows us what the chief destroyer of relationships is – unresolved anger arising out of unforgiveness. Every person who holds unforgiveness is dysfunctional. Only whole people, i.e. those who have let go of all bitterness and resentment, are free to relate.

Your new convert is likely to carry many hurts. You must be the one to build all the bridges to begin with. As you learn about their lives and they open up to you more and more, you will be able to identify potential areas of unforgiveness. It is vital you explain the importance of forgiveness to them and encourage them to forgive those who have hurt them.

Remember that a new convert undergoes a *transformation* to bring them to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ. God leads a person through a process of change to bring them to spiritual wholeness. Different issues arise as God brings them to the surface. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. It is his work to bring a person to spiritual maturity and we must cooperate with him.



## End notes

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- <sup>1</sup> John 3:3-8
- <sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17
- <sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:13
- <sup>4</sup> John 17: 3
- <sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJ)
- <sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:2-3 (NLT)
- <sup>7</sup> Galatians 3: 26, Romans 8: 29, Hebrews 2:11
- <sup>8</sup> Matthew 22: 37-40
- <sup>9</sup> Genesis 6: 11
- <sup>10</sup> Genesis 6: 9
- <sup>11</sup> John 14: 8
- <sup>12</sup> Genesis 1:30
- <sup>13</sup> Genesis 3: 7.
- <sup>14</sup> Isaiah 59:18; Nahum 1:2 (NKJ)
- <sup>15</sup> Ephesians 4: 30
- <sup>16</sup> Revelation 12:10
- <sup>17</sup> Hebrews 5:8
- <sup>18</sup> 2Corinthians 12: 7-10
- <sup>19</sup> James 4:7, 1Peter 5:9
- <sup>20</sup> Ps 103:2-3
- <sup>21</sup> 2Samuel 12: 10-14
- <sup>22</sup> Acts5: 1-10
- <sup>23</sup> 2 Samuel 1:26
- <sup>24</sup> The description of the word translated “wretched” in Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- <sup>25</sup> Romans 12:1-2
- <sup>26</sup> Hebrews 5:8
- <sup>27</sup> I John 2:5-6
- <sup>28</sup> Exodus 19: 5-6
- <sup>29</sup> Exodus 3&4; esp. 4: 24-26
- <sup>30</sup> Exodus Leviticus, Deuteronomy; esp. Exodus 24: 1-11, Deuteronomy 29 & 30
- <sup>31</sup> Joshua 1
- <sup>32</sup> 1Samuel 17; especially v26, 45-47
- <sup>33</sup> Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy especially Deuteronomy 28, 30: 11 - 20
- <sup>34</sup> 1&2 Kings, the Prophets
- <sup>35</sup> 1Corinthians 3:16, 6:19

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<sup>36</sup> 1Pet 1: 9; Acts 2:17-18; 1Cor14: 31

<sup>37</sup> Luke 22: 19

<sup>38</sup> Luke 22:20

<sup>39</sup> Luke 22:44

<sup>40</sup> Luke 22: 43

<sup>41</sup> Luke 22: 42

<sup>42</sup> Mark 15:34

<sup>43</sup> It was most importantly a reference by Jesus to the messianic Psalm 22. He was telling his hearers look at Psalm 22. It contains numerous prophecies which Jesus fulfilled at that time.

<sup>44</sup> Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35

<sup>45</sup> Colossians 1:13

<sup>46</sup> Luke 10:17

<sup>47</sup> Luke 10:18-19

<sup>48</sup> There are seven compound names of God, for example, that reveal an aspect of the character and nature of God

Jehovah-jireh (Genesis 22:14)

“The Lord will provide a sacrifice”

Jehovah-rapha (Exodus 15:26)

“The Lord our Healer”

Jehovah-nissi (Exodus 17:15)

“The Lord our Banner”

Jehovah-shalom (Judges 6:24)

“The Lord our Peace”

Jehovah-raah (Psalm 23:1)

“The Lord our Shepherd”

Jehovah-tsidkenu (Jeremiah 23:6)

“The Lord our Righteousness”

Jehovah-shammah (Ezekiel 48:35)

“The Lord is Present”

