

Foundations of the Christian Faith

(an interactive study)



Fellowship Bible Church

Foundations of the Christian Faith

Bible Study Guide

From the leadership development ministry of

FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH MISSIONS

Acknowledgments

This study book is a collection of writings and teachings from varied sources on specific topics. Authorship other than Tim McManigle is duly noted within the text itself. A special thanks to the FBC College and Career Class that aided Tim in preparing the study questions at the end of each lesson. The lesson outlines and notes in this booklet were compiled, prepared and edited by Tim McManigle, Director of FBC Missions.

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FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 1A THE CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

Grasp the Issue

Everyone who comes to know Christ as Savior, has a story; but what really happened at the time when we became Christians. The implications of adding to or taking away from the gospel are enormous, and the results can and often do rob people, not only of eternal life, but also a fruitful and joyous Christian life.

Sound Bites - Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may be either true or false.

Just as there are many trails up a mountain, so there are many ways to get to Heaven.

Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Jesus Christ was either a liar, lunatic, or Lord of the universe.

What matters is that we believe; it really doesn't matter what we believe in. But we must all have faith.

I don't believe a good God would send people to Hell.

No matter what you do in life, if you believe in Jesus, you will go to heaven.

Study the Scriptures

Acts 16:30-31; I Timothy 1:15; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-10; I Corinthians 15:1-5

Conversion Stories -

- Paul: Perhaps the most dramatic and significant conversion in Christian history (Acts 9:1-22)
- Zaccheus: The conversion of a sinful outcast (Luke 19:1-10)

- Nicodemus: The secret disciple (John 3:1-21 and John 19:38-42)
- The woman at the well: A person with a shameful past (John 4:1-42)
- Lydia: The conversion of a religious person (Acts 16:13-15)
- The Philippian jailer: A crisis conversion - (Act 16:25-34)
- The Bereans: Cautious seekers (Acts 17:10-12)
- Timothy: Came to Christ as a child (2 Tim. 1:5)

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

A New Birth Explained By Miles Stanford

The First Adam

Our purpose here is to make the truths of salvation crystal clear to you.

GOD’S PURPOSE: With that ever in mind, let us lock in on this Scripture: “God said, Let us make man in our image.” That is precisely what God did. “The first man, Adam, was made a living soul” (1 Corinthians 15:45). God is love, and love must have an object upon which to lavish itself. Hence God made the first man in His image that He might give His love, and in turn receive man’s love.

GOD’S IMAGE: Adams’s likeness to God was not a physical image, but one of personhood. God is a Person, man is a person. Man was endowed with the faculties of intellect, emotion, and volition so that God could share with him His life, love, and purpose. Thus they would enjoy fellowship.

God is infinite, uncreated, heavenly, the source of all life; God’s first man was finite, created, earthly. God exists on the divine plane; Adam was made on the human plane hence they were immeasurably separate in being, but alike in the faculties of personhood.

This “image” verse has to do with you personally, so keep your eye on Adam and you will be halfway to your goal!

God made Adam to be the source, the prototype, the head, the representative man of the entire race. All the human family was to spring from Adam and Eve. In that way the personhood and the human characteristics of Adam would be instilled in the race through the inherited oneness of nature.

The initial phase of God’s eternal purpose for mankind was that this representative man would grow in His moral image, and thereby become increasingly like God. By that means the race that came from Adam would continue in fellowship with God, and God with man.

GOD’S CONDITION- God was Creator, and Adam created; therefore, God was sovereign, and Adam subject. While Adam had complete liberty to develop in every

way in line with God's eternal purpose and for his own eternal benefit, he must remain within the circle of God's beneficent will.

To establish the sphere of His will for Adam, God set forth a single condition. He said to Adam, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17).

In order for Adam to develop into a responsible and loving companion to God, not a mere automaton or slave, it was necessary that God give him a choice: to accept God's will- the way of eternal life; or to reject God's will- the way of eternal death. Any deviation from the will of God is lawlessness; it is sin. And, of necessity, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). God is so utterly holy and pure that the result of sin must be eternal banishment from his presence.

At first thought one might be tempted to think that God was extremely harsh and unreasonable with Adam. Death for just one disobedience, and the first one at that? Why, God didn't even say, "That's once"!

But when one realizes something of the only possible relationship between Creator and creature, and the unbelievable consequences of creature rebellion, there was no choice on God's part but to lay down the ultimate for sin. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:12,13).

Satan

THE TEMPTER: Enter Satan: enter death! This brilliant celestial being, the highest in God's angelic hierarchy, was cast down from his exalted estate because of the sin of pride. He aspired and conspired to take over the very Throne of God, and to become as God. For this God had to condemn him and his followers to ultimate eternal death in the lake of fire. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer.... How art thou cut down to the ground.... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.... I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to sheol. And the devil...was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone..." (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 20:10).

In saying "I will", Satan rebelled against God's will. Satan's failure to conquer God's throne in heaven didn't deter him from attempting to gain control of this world and the human race at its inception. He realized that if he could cause Adam

to disobey God, he would thereby win the entire human race at its inception. He realized that if he could cause Adam to disobey God, he would thereby win the entire human race and thus become the god of this world.

Again the reminder to keep your eye on your representative man, because what happened to him happened to you. As you observe Adam, you will learn why you must be born again.

THE TEMPTED: In the face of God's protective command, and His gracious warning of death as the consequence of disobedience, Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that is exactly what they did.

They chose Satan's way over against the will of God! That was sin. It resulted in spiritual death which cut them off from God, who is the source of life. Years later they died physically- physical death being the ultimate result of spiritual death.

After he died spiritually, and before he died physically, Adam begot a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:3). Hence he brought forth the condemned, Satan-bound human race in his own sinful image. Man fell from innocence to enmity toward God!

To see Adam the sinner is to see yourself. You were born into this world possessed of a sinful nature inherited from your fallen source. You were born a sinner, and are therefore spiritually dead. Spiritual death results in separation from God forever- that is hell.

Interesting scripture. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). "Therefore, as by the offense of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18).

CONDEMNATION COMPOUNDED: Actually, you lie under a dual condemnation: for Adam's sin, and for your own. In Ephesians chapter 2, God speaks of sinners as being dead in trespasses and sins, and by nature the children of wrath; having no hope, and without God in the world (vv. 1,3). "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

A pretty tight spot to be in! Here you are, not only condemned and headed for the judgment of the Great White Throne because you have sinned against God by not trusting Him, but you are equally condemned because you have a sinful nature inherited from Adam.

Since you have been born wrong, and have done wrong, you are spiritually bankrupt. Wrong family (root), and wrong conduct (fruit). “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The Sinner

QUESTION - You have now reached the half-way mark to the goal of how to become a Christian. Having no hope, and without God in the world, there is only one way left to go. The way up is down, as you will soon see.

There is but one provision by which to escape the condemned family: a new family! And there is but one provision by which to enter that family: a new birth! If you were to ask, how can this be? You would not be the first to pose that question. Now let's find the answer in the Word of God.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews in Jesus' day, was one of the foremost theological teachers in Judaism at that time. In his need he sought out the Lord Jesus, and received some totally unexpected answers to his questions.

ANSWER - The Lord Jesus said to this seeking sinner, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus then asked, How can a man be born when he is old Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?” (John 3:3,4).

The Lord Jesus reemphasized, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again....” Nicodemus answered, and said unto him, “How can these things be?” The very same question you may have asked. Jesus answered, and said unto him, “Art thou a teacher in Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:7,9,10).

BLINDNESS - How could such a highly intellectual and theologically astute religious doctor come to such a wrong interpretation of the most important statement he had ever heard or ever would hear? Easy. Wrong family! Hence he was a blind leader of the blind.

The Apostle Paul, another one-time blind leader and teacher of Israel, wrote after he had received his spiritual sight, “If our gospel be hidden it is hidden to them that are lost, in whom the god of this age (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:3,4).

Satan conquered Adam and the human race by means of deceit, thus he became the arch-usurper- the god of this world and the Adamic race. He has blinded the mind of the natural man and has placed enmity in man’s heart against God, in order to prevent him from turning to the Savior.

The Bible says that the carnal (Adamic) mind is enmity against God; “for it is not subject to the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 3:10,11).

By now you may have something pressing quite heavily on your mind, such as, Where is God in all this scene? He doesn’t seem to have been able to do anything on my behalf, and Satan seems to have had about everything his own way. Worst of all, God has condemned me for something over which I had no control. It was not my choice to be born of the wrong family!

GUILTY - You are right...in part. It is true that you could not help being condemned in Adam, and therefore a lost sinner by nature. But it is also true that you are a condemned sinner by your own personal choice-in thought, word, and deed.

“Is it not true that you have broken every commandment in the Book? Have you even kept the first one? Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Matthew 22:37,38; James 2:10).

We have all earned our condemnation before God because of our self-centered heart and will. God says that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9). Like Satan we have said, I will in the

face of God's will to the contrary. What is more, as the sinful clay you have no right to question the holy, sovereign Potter. Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (Romans 9:20).

When it comes to being a lost sinner, we are a self-made person.

It is best that we admit to God that He is right after all, and that we are wrong, wrong, wrong. And the good news is that God has been very much on the scene all the time, and that on our behalf!

Satan is never so completely defeated as in his apparent victories!

The Last Adam

Enter the Last Adam: enter Life! Did you know that God has two Adams, two contrasting representative men as heads of two completely different streams of humanity? "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit" (1Corinthians 15:45). Note the disparity between these two sources: The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47).

THE FALLEN ADAM: The first man brought forth the sinful, earthly race by natural generation. The Second Man is bringing forth the righteous, heavenly race by supernatural regeneration. The wrong family is entered by physical birth; the right family is entered by the new birth.

Watch carefully now, and see what God has done for you. Having kept your eye on the first Adam long enough, you can now keep your eyes on the Last Adam for all eternity. See how God has been silently working in order to consummate His original purpose of making man in His image.

THE RISEN ADAM: "God...hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." (Hebrews 1:1-3).

The first Adam ceased to reflect the image of God because he rebelled and turned against God's will. The Last Adam maintained God's image because He confessed, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38).

God in mercy has given another Adam through whom He means to carry out His original purpose for you. He is no less than God the Son, and hence the express image of God. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Actually, the failure of the first Adam set the scene for the triumph of the Last Adam.

The Lord Jesus is God’s Last Adam because there would be no need for another. At the Cross He appeared to be a hopeless failure but, “except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

SINLESS BIRTH: See how justly and perfectly God has wrought the plan of salvation. Your condemnation came by human birth, and your Redeemer came also by human birth. It has been said: “The manner of the birth of Christ, termed the virgin birth, might better be defined as the virgin conception, for the birth itself was normal enough once He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.”

The angel announced to the virgin Mary, “Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.... The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:31,35).

That was the manner by which the Son of God entered the human race. The difference was that He as God was born sinless, while we were born “dead in trespasses and sins.” And, during His life on earth, He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Remember now, in order for God to justly and perfectly replace the sinful first Adam, His Last Adam had to succeed where the first Adam failed. He had to remain faithful to God under the same circumstances and limitations in which the first man brought ruin. Further, He had to be tempted to do the same thing, in the same way, by the same person, as was the first Adam.

RE-ENTER SATAN: In Luke 4 we see that the Holy Spirit led the Lord Jesus into the desert, where He fasted for forty days. When the Last Adam’s hunger was acute, Satan tried to tempt Him to eat- the very temptation by which he had conquered the first Adam. Satan launched his attack on the Last Adam, knowing that if he could get Him to step outside God’s will and go His own way, he would thereby conquer the last representative Man. He would then have all and be as God.

Keep in mind that the Lord Jesus was not facing this temptation for His own sake, but for yours! He was doing it as your Substitute in order that He might become your Savior.

Satan cast his first fiery dart at the Lord Jesus by saying, “If thou be the Son of God, command this stone, that it be made bread” (Luke 4:3). Being God, the Lord Jesus could have done it.

Famished as He was, He just parried the deadly dart with Scripture: “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). As the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus was in glad subjection to His Father, and He refused to do anything contrary to God’s will for Him. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:9).

When food failed, Satan projected his 2 remaining power plays.....

But the last Adam again and again effortlessly cut down the enemy with the sword of the Lord.....(Luke 4:6-13).

The Mediator

Enter the Mediator: enter justice! Now we come to another wonderful aspect of God’s work on your behalf. He sent His beloved Son from heaven, not only to be your Last Adam, but to be the Mediator between Himself and you. A Mediator is one who stands between two parties to reconcile their differences when there is a breach between them. And the gulf between you and God is considerable.

REQUIREMENTS - The Lord Jesus is God’s only Mediator. And He is the only possible mediator for you. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

A mediator must be one who is accepted and trusted by both parties involved. God said of the Lord Jesus, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him (Matthew 17:5). He asks you to receive His Son. You enter into your part of the mediation by accepting and trusting God’s Mediator.

In order to be the Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus had to partake of both God’s nature and man’s nature. That is mediation- He entered into the very nature of both parties involved! Are you not beginning to be gripped by the marvel of all this?

The Lord Jesus always was God; He had God's nature from all eternity. By being born of the Virgin Mary, He took upon Himself the nature of man. He is referred to in the Scriptures as both "Son of God" and "Son of man."

PAID IN FULL - Observe what else the Word of God says of Him: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant (the Last Adam), and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:6-8).

Our Lord willingly shed His life-blood on the Cross, dying the most agonizing and shameful criminal death for you. Yes, the Lamb of God was sacrificed in order to pay your penalty. "Without shedding of blood is no remission (forgiveness)" (Hebrews 9:22).

Your blessed Substitute made peace through the blood of his cross.... "And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his (God's) sight" (Colossians 1:20-22).

Further, as Mediator, the Lord Jesus must equally represent both God and man. Think of that! He stood between the holy God and the sinful human race. He had to be one who would satisfy every claim of God upon man, and every claim of man upon God. Being your Creator, God has considerable claim upon you, does He not?

STAKE YOUR CLAIM! - There is but one legitimate claim that you have upon God, and that is that you are condemned and there is absolutely nothing you can do to alter the fact. Although you had nothing to do with your birth into the wrong family, of your own volition you established your condemnation.

No matter how much you try to alter your condition, or how good you may attempt to be, you are still drawing from the wrong source, one that is totally unacceptable to God. So the claim you have upon Him is, God, I can do nothing about my spiritual position, or condition. You will have to undertake for me.

And He has already done that which is required for your personal case! He sent His Son to take your place in the death that sin required- the Lord Jesus took upon Him that death and paid the penalty for you.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, who raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God”(1 Peter 1:18-21).