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 12:26

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 4:1

<sup>51</sup> John 8:44

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 4:3

<sup>53</sup> Revelation 12:10

<sup>54</sup> Revelation 12:9

<sup>55</sup> Revelation 12:9

<sup>56</sup> Mark 3:22

<sup>57</sup> 1John 2:13

<sup>58</sup> John 14:30

<sup>59</sup> 2Corinthians 4:4

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- 60 Ephesians 2:1  
61 Matthew 4:8-  
62 2Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1  
63 Matthew 6:9-10  
64 Genesis 6: 9  
65 Isaiah 24:5-  
66 Revelation 11: 15, 20: 10 – 21: 3  
67 Revelation 12:12  
68 Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 2:10,15  
69 Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 2:10,15  
70 Ephesians 6:12  
71 Ephesians 6:12  
72 Matthew 8:16; 9:33-34; 12:43; Mark 9:17; 16:17, Luke 7:21;  
8:2;9:1; 10:17; Acts 16:16; 1Corinthians 10:20-21; 1Timothy 4:1;  
James 2:19 etc  
73 Revelation 12: 3-4  
74 Matthew 8: 29, 25: 41, Revelation 20: 10, 14  
75 |John 5:19, see also Revelation 2:13; 12:9, Ephesians 2:1-2  
76 See John 8:44, 10:10, 2Corinthians 12:7, Luke 13:16  
77 Colossians 1:13, Luke 22:29  
78 Matthew 11: 12, 16:18-19  
79 James 4:7, 1Peter 5:9, Ephesians 6:11-13  
80 2 Corinthians 2:11  
81 2 Corinthians 4:4  
82 1Peter 5: 8-9 , Ephesians 6:10-12  
83 Genesis 2:17, Romans 6:23  
84 John 10:17-18  
85 Job 1:6-11, Rev 12:10, Luke 10:18-19  
86 Romans 8:1  
87 See 1 Corinthians 2:8  
88 Matthew 4:1-11, 28:18, Luke 9:1 Acts 10:38  
89 Hebrews 4:15  
90 Revelation 1:18  
91 Colossians 2:15  
92 John 20: 17  
93 Luke 24: 39  
94 See Hebrews 9:12  
95 Genesis 3: 15  
96 John 20: 15-17  
97 1 Corinthians 2:8  
98 Ephesians 1:20-23, 2:6

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- 99 1Corinthians 10:13  
100 Genesis 3: 6; Matthew 4: 1-10  
101 2Corinthians 10:3-5, Ephesians 4:22-24  
102 2Corinthians 5: 21  
103 Romans 12:2  
104 1Thesselonians 5: 23  
105 1Corinthians 15: 22  
106 Matthew 6:12-15, Matthew 18:23-35  
107 Matthew 18: 34  
108 Luke 4:13  
109 Proverbs 18:21  
110 Matthew 12:34  
111 John 1:1, 6: 63  
112 Jeremiah 1: 12  
113 James 3: 14 - 4: 3  
114 Acts 10:38  
115 John 14: 12  
116 Luke 4: 1, Luke 4:1, Matthew 4: 1, Luke 4: 14  
117 1 Corinthians 14: 18, 5  
118 1Corinthians 13: 1  
119 Acts 2: 5-12  
120 Acts 2: 12  
121 1Corinthians 14: 22  
122 Romans 8: 9  
123 John 20: 22, Acts 1: 4, 5, 8  
124 Acts 8:14-16  
125 Acts 10:46-48  
126 Luke 3: 16  
127 Luke 11:11-13  
128 Joel 2:28-29  
129 Acts1:8  
130 Acts 2: 1-12, Acts 9: 1-19, Acts 10: 1-24, 44-48, Acts 19: 1-7,  
Acts 8: 5-19  
131 1Corinthians 3: 12-15  
132 John 15: 5-8  
133 John 15: 8  
134 Matthew 20: 28  
135 Mark 7:36  
136 Mark 8:12  
137 Luke 9:23  
138 Matthew 16: 15-16

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- <sup>139</sup> Matthew 16: 21-22  
<sup>140</sup> Matthew 16: 17  
<sup>141</sup> Matthew 26: 36-44  
<sup>142</sup> John 13: 1-15  
<sup>143</sup> John 21: 2-3  
<sup>144</sup> John 21: 15-17  
<sup>145</sup> John 3: 16  
<sup>146</sup> Luke 6: 27  
<sup>147</sup> Philippians 2:7 NKJV  
<sup>148</sup> Isaiah 6: 8  
<sup>149</sup> Matthew 6:21  
<sup>150</sup> Luke 22: 42  
<sup>151</sup> Luke 9:23-24  
<sup>152</sup> John 17:3  
<sup>153</sup> Matthew 3:11  
<sup>154</sup> 2Corinthians 11:26  
<sup>155</sup> 2Corinthians 12:7  
<sup>156</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12  
<sup>157</sup> John 15:20  
<sup>158</sup> John 18:37  
<sup>159</sup> James 1:2-4  
<sup>160</sup> Matthew 5:11-12  
<sup>161</sup> John 8:44  
<sup>162</sup> John 8:44  
<sup>163</sup> Matthew 16:6  
<sup>164</sup> Jude v4  
<sup>165</sup> Acts 20:29-30  
<sup>166</sup> Galatians 6:1-9, 2John 7-11  
<sup>167</sup> Matthew 7:21-23  
<sup>168</sup> Hebrews 6:4-8  
<sup>169</sup> Key leaders/authors include Brian McLaren, Richard Foster, Rob Bell, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, Erwin McManus, Frank Viola and Leonard Sweet. See <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/> and Wikipedia for others.  
<sup>170</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15  
<sup>171</sup> Most of the information on Wesley's group structure is taken from D. Michael Henderson "John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples", Francis Asbury Press