Liberty and Life

All that you have considered thus far adds up to this: “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians. 15:22). Your only hope is to be freed from eternal death in Adam, and to be born again so that you have eternal life in Christ.

FROM BAD TO GOOD - When you are able to face up to the bad news, and acknowledge that Satan has you hopelessly bound in guilt, condemnation, and death; it is then, and not until then, that God comes to your rescue and enables you to embrace the Gospel, the good news.

And was there ever such good news? “Forasmuch, then, as the children (of Adam) are partakers of flesh and blood, he (the Last Adam) also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews. 2:14,15).

THE DIVINE OFFER - God has always taken the initiative. He made the first and every other move toward you, while all your moves have been away from Him. But the blessed “Hound of Heaven” has finally overtaken you.

As one has so well put it, “Mulling over this solitary journey afterward, I had a notion that somehow, besides questing, I was being pursued. Footsteps padding behind me; a following shadow, a Hound of Heaven, so near that I could feel the warm breath on my neck. I know I was making for somewhere, some place of light; seeking some ultimate fulfillment of which another reborn me would be extricated from the existing husk of a fleshly egotistic me, like a butterfly from a chrysalis. I was also in flight. Being chased; the pursuing and the pursuit, the quest and the flight, merging the last into one single immanence of luminosity.”

Just as the Father embraced his prodigal son, so God’s love receives you “as is”. “God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ

died for us” (Romans 5:8). God loves us the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way.

Could the good news of the Gospel be more explicit? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Whosoever includes you: you can thank God for that! You escape everlasting death and enter into everlasting life by believing on the Son. Born to die, you are reborn to live. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life” (John 3:36).

What a relief! God laid all your sins upon His perfect Son when He was on the Cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus took all your sin into death, thereby paying for your justly-earned penalty. Since He Himself had not sin, “He was free to come out from under the paid penalty and rise from the dead. He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

FREELY FORGIVEN - Now God can justly say to you, “Full payment has been made. Received My beloved Son as your personal payment, and you will be free from the first Adam and born again into the Last Adam.”

Yes, Jesus paid it all! “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.... For he hath made him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians. 5:18,21).

Here is a word from God to better enable you to close in on the subject at hand. He says to you, in love, To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

Enough! No works, no changing; He just asks you to trust Him as you are: an ungodly sinner. Being a sinful child of Adam, you fully qualify for God’s gift of His Son. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. For Christ also hath once suffered for (your) sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Peter 3:18).

THIS IS IT! - You have earned your wages, but God offers you His free Gift before you have to collect them. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord” (Romans 6:23). If, right now, you want to receive the Savior, there are but two words remaining!

“REPENT”- How to be born again consists of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

Repentance means to turn about, to change one’s mind. God, the Creator of the universe, asks you to turn from your way and choose His way. And He has personally paid your (Adamic) penalty on the Cross so that you are legally free to make the right choice. “God... commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Now you can freely pray to Him, AO God, I want You to be my heavenly Father, and I choose to go Your way.

BELIEVE – “Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” When you repent and turn to God as your Father, there is no longer any question about trusting God the Son as your Savior. On the basis of what you know of your spiritual need, and what you have learned about Christ’s provision, you may now say to Him, Lord Jesus, I thank you from my heart for dying for my sins, and I now receive You as my own Savior.

That, dear friend, is how to become a born-again Christian.

QUESTIONS to guide our study:

1. From the Biblical examples of conversions in the Scriptures that we have studied, which compares to your own conversion experience?
2. Explain what happened to you at the moment of your conversion.
3. What are the core essentials of the gospel - We could ask this another way; what is absolutely essential to know or to do, in order to be saved?
4. If you were on a ship that was sinking with an unbeliever, and you had 5 minutes before it went down, what would you say to him/her?.....Now you have 3 minutes.....
5. Now 1.... 2 minutes.....
6. What are some elements that people typically add to the gospel message?
7. What is the role of repentance in salvation?
8. Explain Jesus' answer to the questions of the lawyer and ruler in Luke 10:25-28 & Luke 18:18-26

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
LESSON 1B Assurance of Salvation/Eternal Security

Grasp the Issue:

Essential to becoming a Christian is an understanding of the “Gospel of Grace”. But then, what happens after salvation; when I’ve sinned and don’t feel saved? Is it possible that I’ve lost my salvation? Maybe I was never really saved.....

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

I had a Christian friend years ago who said he was once a Christian, but lost his salvation when he left his wife for another woman.

Once saved, always saved.

After salvation, one must diligently confess all known sins; if not, we’re simply playing Russian Roulette regarding Heaven and Hell.

Assurance of salvation rests upon personal righteousness

If we don’t believe in eternal security, we’re casting aside the work of the Holy Spirit

Study the Scriptures:

John 10:28-29; Romans 5:8-9; Romans 8:16; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 10:22; Jude 1; Jude 24-25;

Consult Other Sources

“New Birth Explained”
by Miles Stanford

“Assurance of Salvation”

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER - The second aspect of your spiritual foundation is the assurance of salvation. This is the “know-so” conviction that you are a Christian. “For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

To the extent that your assurance of salvation wavers, your Christian experience will be crippled. It is much the same in the realm of the human family. A child may hear a rumor that he was adopted, and may begin to doubt that his parents are his real father and mother.

He thereby loses his “assurance”; he is no longer sure of his position in the family. This can have a devastating effect upon a child. How strengthening and assuring it is when one is sure of his parentage!

It is similar in the Christian life. Your unshakable assurance as to spiritual parentage comes from the Word of God. Your new position is as sure and unchangeable as the eternal Scriptures upon which it is founded. Your actual condition fluctuates from time to time. There is both retrogression and progression. Hence your position is the only ground for assurance of your salvation.

FAMILY POSITION - Ever keep in mind the difference between position and condition. Let’s say there is a certain boy whose dad’s name is Carloni, and whose mom’s maiden name was Valentino. When we know his parentage, we know that this boy is Italian by family position and nature.

Because of his position by birth, we know that when this boy grows up he is going to be Italian in his condition, in his characteristics. His condition will reflect his position. He is born into an unchangeable position, and he is growing in his changeable condition; but both are Italian.

Spiritual birth has to do with family position, and not with experiences. Your new birth may have a great effect upon your condition. You may be filled with love, joy, and peace that is the result of your position. These and other aspects of your condition will ebb and flow.

There will be growth all during your life, but your family position will never change one iota. And it is upon your position in Christ that your assurance of salvation is established.

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

FOUNDATIONAL SHIFT - It is usually in this area of assurance that you make your first major mistake in your Christian life. After you enter your spiritual position by faith, there is a great change in your condition; at least there should be! Many of the old sins and habits drop away, and you may become a joyous and outgoing Christian. Your life is flooded with that first love and enthusiasm.

As a babe in Christ you are keenly aware of this transformation. It is so perceptible and wonderful that you are very likely to shift your assurance from your position to your condition. You feel so saved, and you act so saved, that you may say to yourself, “I know that I am a Christian; look at me, listen to me!”

You are now assured of your salvation because you feel saved. But see what this leads to. One morning, comes the dawn. On this particular day upon awakening you realize that you don’t look very saved, you don’t sound very saved, and you no longer feel very saved. All day long everything goes wrong, and by nightfall you find yourself at the end of your assurance.

Your conclusion may well be that since your condition is so bad, you just may not be a Christian. At any rate, you make up your mind to regain your assurance. The next day you strive to look and to sound and to feel saved. In short, you begin to struggle in order to maintain your assurance.

But because you are now centering your faith upon yourself and your condition, there is nothing but failure compounded. Your positional relationship with God has

not changed in the least, and never will, but your assurance of it has. It may be by this, or a similar experience, that God will teach you that your new Christian life, and your assurance of that life, have their source and foundation in your position. It is all of grace!

“Who (God) hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:9).

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT - Another factor concerning your assurance of salvation is “the witness of the Spirit.” “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16).

So many have the tendency to hanker for assurance in the realm of feelings. “Some anxious soul says, ‘If I had the witness of the Spirit I should be happy and at rest; but, alas! I have not that witness.’ My friend, you are looking in the wrong place for the Spirit’s witness. You must not look within.

“The witness of the Spirit of Truth is not an inward feeling of consciousness of pardon; it is a witness recorded in the imperishable words of Holy Scripture. The witness of the Spirit is not a vague uncertainty or inward consciousness; it is a written testimony that lies plain and clear on the pages of Scripture.

“What is the witness? It is this: ‘Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more’ (Hebrews 8:12). Every believer is entitled to know that the question of his sins is divinely and eternally settled.”CC.A. Coates

When the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Bible, speaks to your heart, He does it by means of that Word. As you study the Scriptures concerning your position in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Christ gives you a deep assurance within your spirit, beyond the realm of feelings, which cannot be altered or gainsaid.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.... And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.... These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:10-13)

“Eternal Security”

UNCONDITIONAL - The third and final aspect of your spiritual foundation to be considered here is eternal security. Just as your acceptance with God is by grace, so your eternal security is by grace.

You will inevitably encounter those who vehemently oppose the truth of eternal security. Those opponents insist upon some form of works in order to remain saved. But the God of all grace, the One who saves and secures, says, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5).

Standing upon your acceptance by God, and thereby resting in your assurance of salvation, there is very little that need be said about the obvious conclusion: you are unconditionally, eternally secure in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever” (Jude 24,25). It isn't that you don't fall in some measure daily in your condition, but that you cannot fall from your eternal position. One may fall on the deck, but never off the ship!

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD - The master key to your eternal security is the fact that your Father is the sovereign God of the universe. He has chosen you! He has made you His child! “According as he hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world...having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Ephesians 1:4,5).

You have already seen that your sovereign Father accepts you in His Son, and that He is working out His eternal purpose and will concerning you. “To the praise of the glory of his grace, through which he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:6,11).

THE JUSTICE OF GOD - In a day of flagrant injustice, it will hearten you to know that your security is based squarely upon the justice of God. “To declare...his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.” “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (Romans 3:26; 1 Peter 3:18).

Payment God cannot twice demand; First at my bleeding Surety’s hand, And then at mine.

THE LOVE OF GOD - Another factor in your eternal security is God’s love for you. Your Father loves you as He loves His Son, because in Him you are also His son. Nothing can separate the Lord Jesus from His Father, and in Him nothing can separate you from your Father.

“What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, or Lord” (Romans 8:35,38,39).

THE POWER OF GOD - further, you are an heir of God. Your inheritance is kept for you while you are kept by the power of God.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

THE PROMISES OF GOD - As if this overwhelming evidence concerning your eternal security were not enough, God has given many promises that He will keep you. Let us look at just two of them in closing.

The Lord Jesus gives you a dual promise: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). You have come to him as your Savior, and he has not rejected you but rather received you in

eternal love. Having come to Him and been saved by His marvelous grace, He has promised never to cast you out!

When Satan approaches you in the midst of your weakness and immaturity and charges that God has forsaken you, because of your sinful condition, it is then that your Father's promise shines upon you: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it!"

Finally, consider this encouraging word by the late Dr. L.S. Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary: "Could it be possible that God would so love an individual as to give His Son to die for him, and still love him to the extent of following him with the pleadings and drawings of His grace until He has won that soul into His own family and created him anew by the impartation of His own divine nature, and then be careless as to what becomes of the one He has thus given His all to procure?" (Salvation, p. 119)

It is upon this sure foundation of acceptance, assurance, and eternal security - amid the exigencies and ecstasies of the Christian life-that you will "grow in grace & in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" 2 Peter 3:18

Questions to guide our Study:

1. Explain this statement: "To the extent that your assurance wavers, your Christian experience will be crippled."
2. Explain position/condition and assurance of salvation.
3. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to our subject of "assurance of salvation?" Can you back up your answer with scripture?
4. Share your thoughts about the following scripture: Isaiah 32:17-18
5. How would knowledge of, and faith in the following statement be a help to us in this whole area of assurance and eternity security: "The Lord Jesus is continually in the presence of the Father, not making excuses for our sin, nor

begging for mercy, but rather presenting His blood before the throne as the answer to the condemnation of sin.”

6. Does God offer a salvation that is not secure? Explain your answer and support it with scripture.
7. What significance, if any, do the following scriptures have in regard to the subject of eternal security: Mark 13:32-37; Matthew 24:42-45.
8. What are your thoughts regarding this statement: “Once saved, always saved.”
9. Comment on the following statement: “There is no distinction between salvation and safe keeping/eternal security.
10. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in regard to “eternal security?” Can you support your answer with scripture?
11. Regarding the issue of eternal security, please read I Corinthians 5:1-5 and share your thoughts about verse 5.
12. How would you respond to someone who made the following comments: “I think I have truly trusted Christ as my Savior, however, I continue to sin. Oftentimes I don’t feel saved; maybe I’m not or maybe I’ve lost my salvation.”

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 2 KNOWLEDGE

Grasp the Issue

“Knowledge is the basis of the whole life of the child of God, and underlies every phase and aspect of that life.

Our greatest need is a true knowledge of God.” (John 17:3) It is the most important factor in our walk of faith and lies at the foundation of the Christian faith. We cannot trust a God who we don’t know, but on the other hand, we cannot help but trust Him if we truly do know Him. To the degree that we don’t know God, we’ll trust in other things.

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

We need not be concerned with too much knowledge; it only makes us proud.

Our trust will always be in proportion to our knowledge.

What we don’t know won’t hurt us, or as some say, Ignorance is bliss.

To the degree that we don’t know God, we’ll trust in other things.

Study The Scriptures

Proverbs 10:14; Proverbs 24:3-5; Isaiah 1:2-3; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Jeremiah 16:20-21; Hosea 4:6; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 8:2; Ephesians 1:17-18; Ephesians 3:19; Philippians 3:10; 2 Peter 1:2-3

Consult Other Sources

“Biblical Knowledge” Author Unknown

Knowledge of scriptural truth should precede spiritual growth. For example, in the early chapters of Paul’s epistles, doctrinal truth is presented, while the latter chapters deal with the practical results of the truth set forth. We must first know what the triune God has done, before we can count on Him to “do”. “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him”; “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and do of His good pleasure.” (Eph. 1:17; Phil. 2:13)

“There is a crippling tendency among believers today to depreciate head knowledge of the truth, and even doctrine itself. Emphasis is being put on so-called heart knowledge gained by means of experience. This, however, is to place condition before position, which is the opposite of God’s scriptural pattern. Truth reckoned on fosters the only healthy and abiding spiritual experience. For faith to function, there must be Spirit-given knowledge of the Word.”

The Spirit of truth ministers truth to us by means of our mind-the spiritual mind that relies on Him. This head knowledge gives us the facts on which we exercise faith or reckon. In Time, through deeper understanding and quiet assimilation of truth, there is both head knowledge and heart knowledge; we not only believe, but now we know experientially. Paul had believed on the Lord Jesus many years before he wrote, “That I may know Him” (Phil 3:10). Likewise, he urges us to “Meditate upon these things; give wholly to them that thy profiting may appear to all.” (1 Timothy 4:5) For, as a man “thinks within himself, so he is” (Proverbs 23:7, NASB).

“Some people belittle head knowledge because they see many Christians who seem to know so much scripture, yet whose lives fail to “adorn the doctrine” (Titus 2:10). Doubtless there is some justification for this reaction, but it should be realized that one’s knowledge of truth is always in advance of his growth in that truth. Many believers know truth in which it will take them a lifetime (and eternity) to grow.”

“Further, there are those who know about truth, having grasped and even memorized Scripture by means of the natural mind. Such knowledge will never become living experience. In the final analysis, we are not to decide about spiritual matters by observation of other believers. It is the Holy Spirit who must teach us by means of the Word “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor .2:13)

“Paul states that there are some who have a “zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). Ideally, head knowledge precedes heart knowledge. However, neither one is preeminent above the other B both are essential for healthy growth and effective ministry. Heart knowledge alone cannot progress beyond the fluctuating feelings and emotions of babyhood. It can exhort, emotionalize, and share experiences and blessings, but it can not lead others to establishment in the truth. To share effectively, we must be brought to maturity of both head and heart knowledge.

“We are to reckon and stand on certain truths for our foundations. Linked with these are other truths on which we are to reckon and rest for growth.”

FBC BIBLE STUDY LESSON #1

“Man’s Great Need; A True Knowledge of God”

A. Introduction:

The Christian life is nothing more than a walk of faith. However, for faith to function there must be Spirit-given knowledge of the Word. We must first know what God has done, before we can believe in Him and count on Him to do it.

B. The Spirit’s role:

The Spirit of truth ministers truth to us by means of our mind, the spiritual mind, that relies on Him. This head knowledge gives us the facts on which we exercise faith or reckon. In Time, through deeper understanding of truth, there is both head knowledge and heart knowledge; we not only believe, but now we know experientially. Proverbs 24:3- An interesting verse to consider – Proverbs 23:7

C. Our great need:

It might be helpful to give serious thought to what is probably one of our greatest needs as Christians. There is one thing on which the foundation of the Christian faith rests. It is a most important factor in this life and walk of faith, and that is knowledge..... In fact, we could even be more specific and say that man has a great/tremendous need of a TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. John 17:3 Notice that Jesus defines eternal life, not as a span of time, but rather a knowledge of God...

Ephesians 1:17 This is Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian Church. Notice that he does not pray for anything new, but rather for God to reveal Himself to them. Then in verse 18 Paul goes on praying that He would open the eyes of their understanding (heart) so that they would KNOW....

D. Our trust will always be in proportion to our knowledge:

We could say this. We are unable to trust someone if we don’t know them; but on the other hand, we can’t help but trust someone if we really do know them. No effort is required, it just comes natural.

Give some thought to this; our trust will always be in proportion to our knowledge, which means that to the degree that we don’t know God, we will trust in other things. Romans 10:14 “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”

Let's look at several more scriptures: Colossians 1:9,10 Again Paul is praying for a "knowledge of His will, a knowledge of God." Philippians 3:7,8

E. Only through His Word can we know Him:

God has given us His Word to reveal Himself, and it is only through His Word that we can know Him, know His wisdom, His will, His infinite love, His almighty power, His faithfulness, His holiness, His truth, His goodness, and grace and mercy. It is only through His Word that we can KNOW what pleases Him and what displeases Him; there's no other way. Phil 3:10 Give some thought to this: If we were to go to a foreign country, to learn another language and culture for the purpose of explaining our God to those who have never heard. How could we explain a God we don't know? Isaiah 1:2,3 "The ox knows his owner, but my people do not KNOW". Hosea 4:6a...We see the same problem today, people who are being destroyed for lack of knowledge.

F. Jesus – The world knew Him not:

John 1:10-11 Notice, "His own received Him not"..... Why? Because they didn't know Him. On the other hand, 2 Peter 3:18; Jeremiah 9:23-24

G. Random thoughts to consider:

2 Peter 1:2,3 makes real clear our need for a KNOWLEDGE OF HIM.

The victorious Christian life is not a method or technique, nor is it man imitating Jesus Christ; It is not an imitation of Christ, but rather a participation of Christ. It is Jesus Christ living His life in and through us. But if we don't KNOW both what He has done, and what He is doing, we'll end up just like those people in Hosea's time, DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE....

Questions to Guide our study:

1. What is the place of knowledge in the Christian's life?
2. Explain the following statement: "Our trust in God will always be in proportion to our knowledge of Him."
3. Explain the difference between "knowing God", and "knowing about God"?
4. Explain the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge?
5. Is it possible for a believer to learn truth apart from dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit? Can you think of Scripture to support your answer?
6. How would you arrange the following words to show a Biblical progression of thought regarding Spiritual Growth? Faith.....Knowledge.....Works....Grace.....
7. Do you see that progression in Rom. 6:6-13? 1 Cor. 3:1-3 speaks of 2 kinds of Christians; Carnal and Spiritual.....
How would you evaluate your Spiritual condition in light of this Scripture?
Could it be that your current Spiritual condition is due to a lack of real understanding of truth?
8. To the degree that we don't know God, we'll trust in other things. What are some things in life that you are trusting in, other than God?
9. Share your thoughts re: Rom. 10:2. Also 2 Tim. 3:1-7 particularly vs. 7.
10. What could happen to Christians who place condition before position?

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 3 FAITH

Grasp The Issue

In this lesson, we will be looking at “True Biblical faith”. There is no cloud that so effectively shuts out the sunshine of our Father’s face as the thick cloud of unbelief. Waiting on the Lord, is not a matter of longsuffering, but of expectant faith.....Quiet, restful, confident dependence upon One who can be fully trusted.

Sound Bites: (Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They can either be true or false.)

Faith is a force.

Faith is striving to believe, thinking if I believe something hard enough it will come to pass.

Biblical Faith must rest upon the facts of God’s Word.

The way to increase our faith is by focusing on God.

To the degree that we don’t know God, we’ll have faith/trust in other things.

The Lord helps those who help themselves.

The Lord helps those who trust in Him.

Study the Scriptures:

Matthew 14:22-31; Romans 4:20-22; Romans 10:17; Romans 14:23; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:6-7; Hebrews 3:18-4:3; Hebrews 10:38-11:40; Revelations 2:1-4

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

FAITH

by Miles Stanford

The Holy Spirit had Paul write to each of us, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5a), and the recommendation is certainly not out of order at the very inception of this series of studies. First of all, we must remind ourselves that “without faith, it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6a). Moreover, and this is all-important, true faith must be based solely upon scriptural facts, “for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Unless our faith is established upon facts, it is no more than conjecture, superstition, speculation, or presumption.

Hebrews 11:1 leaves no question about this: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith standing on the facts of the Word of God substantiates and gives evidence of things not seen. And everyone knows that evidence must be founded upon facts. All of us started on this principle when we were born again - our belief stood directly upon the eternal fact of the redeeming death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This is the faith by which we began, and it is the same faith by which we are to “stand” (1 Corinthians 16:13), and “walk” (2 Corinthians 5:7), and “live” (Galatians 2:20). As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him (Colossians 2:6).

Since true faith is anchored upon Scriptural facts, we are certainly not to be influenced by impressions. George Mueller said, “Impressions have neither one thing nor the other to do with faith. Faith has to do with the Word of God. It is not impressions, strong or weak, which make the difference. We have to do with the written Word and not ourselves or our impressions.”

Then too, probabilities are the big temptation when it comes to exercising faith. Too often the attitude is, “it doesn’t seem probable that he will ever be saved. The way things are going, I wonder if the Lord really loves me.” But Mueller wrote: “Many people are willing to believe regarding those things that seem probable to them. Faith has nothing to do with probabilities. The province of faith begins where probabilities cease and sight and sense fail. Appearances are not to be taken into account. The question is - whether God has spoken it in His Word.”

Alexander R. Hay adds to this by saying. “Faith must be based upon certainty. There must be definite knowledge of God’s purpose and will. Without that there can be no true faith. For faith is not a force that we exercise or a striving to believe that something shall be, thinking that if we believe hard enough it will come to pass.” That may be positive thinking, but certainly not Biblical Faith.

Evan Hopkins writes: “Faith needs facts to rest upon. Presumption can take fancy instead of fact. God in His Word reveals to us the facts with which faith has to deal.” It is upon this basis that J. B. Stoney can say, Real faith is always increased by opposition, while false confidence is damaged and discouraged by it. There can be no steadfastness apart from immovable facts. Peter’s burden was, That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7).

Once we begin to reckon (Count) on facts, our Father begins to build us up in the faith. From his profoundly simple trust in God, Mueller was able to say that God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God’s hand as a means. I say - and say it deliberately - trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith.

On this same subject, James McConkey wrote: “Faith is dependence upon God. And this God-dependence only begins when self-dependence ends. And self-dependence only comes to it’s end, with some of us, when sorrow, suffering, affliction, broken plans and hopes bring us to that place of self-helplessness and defeat. And only then do we find that we have learned the lesson of faith; to find our tiny craft of life rushing onward to a blessed victory of life and power and service undreamt of in the days of our fleshly strength and self-reliance.”

J. B. Stoney agrees by saying, “It is a great thing to learn faith: That is, simple dependence upon God. It will comfort you much to be assured that the Lord is teaching you dependence upon Himself, and it is very remarkable that faith is necessary in everything. ‘The just shall live by faith,’ not only in your circumstances, but in everything. I believe the Lord allows many things to happen on purpose to make us feel our need for Him. The more you find Him in sorrows or wants, the more you will be attached to Him and drawn away from this place where

the sorrows are, to Him in the place where He is.” “Set your affection on things above” (Colossians 3:2a).

Actually, we cannot trust anyone further than we know him. So we must not only learn the facts involved, but ever more intimately come to know the One who presents and upholds them! “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:2-4)

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #1

“Faith”

A. Introductions - Without faith it’s impossible to please Him:

Let's begin today with what is probably the single most important principle of spiritual growth, and that is faith...Without faith, any desire of ours to walk with the Lord and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely hopeless. Hebrews 11:6; 10:38. Romans 14:23 – We could say that the Christian life is nothing more than a walk of faith.

B. The Church at Ephesus was a really good Church:

Turn with me to a rather interesting scripture in the book of Revelation.

Read - Revelation 2:1-3 - A message to the Church at Ephesus. Notice again in verses 2 & 3, that this was a good church; this was the church that the Apostle Paul spent more time with than any other church. They were a serving church, they were steadfast, separated and sacrificing; they were doing many good things. However, verse 4--they had left, not lost, but left their first love. Now first love is that child-like faith that we have when we first came to know Christ, (1Timothy 5:12) and although the saints at Ephesus were doing many good things, they were not trusting, and resting, and depending on the lord; therefore, they were not pleasing to Him.

C. The Lord helps those who trust in Him:

The Christian life is not a walk of me producing/performing, but rather receiving by faith. Colossians 2:6; Romans 5:2

An interesting thought to consider is this; It's only natural in this production oriented society to balk at a walk of faith. We are taught from day one to produce/do the right things, or life will not go well.

We hear things like "the Lord helps those who help themselves".

This is not a true statement..... What is true and we find throughout the Bible is, that the Lord helps those who trust in Him....

D. An age-old problem:

It's important that we know that this is not a problem that is unique to the 20th century, but rather a problem that has plagued the church and Christians since the beginning. Galatians 3:1-3

E. Faith from start to finish:

The faith by which we were saved is the same faith by which we are to stand 1 Corinthians 16:13.....and walk, 2 Corinthians 5:7..... and live. Galatians 2:20b

F. Some Old Testament Saints and Jesus to encourage us:

What encouragement and comfort we get from people like David, and Daniel, and Elijah, and Nehemiah, and from Jesus Himself.

In 1 Samuel 17 Goliath cursed David by his god's and said; "I will give your flesh to the birds of the air." David responded back; "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts." Goliath never knew what hit him.

How about Nehemiah...Ridiculed by Tobiah and Sanballat...Who built the wall in 52 day? who won out in the end?...Not old Tobiah.

What about Elijah who stood alone against 450 prophets of Baal with all of Israel watching....Surely they had to have been laughing him to scorn...But whose God proved Himself by devouring the sacrifice? It certainly wasn't Baal.

And now Daniel...Thrown into the den of lions because he continued to pray to his God...Don't you just love the king's question to him the following day when he came to the lions den to see what had happened to Daniel; "O Daniel, servant of the most high God, has your God been able to deliver you from the lions?" Possibly a

long moment of silence and then Daniel's response....."O king, my God has sent the angels to shut the mouths of these lions."

Turn now to Matthew 27:39-44 –

(Who is seated at the right hand of God? It sure isn't those chief priests and scribes.)

G. Back to the Garden, where it all started:

It all started in the Garden of Eden when Satan said to Eve, "Yea hath God said?

All he did was sow a seed of doubt in Eve's mind, and he continues sowing seeds of doubt in the minds of Christians today.

H. His working in our lives is in direct proportion to our faith:

Turn now to Psalm 33:22; Matthew 8:13; Matthew 9:29. Everyone of these scriptures say that "it will be done to us according to our faith." In other words, His working in our lives is in direct proportion to our faith.

Questions to Guide Our Study:

1. What is your definition of Biblical faith?
2. What is the difference between “positive thinking” and “biblical faith?”
3. In your thinking, how important is faith?
4. In your own words, explain Romans 14:23b.
5. Comment on Hebrews 10:38 and Hebrews 11:1.
6. How would you explain 2 Corinthians 13:5a?
7. If the Christian life is a walk of faith, what part do we play in it?
8. Explain this statement: “Unless our faith is based on facts (what are the facts), it is no more than conjecture, superstition or presumption.”
9. In your thinking, how much faith does a mustard seed have? Look at Luke 17:6.
10. In I Corinthians 16:13 and I Peter 5:9, what is meant by “stand fast in the faith?”
11. Share your thoughts regarding the following statements: “Real faith is always increased by opposition, while false confidence is damaged and discouraged by it.” I Peter 1:7 “Trials, obstacles, difficulties and sometimes defeat are the very food of faith.”
12. To the degree that we don’t know God, we’ll trust in other things. What are some of the “other things” that you may be trusting in?
13. Comment on Colossians 2:6.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 4 GRACE

Grasp The Issue

What does the word “Grace” mean to you? For many Christians, this word means nothing more than a prayer which is said before meals.....However.....True Biblical Grace is much more than a mere prayer; Romans 5:17 says, “Those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.”.....This understanding of God’s Grace is foundational to Christianity.....Furthermore, grace alone can free us not only from the penalty of sin, but also the power of sin.....Romans 6:14 says; “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”..... God is made known to us as “the God of all grace”, and the position in which we are placed is that of recipients of His grace.....

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may be either true or false.

Grace helps us live the Christian life.

The flesh has no place in the plan of grace.

Law and Grace go hand in hand.

Grace is seldom deserved by the Christian.

The failure of man does not cause God to withdraw His grace.

If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace.

Study the Scriptures:

Acts 13:43; Romans 3:24; Romans 5:2, 17, 20; Romans 6:14-15; Romans 11:5-6; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 1:2,6; Ephesians 2:7-8; Colossians 4:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; John 13:1-15

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“Grace the Glorious Theme” by L. S. Chafer

The meaning of the word grace as used in the New Testament is not unlike its meaning as employed in common speech, but for one important exception; namely, in the Bible, the word often represents that which is limitless, since it represents realities which are infinite and eternal. It is nothing less than the unlimited love of God expressing itself in measureless grace.

The word favor is the nearest Biblical synonym for the word grace. Grace is favor, and favor is grace, and it finds its greatest triumph and glory in the sphere of human helplessness. Grace ceases to be grace if God is compelled to withdraw it because of human failure or sin. In fact, grace cannot be exercised where there is the slightest degree of human merit to be recognized.

God cannot propose to do less in grace for one who is sinful than He would have done had that one been less sinful. The sin question has been set aside forever, and equal favor/grace is extended to all who believe. Thus, grace can not be increased, nor diminished.

God does not ignore or slight the fact of human sin; for He has met these issues for all men in the death of His Son.

“ New Birth Explained”
By Miles Stanford

The Principle of Grace

BORN BY GRACE - As a new Christian you are able to understand that you were born again on the principle of grace-the unearned, free gift of God. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8).

CONFORMED BY GRACE - As a new Christian it is important that you realize, also, that God saved you in order to conform you to the image of His Son. The Lord Jesus is the express image of God, and it is through Him that God realizes His original purpose: Let us make man in our image.

LIVE BY GRACE - As a new Christian, moreover, you are to understand that your new life is to be lived on the same principle as your new birth-that of grace. “As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Colossians 2:6).

God created, God gave, God works, For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). Your Father’s good pleasure is that you may become like His beloved Son.

As a babe in Christ you are aware of new life and strength within, and your heart is filled with love for the Lord Jesus. You will become active in church, Bible study, Scripture memorization, and no doubt seek to win your unsaved relatives and friends to the Savior. All good, and beneficial.

WORKS VS. GRACE - In time, however-it may be a few months or a number of years you may begin to falter in all of these areas. Your love for the Lord Jesus cools, and elements of your old life begin to reassert themselves.

Struggle as you may to regain your spiritual balance, you will only seem to fail the more. For you it becomes, When I would do good, evil is present with me.... Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:21, 24).

By means of your struggle and failure to live the Christian life, the Lord Jesus is teaching you the indispensable grace principle of not I, but Christ (Galatians 2:20). During this downward path you will finally learn that you cannot live the Christian life in you own strength, nor even with the Lord’s help.

THE GRACIOUS VINE - The Lord Jesus expressed this principle in John 15:5: *“I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.”*

Your part, as a branch in the Vine, is to rest in Him, depend upon Him, and fellowship with Him. You are joined to the Vine by nature, and His life will flow in and through you, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:11).

You will find it a great revelation-and relief-in the midst of your failure, to hear these words, “Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place” (2 Corinthians 2:14). You do not triumph by means of your own strength and strategy; it is your Father who gives you life and growth in His Son.

Regeneration by grace; growth by grace-that is the principle of the Christian life. Indeed, the Lord Jesus is your Life Principle. Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us (Ephesians 3:20).

WALK BY GRACE - Slowly and painfully you will learn to be dependent upon your heavenly Father. He has ordained and laid out His plan for your life, and as you grow spiritually you will be walking in the path He has chosen for you. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

SERVE BY GRACE - You are going to learn that your service is also according to the principle of grace: regeneration by grace, growth by grace, service by grace.

Your Father has promised to provide you with all that you will need for whatever He calls you to do. There will be enough for you, and for others, also. God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8).

GRACE WORKS! - The fact that the Christian life and service are by grace does not mean that you flop down and wait for Him to work apart from you.

The growing Christian is a very active individual; he becomes the willing instrument of God’s blessed will. In his measure he can say, with Paul, His grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Corinthians 15:10).

God works, not with what He finds, but with what He brings.

A Few Words About Grace:

by William. Newell

The Nature of Grace:

1. Grace is God acting freely, according to His own nature -- as Love; with no promises or obligations to fulfill; and acting of course, righteously -- in view of the cross.
2. Grace, therefore, is uncaused in the recipient: its cause lies wholly in the GIVER, in GOD.
3. Grace, also is sovereign. Not having debts to pay, or fulfilled conditions on man's part to wait for, it can act toward whom, and how, it pleases. It can, and does, often, place the worst deservers in the highest favors.
4. Grace cannot act where there is either desert or ability; Grace does not help -- it is absolute, it does all.
5. There being no cause in the creature why Grace should be shown, the creature must be brought off from trying to give cause to God for His Grace.
6. The discovery by that he is truly the object of Divine grace, works the utmost humility: for the receiver of grace is brought to know his own absolute unworthiness, and his complete inability to attain worthiness: yet he finds himself blessed -- on another principle, outside of himself!
7. Therefore, flesh has no place in the plan of Grace. This is the great reason why Grace is hated by the proud natural mind of man. But for this very reason, the true believer rejoices! For he knows that in him, that is, in his flesh, is no good thing;; and yet he finds God glad to bless him, just as he is!

The Place of Man under Grace:

8. He has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing!
9. He is not on probation.
10. As to his life past, it does not exist before God: he died at the Cross, and Christ is his life.
11. Grace, once bestowed, is not withdrawn: for God knew all the human exigencies (needs) beforehand: His action was independent of them, not dependent upon

them.

- 12.The failure of devotion does not cause the withdraw of bestowed grace (as it would under law). For example: the man in I Cor. 5:1-5; and also those in 11:30-32, who did not judge themselves, and so were judged by the Lord, -- that they might not be condemned with the world!

The Proper Attitude of Man Under Grace:

- 13.To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.
14.To refuse to make resolutions and vows; for that, is to trust in the flesh.
15.To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth.
16.To testify of God's goodness, at all times.
17.To be certain of God's future favor; yet to be ever more tender in conscience toward Him.
18.To rely on God's chastening hand as a mark of His kindness.
19.A man under grace, if like Paul, has no burden regarding himself; but many about others.

Things Which Gracious Souls Discover:

- 20.To hope to be better is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.
21.To be disappointed with yourself, is to have believed in yourself.
22.To be discouraged is unbelief, -- as to God's purpose and plan of blessing for you.
23.To be proud, is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves.
24.The lack of Divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion.
25.Real devotion to God arises, not from man's will to show it; but from the discovery that blessing has been received from God while we were yet unworthy and undevoted.
26.To preach devotion first, and blessing second, is to reverse God's order, and preach law, not grace. The Law made man's blessing depend on devotion; Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing: our devotion may follow, but not always in proper measure.

Questions to guide our study

1. In your own words, define Grace.
2. Does God's Grace toward us mean that He passes over sin? Explain.
3. Is it possible to co-mingle law and grace? Explain your answer.
4. Complete the following equation:
 $99\% \text{ grace} + 1\% \text{ human effort/work} = ?$
5. What do the following terms mean to you?
 - A. Born by Grace
 - B. Conformed by Grace
 - C. Live by Grace
6. Explain in your own words the following Scripture: Rom. 6:14
7. How would you define the following term: A Grace Awakening?
8. Judging from the following verses, how does one obtain God's Grace?
Colossians 2:6; Romans 5:2
9. Gleaning from Hebrews 12:15, what happens to those who fail to appropriate the grace of God?
10. Explain the following statements in light of God's grace:
 - a. To hope is to be better, is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.
 - b. To be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself.

- c. To be discouraged is unbelief in God's purpose and plan for you. See Romans 8:28; Jeremiah 29:11.
- d. Lack of God's blessing comes from unbelief, not from failure of human effort.
- e. To believe and consent to be loved while unworthy is the great secret.
- f. To refuse to make resolutions and vows, for that is to trust in the flesh.
- g. To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 5 TIME

Grasp the issue:

The issue of God's timing in the believers life is one that is often hard to understand. We live in a "microwave" society that is constantly looking for fast results. We are a time oriented people. We tend to carry this mind-set over into our Christian life.....Our desire is to short-cut God's growth process.

However, that is not God's way; God is working from eternity and to eternity and has no timetable. An interesting thought is that God Himself regulates the pace of our growth. Unless we understand God's working in our lives regarding this time element there is bound to be frustration and resistance to His developmental process.

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

True spiritual growth is an instant event.

God is slow and meticulous with our spiritual growth.

The believers growth is based only on God who gives the increase.

If a believer tries hard and walks by faith then their maturity process will be fast.

Through large amounts of Bible reading a believer can hurry up growth.

Growth is not always steady and measurable.

Study the Scriptures:

Exodus 23:29-30; Psalm 27:13-14; Psalm 62:1-5; Psalm 123:1-2; Isaiah 28:10; Isaiah 30:18; Mark 4:26-28; Philippians 1:6; I Peter 5:10; II Peter 3:8; II Peter 3:18

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“TIME”

by: Miles Stanford

It seems that most believers have difficulty in realizing and facing up to the inexorable fact that God does not hurry in His development of our Christian life. He is working from and for eternity! So many feel they are not making progress unless they are swiftly and constantly forging ahead. Now it is true that the new convert often begins and continues for some time at a fast rate. But this will not continue if there is to be healthy growth and ultimate maturity. God Himself will modify the pace. This is important to see, since in most instances when seeming declension begins to set in, it is not, as so many think, a matter of backsliding.

John Darby makes it plain that it is God's way to set people aside after their first start, that self-confidence may die down. Thus Moses was forty years. On his first start he had to run away. Paul was three years also, after his first testimony. We must get to know ourselves and that we have no strength. Thus we must learn, and then leaning on the Lord we can with more maturity, and more experientially, deal with souls.

Since the Christian life matures and becomes fruitful by the principle of growth (see 2 Peter 3:18) rather than by struggle and experiences, much time is involved. Unless we see and acquiesce to this, there is bound to be constant frustration, to say nothing of resistance to our Father's development process for us. Dr. A. H. Strong illustrates for us: "A student asked the President of his school whether he could not take a shorter course than the one prescribed. 'Oh yes,' replied the President, 'but then it depends upon what you want to be. When God wants to make an oak, He takes a hundred years, but when He wants to make a squash, He takes six months.'" Strong also wisely points out to us that "growth is not a uniform thing in the tree or in the Christian. In some single months there is more growth than in all the year besides. During the rest of the year, however, there is

solidification, without which the green timber would be useless. The period of rapid growth, when woody fiber is actually deposited between the bark and the trunk, occupies but four to six weeks in May, June and July.”

Let’s settle it once and for all--there are no shortcuts to reality! A meteor is on a shortcut as it proceeds to burn out, but not a star, with its steady light so often depended on by navigators. Unless the time factor is acknowledged from the heart, there is always danger of turning to the false enticement of a shortcut via the means of “experiences” and “blessings,” where one becomes pathetically enmeshed in the vortex of ever-changing feelings, adrift from the moorings of scriptural facts.

In regard to this subject George Goodman writes: “Some have been betrayed into professing perfection or full deliverance, because at the time they speak they are happy and confident in the Lord. They forget that it is not a present experience that ensures fruit unto maturity, but a patient continuance in well doing. To taste of the grace of God is one thing; to be established in it and manifest it in character, habit, and regular life, is another. Experiences and blessings, though real gracious visitations from the Lord, are not sufficient to rest upon, nor should they lead us to glory in ourselves, as if we had a store of grace for time to come, or were yet at the end of the conflict. No. Fruit ripens slowly; days of sunshine and days of storm each add their share. Blessing will succeed blessing, and storm follow storm before the fruit is full grown or comes to maturity.”

In that the Husbandman’s method for true spiritual growth involves pain as well as joy, suffering as well as happiness, failure as well as success, inactivity as well as service, death as well as life, the temptation to shortcut is especially strong unless we see the value of and submit to the necessity of the time element. In simple trust we must rest in His hands, “being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). And it will take that long! But since God is working for eternity, why should we be concerned about the time involved?

Graham Scroggie affirmed, “Spiritual renewal is a gradual process. All growth is progressive, and the finer the organism, the longer the process. It is from measure to measure: thirtyfold, sixtyfold, an hundredfold. It is from stage to stage: ‘first the blade, then the ear, and after that, the full corn in the ear.’ And it is from day to day. How varied these are! There are great days, days of decisive battles, days of crises in spiritual history, days of triumph in Christian service, days of the right hand of God upon us. But there are also idle days, days apparently useless, when even prayer and holy service seem a burden. Are we, in any sense, renewed

in these days? Yes, for any experience which makes us more aware of our need of God must contribute to spiritual progress, unless we deny the Lord who bought us.”

We might consider some familiar names of believers whom God obviously brought to maturity and used for His glory--such as Pierson, Chapman, Tauler, Moody, Goforth, Mueller, Taylor, Watt, Trumbull, Meyer, Murray, Havergal, Guyon, Mabie, Gordon, Hyde, Mantle, McCheyne, McConkey, Deck, Paxson, Stoney, Saphir, Carmichael and Hopkins. The average for these was 15 years after they entered their life work before they began to know the Lord Jesus as their Life and ceased trying to work for Him and began allowing Him to be their All in all and do His work through them. This is not to discourage us in any way but to help us to settle down with our sights on eternity, by faith “apprehend[ing] that for which also ... [we are] apprehended of Christ Jesus. ... Press[ing] toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12,14).

Certainly this is not to discount a Spirit-fostered experience, blessing, or even a crisis; but it is to be remembered that these simply contribute to the overall, and all-important, process. It takes time to get to know ourselves; it takes time and eternity to get to know our infinite Lord Jesus Christ. Today is the day to put our hand to the plow and to irrevocably set our heart on His goal for us--that we “may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (v.10).

“So often in the battle,” says Austin-Sparks, “we go to the Lord, and pray, and plead, and appeal for victory, for ascendancy, for mastery over the forces of evil and death, and our thought is that in some way the Lord is going to come in with a mighty exercise of power and put us into a place of victory and spiritual ascendancy as in an act. We must have this mentality corrected. What the Lord does is to enlarge us to possess. He puts us through some exercise, through some experience, takes us by some way which means our spiritual expansion, and exercise of spirituality so we occupy the larger place spontaneously. ‘I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased’ (Exodus 23:29,30).

“One day in the House of Commons, British Prime Minister Disraeli made a brilliant speech on the spur of the moment. That night a friend said to him, ‘I must tell you how much I enjoyed your extemporaneous talk. It’s been on my mind all day.’ ‘Madam,’ confessed Disraeli, ‘that extemporaneous talk has been on my mind for twenty years!’”

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #2

“Time”

A. Introduction:

Many believers have difficulty in coming to the realization and facing up to the fact that God does not hurry in His development of our Christian life. He is working from eternity and to eternity. Philippians 1:6

B. Our desire is to short-cut God's growth process:

This issue of God's timing in the believers life is one that is often hard to understand. We live in a “microwave” society that is constantly looking for fast results. We are a time oriented people. We tend to carry this mind-set over into our Christian life.....Our desire is to short-cut God's growth process.

C. God Himself Regulates the Pace of Our Growth:

It is very important we understand that it is God Himself who regulates the pace of our growth. Over in Mark, Chapter 4, the Lord gives us the parable of spiritual growth. Mark 4:26-28..... Since the Christian life matures and becomes fruitful by the principle of spiritual growth, much time is involved, and unless we understand God's working in our lives regarding this time element, there is bound to be frustration and resistance to His development process.

The temptation to shortcut God's maturing process is especially strong unless we see the value and necessity of the time element.

There is a tendency for Christians to look around at other Christians who are light years ahead spiritually, and pray that God will miraculously mature them, expecting Him to come in with a big surge of power and put them into a place of spiritual maturity. That is not God's way.....

But the way he does answer that prayer is described in Exodus 23:29, 30; Is. 28:10.

D. The Holy Spirit's role:

2 Corinthians 3:18--Notice who changes us; the Holy Spirit. The moment that we come to realize that only God can make a man Godly, we are left with no option but to yield/present ourselves/abide/rest. Psalm 46:10; Psalm 4:4-5; John 3:30; John 15:5; Romans 12:1

If we fail to enter into this mystery of Godliness, and abide and rest in it, trusting God to mold us into His image, in His time, then we will seek to be Godly through

self effort. (Obeying rules and conforming to behavior patterns imposed on us by the Christian society that we have chosen.)

E. God takes pleasure in our child-like faith/dependence:

There doesn't appear to be anything more pleasing to God than the position of hanging in childlike dependence upon the Father and being entirely content to wait for His time. Psalm 27:13,14; Psalm 62:1, 2 & 5; Psalm 123:1, 2; Isaiah 30:18; Isaiah 40:31;

Some of our greatest blessings and growth spurts, come while waiting on the Lord. Deuteronomy 8:16; I Peter. 5:10; Isaiah 50:10,11.

F. The Spirit is faithful:

The question of coming into true spiritual maturity rests not with us but with the Holy Spirit. It is not a question of our effort or ability, but of the absolute faithfulness of the Spirit of God. Can we depend on Him to do all the work entrusted to Him, in His time? John 16:13,14.

Questions to guide the discussion

1. Share your thoughts on the following statement: “The moment that we come to realize that only God can make a man godly, we are left with no option but to yield ourselves, abide, rest, and wait.”
2. Comment on this statement: “It appears that there is nothing more pleasing to God than the position of hanging in childlike dependence upon the Father and being content to wait for His time.” Psalm 27:13-14
3. How do the examples of growth in nature relate to our spiritual growth?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the following: “Since the Christian life matures and becomes fruitful by the principle of growth (2 Peter 3:18), much time is involved. Unless we see and acquiesce (consent passively) to this, there is bound to be constant frustration and resistance to our Father’s development process.
5. Explain John Darby’s statement: “It is God’s way to set a Christian aside after his first start, that self confidence may die down...” (Paul was three years after his first start; Joseph? Moses?)
6. Read Exodus 2:11-3:12. What do you see here about the time element in Moses’ life?
7. Who is in control of our spiritual growth/spiritual maturity? (John 16:13-14; 2 Corinthians 3:18)
8. How do you personally respond to slow spiritual growth periods?
9. What are some ways that Christians try to shortcut the spiritual growth process? (A meteor is actually on a shortcut to burnout)
10. Comment on I Peter 5:10.

11. What do the following scriptures tell us about spiritual growth:
 - a. Exodus 23:29-30
 - b. Philippians 1:6
 - c. I Corinthians 3:6-7
 - d. Isaiah 40:29-31
12. What are some things that hinder us from resting in God's timing for our life?
13. Comment on Graham Scroggie's statement: "Spiritual renewal is a gradual process. All growth is progressive, and the finer the organism, the longer the process (Mark 4:26-28)."
14. Remember, "fruit ripens slowly; days of sunshine and days of storm both add their share. There are great days as well as idle, apparently useless days, but each are used by the Lord. (Any experience which makes us more aware of our need for God will contribute in our growth.)"

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 6 ACCEPTANCE

Grasp The Issue

There are two questions that every growing Christian must settle as soon as possible.

1. Does God fully accept me?
2. And if so, on what basis?

Many of us have grown up in legalistic homes, with legalistic parents, who sent us to legalistic schools, and later got jobs and labored in a legalistic work environment. (Legalism is operating under a set of rules and regulations for the purpose of gaining approval).....For example; if we obey certain rules set down by our parents, teachers or employers, then we are looked upon with favor by those in authority. The big question now becomes, how many of us after growing up this way and then experiencing God's Grace at salvation have placed ourselves back under the law and are currently striving to live a holy and righteous life so that we will be acceptable to God?

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

If we are obedient, we will be accepted by God.

God fully accepts all those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

I knew a man once who told me that God wouldn't accept him, because he was too bad.

Our efforts to seek and serve God, make us acceptable in His sight.

Prayer, and Bible study is another must to be accepted.

By grace we are accepted, through faith

Study the Scriptures:

Ephesians 1:3-6; Galatians 3:1-3; Romans 5:1-11; Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 10:14-18

ACCEPTANCE

by Miles Stanford

There are two questions that every believer must settle as soon as possible. The one is, Does God fully accept me? and, If so, upon what basis does He do so? This is crucial. What devastation often permeates the life of one, young or old, rich or poor, saved or unsaved, who is not sure of being accepted, even on the human level.

Yet so many believers, whether “strugglers” or “vegetators”, move through life without this precious fact to rest and build upon: “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:5, 6).

Every believer is accepted by the Father, in Christ. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). The peace is God’s toward us, through His Beloved Son--upon this, our peace is to be based. God is able to be at peace with us through our Lord Jesus Christ, “having made peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20). And we must never forget that His peace is founded solely on the work of the cross, totally apart from anything whatsoever in or from us, since “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinner, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Our faith becomes a fixed attitude, once it begins to rest in this wonderful fact. This is the steadying influence most believers are in need of today. A century ago, J. B. Stoney wrote: “The blessed God never alters nor diverges from the acceptance in which He has received us because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Alas! we diverge from the state in which God can ever be toward us as recorded in Romans 5:1-11. Many suppose that because they are conscious of sins, that hence they must renew their acceptance with God.

“The truth is that God has not altered. His eye rests on the work accomplished by Christ for the believer. When you are not walking in the Spirit you are in the flesh; you have turned to the old man which was crucified on the cross (Romans

6:6). You have to be restored to fellowship and when you are, you find your acceptance with God unchanged and unchangeable. When sins are introduced there is a fear that God has changed. He has not changed, but you have. You are not walking in the Spirit but in the flesh. You have to judge yourself in order to be restored. 'For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins' (Matthew 26:28). But if your sins are not met there, where can they be met? 'Now where remission of sin is, there is no more offering for sin' (Hebrews 10:18).

God has effected the reconciliation; He always remains true to it. Alas! we diverge from it; and the tendency is to suppose that the blessed God has altered toward us. He certainly will judge the flesh if we do not, but He never departs from the love which He has expressed to the prodigal, and we find that when the cloud, which walking in the flesh produced, has passed away, His love, blessed be His Name, had never changed."

God's basis must be our basis for acceptance. There is none other. We are "accepted in the Beloved." Our Father is fully satisfied with His Beloved Son on our behalf, and there is not reason for us not to be. Our satisfaction can only spring from and rest in His satisfaction. It is from God to us, not from us to God. J. N. Darby was very clear on this: "When the Holy Spirit reasons with man, He does not reason from what man is for God, but from what God is to man. Souls reason from what they are in themselves as to whether God can accept them. He cannot accept you thus; you are looking for righteousness in yourself as a ground of acceptance with Him. You cannot get peace whilst reasoning in that way.

"The Holy Spirit always reasons down from what God is, and this produces a total change in my soul. It is not that I abhor my sins: indeed I may have been walking very well; but it is 'I abhor myself.' This is how the Holy Spirit reasons; He shows us what we are, and that is one reason why He often seems to be very hard and does not give peace to the soul, as we are not relieved until we experientially, from our hearts, acknowledge what we are.

"Until the soul comes to that point He does not give it peace--He could not; it would be healing the wound slightly. The soul has to go on until it finds there is nothing to rest on but the abstract goodness of God; and then, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31b).

Sad today, most believers actually reason just the opposite--from themselves to God. When all is going well, and God seems to be blessing, then it is that they feel He loves and accepts them. But when they are stumbling, and everything seems dry and hard, then they feel He does not love and accept them. How can this

be? There is nothing about us to commend us to God, our acceptance being in Christ, plus the fact that most of our true spiritual development comes through the dry and hard times. Thank God, He has accepted us in His Son, and upon this fact we must rest our faith. As in justification, our acceptance is by grace alone. In his classic, Romans, Verse by Verse, Wm. R. Newell presents some penetrating thoughts regarding this grace:

“There being no cause in the creature why grace should be shown, the creature must be brought off from trying to give cause to God for His care.” “He has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing!” “He is not on probation.” “As to his life past, it does not exist before God: he died at the cross, and Christ is his Life.”

“Grace, once bestowed, is not withdrawn: for God knew all the human exigencies beforehand; His action was independent of them, not dependent upon them.”

“To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.”

“To refuse to make ‘resolutions’ and ‘vows’; for that is to trust in the flesh.”

“To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth.”

“To rely on God’s chastening (child training) hand as a mark of His kindness.”

“To ‘hope to be better’ (hence acceptable) is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.”

“To be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself.”

“To be discouraged is unbelief--as to God’s purpose and plan of blessing for you.”

“To be proud, is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves.”

“The lack of Divine blessing, therefore, comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion.”

“To preach devotion first, and blessing second, is to reverse God’s order, and preach law, not grace. The Law made man’s blessing depend on devotion; Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing: our devotion may follow, but does not always do so--in proper measure.”

Have we been afraid to really believe God? Have some even been afraid to allow others to really believe Him? We must never forget that “God’s ways are not always man’s ways. To some men constant peril is the only spur to action, and many religions and psychologies are dependent on fear to keep their disciples in line. Fear, too, has a place in Christianity, but God has higher and more effective motivations than fear, and one of these is love. Often fear after a while produces only numbness, but love thrives on love. To promise a man the certainty of his destiny may seem, on the human level, like playing with fire; but this leaves God out of the picture. Those who have the deepest appreciation of grace do not continue to sin. Moreover, fear produces the obedience of slaves; love engenders the obedience of son.” -- J. W. Sanders, Jr.

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? (I Corinthians 14:8). Until the Christian is absolutely and scripturally sure of his standing, he is not going to do much standing. “Stand therefore” (Ephesians 6:14a).

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work” (2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17).

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #3

“Acceptance”

A. Legalism defined:

I wonder how many of us have grown up in a legalistic home...

(legalism is operating under a set of rules and regulations for the purpose of gaining approval).....

For example, if we obey a certain set of rules set down by our parents or teachers, then we are looked upon with favor by those in authority.

There is a good possibility that many of us have grown up in such an environment, a legalistic home, with legalistic parents, who sent us to legalistic schools and later got jobs and labored in a legalistic work environment.

The big question now becomes how many of us after growing up this way and then experiencing God's grace at salvation have placed ourselves back under the law and are currently striving to live a holy, righteous life so that we will be acceptable to God. Gal. 3:1-3

B. It's either law, or grace”

Turn now to Romans 6:14 (we're not under the law, but under grace)

There appears to be a common error in Christianity today which is co-mingling law and grace.

Lewis Sperry Chafer in his book "Grace the Glorious Theme" makes this comment - "if it is not 100 percent grace, then it is law"

No where in scripture do we see the mixing of law and grace...it is impossible.

Romans 11:6;

C. The “foolish” Galatians:

Does God fully accept us? Yes...on what basis? Grace...unmerited favor.

However, in this production oriented society that we live in it is only natural for us to feel that it is our efforts to seek God, our efforts to serve Him which makes us acceptable.

Just like the Galatians in Galatians 3:1-3 - we started out by grace, but after salvation somehow we begin to imagine that it is our responsibility to live this Christian life and serve faithfully so that He will approve of us.

D. Many Christians seek God's acceptance through production:

But somehow we go through life depending on our efforts (law) rather than God's grace for our acceptance. Our hearts seek acceptance through production...service becomes our life and as long as the service goes well, we, the servant, feel accepted. But notice what Galatians 4:7 says (no more servant, but sons).

E. Acceptance is based on position not performance: A missionary working with a tribal group in Southeast Asia, recently wrote a letter about the work there, and I would like to share a portion of that letter with you. "God has really been impressing upon me my need to continually depend upon the Holy Spirit! As our new church is beginning here, and we see some potential leaders, I find myself praying and thinking a lot lately in regards to their training and preparation. As I look around at our mission field, there is really only one work that has good solid leadership in it. The rest have little or none. I believe that we can also look around at other fields and basically see the same thing, a lack of good solid leadership for our churches. Anyway, the reasons for this, I believe, are twofold; the first is a lack of grace teaching. It's taught for salvation all right, but not for sanctification. It's imperative that these people know that they are sons, not slaves, and therefore their acceptance is based on position, not performance.

F. Joint heirs:

Romans 8:17 says we are joint heirs with Jesus.

All that He is and all that He has becomes ours at salvation...He is forever accepted by God and we are forever accepted in Him.

Romans 7:18 – "In our flesh dwells no good thing" There is nothing that any Christian is or has, or does that will make us acceptable to God.

And not until we understand, believe and trust this verse can we rest in our position of complete acceptance in Jesus. John 6:63; Philippians 3:3.

G. Transferring our effort to trust:

We must stop trying to make ourselves acceptable and start trusting in His acceptance.....It is our God given privilege by faith to consent to be loved, while unworthy.

Over and over in scripture we come face to face with unacceptable people who by, God's grace and God's grace alone, were made acceptable and went on to be used by the Lord greatly; A great example is the Apostle Paul..... Acts 7:54-60; 8:1; 9:1-2; 22:4

H. A great Biblical example:

There is absolutely nothing about Paul or his life that would make him acceptable to the Lord. Acts 9:1-2 – However, Acts 9:3-15 Notice - He is a chosen vessel. 1 Corinthians 15:9-10

I. Concluding remarks:

"God's basis for our acceptance must be our basis for acceptance. There is none other. We are "accepted in the Beloved". Our Father is fully satisfied with His Beloved Son on our behalf, and there is no reason for us not to be.

To believe and consent to be loved while unworthy is the great secret.

Here is a rather interesting comment from Miles Stanford –

"To be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself".

Psalms 62:5 - Notice my expectation is from Him.

As we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, we will begin to expect more and more from Him, and less and less from ourselves.

Questions To Guide Our Study

1. Does God fully accept us, and if so, on what basis?
2. How and when did you become acceptable to God?
3. When we believers sin, is God's acceptance altered? Explain your answer.
4. As believers, will there ever be a time when we are more acceptable to God than now?
5. What part, if any, does obedience play in our acceptance before God?
6. What part, if any, does confessing our sins play in our acceptance before God?
7. In what ways can faith in our acceptance be a steadying influence in our lives?
8. What negative effect will not knowing that we are accepted by God, make in our lives?
9. Explain the following statement: "Feelings of acceptance by God can only spring from rest in His satisfaction."
10. Consider and comment on the following quotes:
 - a. "To believe and consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret."
 - b. "To expect to be blessed though realizing more and more a lack of worth."
 - c. "To hope to be better (more acceptable) is to fail to see ourselves in Christ."
 - d. "To be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself."

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 7 PURPOSE

Grasp The Issue:

Many believers, as well as unbelievers seem rather confused as to the purpose for their lives. Is God's purpose that one be married, or teach Sunday School, or do evangelism and missionary work? Praise God He has shown us, in His word, just what His purpose is for our lives, and that is to be molded into the image of Christ. It's interesting to note that this was God's purpose from the very beginning. In Genesis 1:26, He said; "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." However, after the fall, that image was corrupted, and in Genesis 5:3 we see Adam now bringing forth a son in his own fallen image. But that is not the end of God's sovereign purpose for man; He has once again found a way through the cross to restore man into His image.

Sound Bites: (sound bites are short statements designed to get you thinking about the issue. They can be either true or false.)

God's original purpose for man (made in God's image), is the same today.

God's purpose for all Christians is to imitate God/imitate Christ.

The molding in a believer's life is done by the Holy Spirit, not the individual.

God's purpose for the believer is for him listen for the still small voice.

God's purpose in all of our lives is to mold us into the image of Christ, and that image is death to self.

Death is a key element in God's purpose for our lives.

Study the Scriptures:

Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 5:3; Romans 8:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:10-11; Galatians 4:19; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 2:5-8; Philippians 3:7-10; Colossians 1:27

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“PURPOSE”

by Miles Stanford

How wonderful and encouraging it is to know that our Heavenly Father has made it crystal clear in His Word exactly what His purpose is for each one of us. Now is the time, right in these next few moments, to make sure on the authority of His eternal Word, as to His purpose for your personal life.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). The first Adam, the head of the human race, was made in God’s image in the realm of personality, intellect, emotions, will, and so on, so that there could be communion, fellowship and cooperation between them; with God sovereign and man subject--subject to His will, which is perfect freedom. But we know that Adam chose his own way in preference to God’s way, relying on himself only, loving just himself. As a result he immediately became self-centered instead of God-centered; dead to God who is the source of all life, dead in trespasses and sins. In this condition Adam “begat a son in His own likeness, after his [fallen] image” (Genesis 5:3). Thus he brought forth a sinful, ungodly, self-centered race, born “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

“God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son; ... who being the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:1-3). Here is the image of God back on earth, this time in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, God’s “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45). Our natural birth made us members of the fallen, sinful, first-Adam race. Our transition from the old sinful race to the new godly race is known as the “new birth”. When we were born again, through “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21), we were born into Him--He became our life (see Colossians 3:3,4). “Thou were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree” (Romans. 11:24). “For as by one man’s [Adam’s] disobedience

many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Christ] shall many be made righteous” (5:19).

Our Heavenly Father is still carrying out His purpose of making man in His image. Although His original purpose is the same, He is not using the original man to bring it about. All is now centered in the Last Adam, our Lord Jesus. Being born into Him through faith, we became “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). And as the Lord Jesus is allowed to express Himself through our personality, this poor, sin-sick world will see “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians. 1:27). In 1 Corinthians 15:49 Paul gives us the heartening promise: “As we have borne the image of the earthy [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [Christ].”

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:28,29). Here is the “good” for which God is working all things together--His original purpose of making us in His image, which is centered and expressed in His Son, Christ who is our life. Paul’s determination for each of his converts was: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

The open secret of healthy spiritual growth is to know and settle upon this fact as set forth in Romans 8:28,29. When we see that all things are working together to make us more and more like the Lord Jesus, we will not be frustrated and upset when some of these “things” are hard, difficult to understand, and often contain an element of death. We will be able to rest in our Lord Jesus and say to our Father, “Thy will be done.” And our constant attitude of faith will be: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). This is our matriculation to spiritual maturity!

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is one thing to know what God’s purpose is for our lives, and it is another to know something of the “how” as to entering into it all right here and now. One of God’s most effective means in the process is failure. Many believers are simply frantic over the fact of failure in their lives, and they will go to all lengths in trying to hide it, ignore it, or rationalize about it. And all the time they

are resisting the main instrument in the Father's hand for conforming us to the image of His Son!

Failure where self is concerned in our Christian life and service is allowed and often engineered by God in order to turn us completely from ourselves to His source for our life--Christ Jesus, who never fails. We are to rejoice in our need and hunger of heart, for God says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). As we, in our abject need, consistently and lovingly look upon our Lord Jesus, who is revealed to us in the Word, the Holy Spirit will quietly and effortlessly change the center and source of our lives from self to Christ--hence for each of us it will be not I, but Christ (Galatians 2:20).

God has a natural law in force to the effect that we are conformed to that on which we center our interest and love. Hawthorne brought out this fact in "The Great Stone Face." Then, too, think of Germany some years ago, full of little Hitlers all because of fanatical devotion to a second-rate paper hanger! Here in America radio, TV and movies contribute to a rising generation of young people who try to emulate their entertainment heroes. And what of the believer? If we are attracted to this present evil world, we become increasingly worldly; if we pamper and live for self, we become more and more self-centered; but when we look to Jesus Christ, we become more and more like Him.

Norman Douty writes: "If I am to be like Him, then God in His grace must do it, and the sooner I come to recognize it the sooner I will be delivered from another form of bondage. Throw down every endeavor and say, I cannot do it, the more I try the farther I get from His likeness. What shall I do? Ah, the Holy Spirit says, You cannot do it; just withdraw; come out of it. You have been in the arena, you have been endeavoring, you are a failure, come out and sit down, and as you sit there behold Him, look at Him. Don't try to be like Him, just look at Him. Just be occupied with Him. Forget about trying to be like Him. Instead of letting that fill our mind and heart, let Him fill it. Just behold Him, look upon Him through the Word. Come to the Word for one purpose and that is to meet the Lord. Not to get your mind crammed full of things about the sacred Word, but come to it to meet the Lord. Make it to be a medium, not of Biblical scholarship, but of fellowship with Christ. Behold the Lord."

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phillippians. 2:13). And what is His "good pleasure" He is performing in us? He is working everything together for this one purpose: "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians. 4:11). This is

life: “For to me to live is Christ” (Philippians. 1:21). This is service: “And there were certain Greeks ... saying, Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:20,21).

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #4

“Purpose”

A. Introduction:

Many believers seem rather confused as to God’s purpose for their lives. Is God’s purpose that one be married, or remain single; is His purpose that I do evangelism or even missionary work? Often times, Sunday Morning messages or mission’s conference speakers tend to add to the confusion.

For example;

1. After hearing a message on praising God, one might become convinced that God’s purpose for his/her life is to praise Him.
2. Or possibly after hearing a rather emotional message on evangelism, many might come away excited and convinced that God’s purpose for them is sharing the Gospel, or going to the mission field.
3. Another big favorite is our service to him. We, at times, come to the conclusion that God’s purpose for us is to serve Him.

B. God’s purpose revealed:

Praise God He has shown us, in His word, just what His purpose is for our lives. In Romans 8, God reveals His purpose for each of us personally. Romans 8:28,29. A key ingredient of spiritual growth is to know and settle down on the truth set forth in these verses.

God's purpose in all of our lives is to mold us into the image of Christ. Galatians 4:19

C. Back to the beginning, back to the Garden, to see God’s original purpose

In Genesis 1:26 we read; "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness".....And so Adam, the head of the human race, was made in the image of God. Genesis 1:27

Now the big question is.....What was that image? The most logical answer would be, a physical body. However John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit" and spirits don't have physical bodies. Therefore, the image of God must be seen in something else. (The soul) Our soul is our mind, will and emotions.

Give some thought to this; we have a mind like God's.

It’s interesting to consider that we don't know everything that God knows, but because we have a mind like Him, He can teach us. It is the same with our children.

They don't know all we know, but because they have a mind like ours, we can teach them.

We also have a will like God's; we can make decisions as God also makes decisions.

Finally, we have emotions like God; the Bible speaks of God having, joy, sorrow, anger and love, all of which are emotions that we humans have.

D. Effects of the fall:

However, at the fall, man's soul became self centered rather than God centered; therefore, rather than being dependent on God we become independent, and in this condition we see that Adam brought forth a sinful, ungodly, self centered race of people born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Genesis 5:3, and this is exactly how we come into the world, spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1

E. Finally after thousands of years, the image of God is back on the earth:

However, Hebrews 1:1-3 -Colossians 1:14,15; (Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God) Finally, after thousands of years, here is the image of God back on the earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

F. The "image of God" defined:

An interesting question to consider; what is the image of God? What does it look like when we have it on? The image of God/Christ is one of death...Dying to self. Philippians 3:10, Philippians 2:5-8

Picture in your mind the perfect Christian. What does he look like? He is patient, kind, doesn't seek his own, not inflated with self importance, not easily provoked, bears all things, endures all things. Again, Luke 9:23. What does it take to be patient with an unreasonable person? It takes dying to self. What does it take to be kind to someone who we feel doesn't deserve our kindness, etc.? Dying to self. John 12:24; 1Corinthians 15:36; 2 Corinthians 7:3 - Notice Paul says, "you are in our hearts to die and live". Die and live, this is contrary to nature.

It is always live first then die, but not for we Christians, we must die in order to live. This is the principle of death and resurrection, and can only take place at the cross....Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20.

G. Jesus, our example:

It is interesting to note that Jesus' life produced little or no fruit; oh, He healed a few people, and fed 5,000 and 4,000, but it was His death that gives us eternal life. If

we are to become like Jesus, if we are to become fruitful disciples of Christ, then we must deny, or die to self.

Questions to Guide Our Study

1. What is God's purpose for our lives (Romans 8:28-29)?
2. What effect did Adam's sin have on all of mankind?
3. If God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27) then why is the purpose of God for the believer in Romans 8:28-29 to be conformed to the image of Christ?
4. What is the image of Christ (Philippians 2:5-8)?
5. What does the image of Christ look like when we have it on (2 Corinthians 4:10-12)?
6. Who does the molding in the lives of believers (2 Corinthians 3:18)?
7. How does God use trials/failures to mold us into the "image of Christ"?
8. What positive effect can knowing God's purpose have on our lives, both physical and spiritual?
9. Where does grace fit into this molding process?

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 8 PREPARATION

Grasp The Issue:

It is so important that we face the fact that God's basic ingredient for Spiritual growth is need. Without personal needs, we would get nowhere in our Christian life. It is comforting to realize that it is those have plumbed the depths of failure to whom God gives the call to shepherd others. Without bitter experiences to reveal our own inadequacy, we would be quite unfit to bear the burden of Spiritual ministry. Without Spiritual hunger, we will never feed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sound Bites: (Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issues. They may either be true or false.)

- The end result of a Godly Christian life, should be a problem free life
- If everyday was a sunny day, we'd live in a desert.
- There will always be a tearing down before there will be a building up.
- God's basic ingredient for Spiritual growth is need.
- I can always tell how well I am doing spiritually by God's blessing in my life.

Study the Scriptures:

Matthew 5:6; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 5:10; Hosea 5:15-6:1; Job 5:17-18; Hebrews 12:5-11

Peter's example: John 13:37-38; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-17

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“ PREPARATION”

by Miles Stanford

Once we know His eternal plan and purpose for us, plus His method of preparation and process to that end, there is rest and confidence. Now it so happens that God’s basic ingredient for growth is need. Without personal needs, we would get nowhere in our Christian life. The reason our Father creates and allows needs in our lives is to turn us from all that is outside of Christ, centering us in Him alone. “Not I, but Christ.”

For both our growth and service it is all-essential that we see and understand this principle, which J.B. Stoney sets forth in a sentence: “The soul never imbibes the truth in living power but as it requires it.” As for our growth, needs cause us to reach out and appropriate by faith, from our Lord Jesus, what we require. And in the matter of service, in witnessing and helping others, we must watch and wait for the hungry, the needy heart, if there is to be abiding fruit. Again Stoney says, “The true value of anything is known only when it is wanted.” J. N. Darby makes this doubly clear by writing, “Wisdom and philosophy never found out God; He makes Himself known to us through our needs; necessity finds Him out. I doubt much if we have ever learned anything solidly except we have learnt it thus.”

In this light, our needs are invaluable! We must face up to the fact that without spiritual hunger, we cannot feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. From our personal experience, Matthew 5:6 should mean much to every one of us – “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” All too often believers are exhorted and even pressured to grow before there is an acute awareness of need, before there is true spiritual hunger. And, sad to say, in most instances when there is real -heart-hunger, very little spiritual food is offered. One of the main reasons for so much evangelistic effort and personal work coming to little or nothing is that truths are forced upon the “victim” to be saved before he is aware that he is lost. The work will soon come to naught unless an overpowering conviction of sin causes the lost to reach with the grip of personal faith, and find their need fully met in the Savior.

Watchman Nee puts first things first in saying, “The Lord does not set us here first of all to preach, or to do any work for Him. The first thing for which He sets us here is to create hunger in others. No true work will ever begin without a sense of need being created. We cannot inject that into others; we cannot drive people to

be hungry. That hunger is to be created, and that hunger can be created only through those who carry the impressions of God.”

In preparation, there is a tearing down before there can be a building up. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up” (Hosea 6:1). This applies to both growth and service.

J. C. Metcalfe faithfully writes: “It is more comforting to realize that it is those who have plumbed the depths of failure to whom God invariably gives the call to shepherd others. This is not a call given to the gifted, the highly trained, or the polished as such.”

“Without a bitter experience of their own inadequacy and poverty they are quite unfitted to bear the burden of spiritual ministry. It takes a man who has discovered something of the measures of his own weakness to be patient with the foibles of others. Such a man also has a first-hand knowledge of the loving care of the Chief Shepherd, and His ability to heal one who has come humbly to trust in Him and Him alone. Therefore he does not easily despair of others, but looks beyond sinfulness, willfulness, and stupidity, to the might of unchanging love. The Lord Jesus does not give the charge, ‘Be a shepherd to My lambs...to My sheep,’ on hearing Peter’s self-confident affirmation of undying loyalty, but He gives it after he has utterly failed to keep his vows and has wept bitterly in the streets of Jerusalem.”

Yes there must be deep, thorough, and long preparation if there is to be reality--if our life is to be Christ-centered, our work controlled by the Holy Spirit, and our service glorifying to God. Sooner or later the Holy Spirit begins to make us aware of our basic problem as believers--the infinite difference between self and Christ. “There are other laborers besides those who are seeking for pardon--for justification. There are laborers for sanctification--after personal holiness--after riddance of the power of the old Adam; and to such, as well as to those who are seeking after salvation, Christ promises, with this great ‘I will’ (Matt. 11:28-30). It is highly possible for a man, after having found justifying rest in Christ, to enter upon a state of deep need as regards sanctifying rest. We think we shall not go far wrong if we say that this has been the experience of almost every believer who has ever lived.” -- P. B. Power

Much of His preparation in our lives consists of setting up this struggle--our seeing self for what it is, and then attempting to get free from its evil power and influence. For there is no hope of consistent abiding in the Lord Jesus as long as we are under the dominion of the self-life, in which “dwelleth no good thing” (Romans

7:18a). “Not in babyhood are we able to continually abide in His presence, regardless of our surroundings and that which we are doing. Not when we serve Him with intermittent zeal does our own soul grow and thrive; not when we are indifferent are we watered from the presence of the Lord. It is after we have been subdued, refined, and chastened; when love of self and the world is gone, that we learn to abide in touch with Him at all times, and in all places or surroundings.”

The value of both the struggle to free ourselves from the old Adam-life, and the equally fruitless efforts to experience the new Adam-life, the Christ-life, is to finally realize that it is utterly futile. Our personal, heart-breaking failure in every phase of our Christian life is our Father’s preparation for His success on our behalf. This negative processing of His finally brings us into His positive promise of Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” His “good work” in us is begun through failure, and this includes our strongest points, which continues on into His success, by His performance, and not ours. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). There is no question but that we all began in sheer grace, and we must continue and arrive on the very same basis: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Galatians 5:1).

Charles Trumbull said, “The effortless life is not the will-less life. We use our will to believe, to receive, but not to exert effort in trying to accomplish what only God can do. Our hope for victory over sin is not ‘Christ plus my effort,’ but ‘Christ plus my receiving.’ To receive victory from Him is to believe His Word that solely by His grace He is, this moment, freeing us from the dominion of sin. And to believe on Him in this way is to recognize that He is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.” We learned this principle at the time of our spiritual birth, and it seems that most of us have to learn it all over again for our spiritual growth and service. Fear not, dear friend, just hold firm to the fact of His purpose for you in Christ, and He will faithfully take you step by step into all the necessary preparation--He will do it. Once you are sure of the purpose you can be equally positive of the preparation. Simply remember that Romans 8:28 and 29 go together, and thank Him for Philippians 1:6.

“The Lord is glorified in a people whose heart is set at any cost, by any road, upon the goal which is God himself. A man who is thus minded says, ‘By any road!’ Here is a very difficult road; a road beset by enemies, but the passionate desire for the goal will hold him steadfast in the way. It is the man who lacks the yearning to know Him that will easily be turned aside. Along that road the Man

Christ Jesus has already gone before, and at every point has overcome for us. We have not to climb up; we are to be brought through in the train of His triumph. Every enemy has been met; every foe has been overcome; there remains nothing that has not been put potentially beneath His feet, and there remains nothing in this universe that is able to overcome the least child of God who has taken the hand of the Lord and said: 'Lord, bring me through to the place where Thou art, in virtue of the blood which Thou hast already taken through in victory.' There is great glory to the Lord in a quiet, confident walk in a day of adversity, a day of dread, when things about us are shaking and trembling." -- G. P.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #5

“Preparation”

A. Introduction:

Last week we looked at God's purpose for each of us personally and we determined that His purpose was to mold us into the image of Christ.

How is that done? 2 Corinthians 3:18 God has a natural law in effect that we become like what we focus our attention on.

If we are attracted to this present evil world, we become increasingly worldly; if we pamper and live for self, we become more and more self centered.

But when we look to Jesus Christ, we become more and more like Him.

As we consistently look at Him through the Word, the Holy Spirit will quietly and effortlessly change the center and source of our lives from self to Christ.

B. The problem:

However, there is one major problem in all of this...

Left to ourselves we will never look unto Jesus and therefore never experience the molding into Christ-likeness. Without an intervention by God we just won't focus on Jesus.

There then must be a preparing by God, an orchestration of events that will turn our focus from self to Christ. God does this through difficult times.

C. We need our needs:

God's basic ingredient for spiritual growth, for molding us into the image of Christ is simply need. Without need, we will go nowhere in our Christian lives.

Psalms 63:1; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 5:10

Without spiritual hunger, which only comes through needs such as trials, pain, sickness, etc., without that spiritual hunger, we will never feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 5:6

All too often Bible teachers, pastors, and even parents try to force growth in a person's life before there is an awareness of need; before there is true spiritual hunger. This is futile. Psalm 94:12; Hosea 5:15;

D. God's way is to tear down in order to build up:

There must be a preparing...a tearing down, before there can be a building up.

Hosae 6:1; Job 5:17,18

It is comforting when we finally come to realize that it is those who have plumbed the depths of failure whom God calls to shepherd His flock. John 13:37-38; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-17.

It's interesting to note that Jesus did not give the charge to Peter to "feed his sheep" after hearing his self confident statement, "I will lay down my life for you" in John 13:37, but He gave it after Peter had failed to keep his vow and wept bitterly through the streets of Jerusalem.

A number of years ago I heard a true story of a Godly old professor who taught at Florida Bible College. One day a young man came into his office and said; Professor, I hope that one day, I am just like you". The old professor said to the young man, "let's pray". And he began by saying; "Lord, I pray that this young man would have a very difficult life. I pray that he would be critically injured in an automobile accident. I pray that he would have severe marital problems, that he would lose his job". "Wait a minute!" Said the young man...."What are you doing? Why are you praying these things". To which the old professor responded, "I thought you wanted to be like me". The young man said "I do". "How do you think I got this way" said the old professor. James 1,2-4; Romans 5:3-4;

E. God Himself often engineers failure in our lives:

Writer Miles Stanford makes this statement:

"If our lives are to be Christ centered and Christ like, and our work controlled by the Holy Spirit, and our service glorifying to God, sooner or later the Lord will begin to engineer failure, orchestrate needs in our lives.

It almost appears that His most effective means in the process of molding us into His image is indeed failure.

However, many of us go to any extreme to keep from failing, and all the time we are resisting the main instrument in the Father's hand for conforming us to the likeness of His Son.

F. We can learn much from the Apostle Paul's example:

It might be helpful to look at some of the needs, failures in the Apostle Paul's life. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 2 Corinthians 11:24-30; Acts 14:19-22; Acts 16:22-25

G. Our greatest example, Jesus:

What about Jesus? The next few scriptures might be rather shocking to some. Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 5:8

H. And now, what do the scriptures say about us?

Hebrews 12:5-11. Take special note of verse 11. The purpose of the Lord's chastening is to produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness, but only to those who are exercised, or trained by it. Deuteronomy 8:16; Psalm 66:10-12

Questions to guide the study

1. What is God's basic ingredient for growth and why?
2. Explain this statement by J.N. Darby: "The true value of anything is known only when it is wanted."
3. Comment on the following: "Wisdom and philosophy never found out God; He makes Himself known through our needs; necessity finds Him out."
4. Can we inject hunger into others? Explain your answer. Can we create hunger in others? Again, explain your answer. Explain the difference.
5. Comment on this statement: "There is a tearing down before there is a building up."
6. Regarding spiritual growth, is failure a positive or negative thing?
7. Describe a time in your life when you were torn down to be built up.
8. Read Romans 7:15-25 and relate this scripture to your own life.
9. Explain in your own words the following statement: "Our personal heartbreaking failure in every phase of our Christian life is the Father's preparation for His success on our behalf."
10. Can you think of any biblical examples of those who have plumbed the depths of failure, who God later used to shepherd His people?
11. Share your thoughts on 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.
12. In your own words, explain the process that must take place in a believer before a life of consistent abiding in Christ can occur.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 9 COMPLETE IN HIM

Grasp the Issue

The whole focus of Christianity is on Jesus Christ. (He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end) With the entrance of Christ into the human individual, the divine life is reproduced in us. Man is not only a being made of God, but a being begotten of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the source of our Christian life, we were born into Him, and God has made us “complete in Him”.

Sound Bites: (Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They can either be true or false.)

Becoming “complete in Him” is a life-long process.

When we work to become “complete”, we have already lost the battle.

Positionally I am “complete in Him”.

Conditionally I am “complete in Him”.

Study the Scriptures:

Genesis 1:11-27; Genesis 5:3; Romans 5:12-21; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 3:17-19; Colossians 2:6-15; Colossians 3:1-4; 2 Peter 1:3-4

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“COMPLETE IN HIM”

by Miles Stanford

We continue to deal with foundational facts, since the life can be no better than its root, its source. Youth and immaturity tend to act first and think later, if at all. Maturity has learned to take time to assess the facts. Our patient Husbandman is willing for us to take time and learn the eternal facts, without which we cannot be brought to maturity.

Our Lord Jesus so often uses natural facts to teach us the deepest spiritual truths. He first teaches us about our natural, Adamic life before we can understand and appreciate our new spiritual, Christ-life. This involves the vital source principle—“after his kind”. Every believer first learns that he is complete in Adam—he sprang from him: he is like him. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinner” (Romans. 5:19a). “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing” (Romans. 7:18a). When, through our failures and struggles, He has taught us about the natural, we will be ready to learn of our spiritual Source “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him” (Colossians 2:9, 10a).

There are two main aspects to this source principle. First, the Lord Jesus is the Source of our Christian life--we were born into Him; God has made us complete in Him. This truth we are to hold by faith; it is true of each of us. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...” (2 Cor. 5:17a). Second, as we hold to this fact by faith, we are brought into the practical reality of it day by day in our experience. Little by little we receive what is already ours. The important thing to know and be sure of is that all is ours, we are complete in Him, now. This fact enables us to hold still while He patiently works into our character that life of ours which is hid with Christ in God.

“Progress is only advancing in the knowledge, the spiritual knowledge, of what we really possess at the outset. It is like ascending a ladder. The ladder is grace. The first step is, we believe, that the Lord Jesus was sent of God; second, that in the fullness of His work we are justified; third, we make His acquaintance; fourth, we come to see Him in heaven; we know our association with Him there, and His power here; fifth, we learn the mystery, the great things we are entitled to

because of being His body; sixth, that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ; seventh, lost in wonder and in praise in the knowledge of Himself.” -- J. B. Stoney

Since we are complete in our Lord Jesus, it will not do to try and add to that finished work. It is now a matter of walking by faith and receiving, appropriating, from the ever-abundant Source within. Walter Marshall is concise here: “Christ’s resurrection was our resurrection to a life of holiness, as Adam’s fall was our fall into spiritual death. And we are not ourselves the first makers and formers of our new holy nature, any more than of our original corruption, but both are formed ready for us to partake of them. And by union with Christ, we partake of that spiritual life that He took possession of for us at His resurrection, and thereby we are enabled to bring forth the fruits of it; as the Scripture showeth by the similitude of a marriage union. Romans 7:4: ‘Married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.’”

Our part is not production, but reception of our life in Christ. This entails Bible-based fact finding; explicit faith in Him and His purpose for us in Christ; and patient trust while He takes us through the necessary processing involved. No believer ever fell into maturity, even though he is complete in Christ. Spiritual growth necessitates heart-hunger for the Lord Jesus; determination, based upon assurance, to have that which is ours in Him, plus meditation and thought. We will never come into the knowledge of our spiritual possessions through a superficial understanding of the Word. How can we ever expect to have intimate fellowship with One of whom we know little?

The following truth may be a good opportunity to exercise and develop some of that meditation and thought. “What is needed is a mediation, in which God concentrates His own peculiar Spirit and Life as a principle in a human individual to be personally appropriated. In a revelation, which is really to translate the Divine into Man’s individual personal life, in truth, to form men of God, the Divine as such--that is, as a personal life--must first be embodied in a personal center in humanity. For this reason, as soon as something strictly new is concerned, something that in its peculiarity has not yet existed, every new type of life, before it can multiply itself to a number of specimens, must first have its full contents combined in perfect unity, in an adequate new principle of the Divine life has become personal.”

“Christianity concentrates the whole fullness of revelation in the one human personality of Jesus Christ as Mediator--that is, as the mediating central principle of the new Divine organism, in its fullness of Spirit and Life, in and for the human personal life. With the entrance of Christ into the human individual, the Divine life

becomes immanent in us, not in its universal world relation, but as a personal principle, so that man is not only a being made of God, but a being begotten of God. And with the growing transformation of the individual into the life-type of Christ there is perfected the development of the personal life out of God, in God, and to God--the development not only of a moral or theocratic communion of nature!" --J. T. Beck

A seed embodies in full the reproduction of the life from which it came. That much is complete, and can never be added to. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (I Peter 1:23a). "Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed" (Lev. 19:19). It is to be "not I, but Christ." The Seed has been implanted--now the entire question is one of growth and maturity. This alone will bring forth fruit that abides. "The development of the divine life in the Christian is like the natural growth in the vegetable world. We do not need to make any special effort, only place ourselves under the conditions favorable to such growth."

Only those who have sought to grow by effort and failed are in the position to appreciate the fact that God is the aggressor in the realm of development. "All the powers of Deity which have already wrought together in the accomplishment of the first part of the eternal purpose, the revealing of the Father's perfect likeness in the Man Christ Jesus, are equally engaged to accomplish the second part, and work that likeness in each of God's children." Wm. Law agrees: "A root set in the finest soil, in the best climate, and blessed with all that sun and air and rain can do for it, is not so sure a way of its growth to perfection, as every man may be whose spirit aspires after all that which God is ready and infinitely desirous to give him. For the sun meets not the springing bud that stretches toward him with half that certainty as God, the Source of all good, communicates Himself to the soul that longs to partake of Him."

Not only is our life complete in Him, but likewise the essential victory in all the many exigencies of that life. "When you fight to get victory, then you have lost the battle at the very outset. Suppose the enemy assaults you in your home or in your business. He creates a situation with which you cannot possibly deal. What do you do? Your first instinct is to prepare yourself for a big battle and then pray to God to give you the victory in it. But if you do so defeat is sure, for you have given up the ground that is yours in Christ. By the attitude you have taken you have relinquished it to the Enemy. What then should you do when he attacks? You should simply look up and praise the Lord. 'Lord, I am faced with a situation that I cannot possibly meet. Thine enemy the Devil has brought it about to compass my

downfall, but I praise Thee that Thy victory is an all-inclusive victory. It covers this situation, too. I praise Thee that I have already full victory in this matter”” .

P. S. Don't rush --- He won't. “The Japanese artist, Hokusai, said, ‘From the age of six I had a mania for drawing the forms of things. By the time I was fifty I had published an infinity of designs; but nothing I produced before seventy is worth considering.’ He died at eighty-nine, declaring that if he could have only another five years he would have become a great artist.”

GREEN LETTERS #6
"COMPLETE IN HIM"

A. Introduction:

Today we will be looking at Colossians 2 and the subject: "We are complete in Him."

Colossians 2:6-10 – Our emphasis here is in verse 10, and the phrase "We are complete in Him". God wants us to know (fully understand) this truth.....WE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM.....

B. We must first learn that we are complete In Adam – (After his kind)

Now many times in scripture the Lord uses a natural or physical picture to teach us a spiritual truth, and in the area of being complete in Him, He first teaches us that we are complete in Adam before we can understand what it is to be complete in Christ.

The key for our understanding in all this is a little phrase used over and over again in Genesis 1 which is, "after its kind". Genesis 1:11-12 and 21-25 - As it is with plants and animals, so it is with man – "after His kind". Genesis 1:26, 27

However, after the fall, Genesis 5:3.....Every believer must first learn that he is complete in Adam (after His kind). We came from him and we are like him. Inside of each of us is a self centered sin nature, the flesh, an inward desire to do wrong, and in the book of Romans the word sinner, which we all are, is brought to our attention in chapter five, and it is important to notice how it is introduced. Look again with me at verse 19. We see that a sinner is a sinner because he is born a sinner, not because he commits sins.

From the first half of verse 19 it is very clear that in the natural, we are complete in Adam, but now look more closely at the last part of that verse.....

Remember Colossians 2:9 and 10a; "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in Him". By Him are we made righteous..

C. Some thoughts for us to ponder:

1. Jesus Christ is the Source of our Christian life - we were born into Him and God has made us complete in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:17a

2. As we, by faith, rest in this truth, it becomes a reality in our daily lives (little by little), and we receive what is already ours. The important thing to know and

believe is that all is ours, we are complete in Him now. 2 Peter 1:3; Romans 8:17; Ephesians 1:3

D. Born complete:

We could say it this way: When a person is born again into the family of God, he is born complete in Christ. It may help to think of it this way. Is Christ complete?

Yes. Nothing needs to be added to Christ because

He is already the fullness (Colossians 2:9) of God; and as we believers, by faith, rest in Christ's fullness we also are filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17-19

E. Nothing can be added to completeness:

Since we are complete in Jesus, it will not do to try and add to that finished work.

Our part is not production, but reception of our life in Christ.

It is really to translate/transfer Christ's life unto man.... Which in reality is forming men of God".

F. We have no option but to trust and rest:

Remember the time chapter. Don't be in a rush...He isn't.

The bottom line to all that we have shared thus far is this: The moment that we come to realize that positionally we are complete in Him, and it is only God who can out work that completeness in our daily lives, we have no option but to trust and rest and depend and walk.

Questions to guide the study

1. Read Romans 5:12-21 and explain what it means to be complete in Adam.
2. Read Colossian 2:6-10 and describe in your own words the term “complete in Him.”
3. How would you explain this: positionally, I am complete, but conditionally, I am incomplete.
4. What are the two main aspects of the source principle (after His kind)?
5. Comment on the following statement: “Since we are complete in Him our part is not production, but rather reception.”
6. Relate the following statement to our Christian life: “The quality of the seed equals the quality of the fruit.”
7. What is our part in becoming “complete in Him?”
8. Explain the following comment: “When we fight to get victory in the Christian life, we have already lost the battle.”

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 10 APPROPRIATION

Grasp the Issue:

Appropriation does not necessarily mean to gain something new, but rather to take possession of what already belongs to us. God hath! It is already done....It is already finished.....God hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. The great pity of it all is that we are praying for God to bless us, when it has already been done.

Sound Bites: (Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They can either be true or false.)

We must be in constant prayer, asking God to give us everything pertaining to life and Godliness.

Our Heavenly Father has freely given us all things, and all that is left for us to do is, by faith, take possession of it

If we hearken diligently unto the Lord our God, and do all His commandments, then His blessings will come upon us and overtake us. Deut. 28:1-3

The first step to appropriation is knowledge.

Study the Scriptures:

Romans 8:17; Ephesians 1:1-23; Colossians 3:1-3; Hebrews 3:12-14; Hebrews 4:2; 2 Peter 1:2-3;

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

APPROPRIATION

by Miles Stanford

Here is an important subject that has to do with faith, and the practical reception of that for which we are able to trust Him. Appropriation does not necessarily mean to gain something new, but to set aside for our practical possession something that already belongs to us.

To appropriate something for our daily walk in Christ, we face two essentials: to see what is already ours in Christ; and to be aware of our need for it. Upon these two factors rests the ability to appropriate, to reach out in steadfast faith and receive what belongs to us in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Regarding the first essential, to see what is already ours, Wm. R. Newell wrote: "Paul does not ask a thing of the saints in the first three chapters of Ephesians but just to listen while he proclaims that wondrous series of great and eternal facts concerning them; and not until he has completed this catalogue of realities about them does he ask them to do anything at all!"

"And when he does open his plea for their high walk as saints, everything is based on the revelation before given--the facts of their high character and destiny as saints: 'I therefore...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called' (Eph. 4:1). Let us cease laying down to the saints long lists of 'conditions' of entering into the blessed life in Christ; and instead, as the primal preparation for leading them into the experience of this life, show them what their position, possessions, and privileges in Christ already are. Thus shall we truly work with the Holy Spirit, and thus shall we have more, and much more abiding fruit of our labors among the people of God."

Once we see what is ours in Christ Jesus, practical need will cause us to appropriate, to receive the answer to that need. "There was a 'supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ' for Paul, and that made it possible for Christ to be magnified in him. It was a supply which was always available, but only appreciated and appropriated as and when the Apostle came to know his need. Life is meant to bring a succession of discoveries of our need of Christ, and with every such discovery the way is opened for a new inflow of the supply. This is the explanation of so much that we cannot otherwise understand--this plunging of us into new tests where only a fresh supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ will meet our need. And as

our need is met, as we prove the sufficiency of Christ to meet our inward need, so there can be a new showing forth of His glory through us.” --H. F.

These two realities of seeing and needing bring us from childish meandering into a responsible, specific walk of faith. They take us from the “help me” attitude to that of giving thanks; from begging to appropriation. Notice what L. L. Letgers, co-founder of Wycliff Bible Translators, has to say about this: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:3, A.S.V.). If you run over in your mind and find one single blessing with which God might bless us today, with which He has not already blessed us, then what He told Paul was not true at all, because He said, ‘God hath.’ It is all done. ‘It is finished.’ God hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies! The great pity of it all is that we are saying, ‘O God bless us, bless us in this, bless us in that!’ and it is all done. He has blessed us with us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies.” As C.A. Coates said, “It is appropriation that tests us. How often we stop at admiration.”

From time to time the Holy Spirit will bring to our attention a certain aspect of the Word in a striking manner, and we will rejoice to see and believe that it is ours in Christ. It may be, for instance, the truths of Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Besides the usual personal situations, the uncertainty, strife and tensions of world conditions provide just what is needed for the believer to abide, to rest in the Lord Jesus. The need exists, and when he sees the rest in Him, all there remains to do is appropriate!

So far so good. The believer sees what he possesses in Christ, and the need enables him to reach out and confidently appropriate and accept the required rest. This appropriation must be a case of clear, scriptural, specific trust. We are not to “ask amiss.” And now comes the critical phase, the key to it all. In most instances of appropriation, there is a waiting period between the acceptance and the receiving--often of years. Our responsibility is to patiently wait upon Him during the time necessary for Him to work into our character, our life, that which we have appropriated in Christ--in this instance, his rest, steadiness, assurance, security. “A God...who worketh for him that waiteth for him” (Isa. 64:4b, ASV).

T. Austin-Sparks gives us two valuable thoughts regarding this all-important gap--usually a matter of years--between the actual appropriation, and the practical experience. “Every bit of truth we receive, if we receive it livingly, will take us into conflict and will be established through conflict. It will be worthless until there has been a battle over it. Take any position the Lord calls you to take, and, if you are taking it with Him, you are going through things in it, and there will be an element

added by reason of the battle. You have taken a position--yes, but you have not really got it yet, the real value of it has not been proved. You have not come into the real significance of it until there has been some sore conflict in relation to it.”

“As the result of the work of His cross, and as the grand issue of His resurrection, eternal life is received already by those who believe. But while that life is itself victorious, incorruptible, indestructible, the believer has to come by faith to prove it, to live by it, to learn its laws, to be conformed to it. There is a deposit in the believer, which in itself needs no addition, so far as its quality is concerned. So far as its victory, its power, its glory, its potentialities are concerned nothing can be added to it. But the course of spiritual experience, of spiritual life, is to discover, to appropriate, and to live by all that the life represents and means.”

Now we have seen a third element involved in our appropriation. After we have seen our possessions in Christ, and become aware of our need, then we must give Him the necessary time to work the appropriation into our everyday walk. If we are looking for our needs to be met in the next interview, the next devotional book, the next series of special meetings, the next hoped-for “revival,” then reality will never come.

In this matter of Christian development, there is not shortcut, no quick and easy way. The Husbandman builds into the believer that which He intends to minister through him to others. To minister Life to others, what one does and says must flow from what he is. “For it pleased the Father that in him (Christ Jesus) should all fulness dwell”; “For we are made partakers of Christ”; “That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”; “For your life is hid with Christ in God”; “That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (Col. 1:19; Heb. 3:14; Eph. 3:19; Col. 3:3; 2 Cor. 4:11b).

How often we simply admire and talk about truths the Holy Spirit reveals to us in the Word, whereas His primary purpose in giving them to us is that we might stand upon them in faith, waiting confidently for Him to make them an integral part of our life. “A prophet is one who has a history, one who has been dealt with by god, one who has experienced the formative work of the Spirit. We are sometimes asked by would-be preachers how many days should be spent in preparation of a sermon. The answer is: At least ten years, and probably nearer twenty! For the preacher matters to God at least as much as the thing preached. God chooses as His prophet those in whom He has already worked what He intends to us as His message for today.”

GREEN LETTERS #7

“APPROPRIATION”

A. Appropriation defined:

Chapter seven of the Green Letters is simply entitled "appropriation". The word appropriation does not necessarily mean to gain something new, but rather to take possession of something that already belongs to us for the purpose of some specific use.

B. Hetty Green:

A great example of this is a lady who lived during the late 1800s and early 1900s. She has gone down in history as America's greatest miser, yet when she died in 1916, Hetty Green left an estate valued at over \$100 million.

She ate cold oatmeal because it cost money to heat it.

Her son had to suffer a leg amputation because she delayed so long looking for a free clinic that his condition became incurable.

She was wealthy but lived like a pauper. Eccentric? Certainly! Crazy? Perhaps, but Hetty Green is an illustration of too many Christians today.

We have limitless wealth at our disposal and yet we live like paupers.

It's to the Hetty Greens in Christianity that Miles Stanford writes this seventh chapter of the Green Letters on the subject of appropriation.

C. Two all important essentials:

Mr. Stanford begins this all important chapter with this statement:

"In order for us to appropriate something for our daily walk in Christ, we face two essentials. First we must see what is already ours in Christ; and second, we must be aware of our need for it." On these two factors rests the ability to reach out in faith and appropriate or receive what belongs to us in Christ.

D. Paul's prayer:

Turn with me to a scripture that we briefly looked at last week. Ephesians 1:16-19 Notice that Paul does not ask for what they don't have, but rather for God to reveal what they already do have.

E. Our position in Christ:

It is interesting that in the first three chapters of this book of Ephesians, Paul does not ask one thing of these Christians, but merely to sit and listen while he proclaims who they are in Christ.

As it was good for the Ephesians to sit and listen, so it might also be good for us this morning to hear who we are in Christ.

In chapter 1 verse 1 Paul refers to us as saints. Keep in mind that a saint in the New Testament is not a sinless person, but rather a saved sinner.

vs.3 - blessed

vs. 4 - chosen to be holy and blameless before Him.

vs. 5 - adopted sons.

vs. 6 - accepted in the Beloved.

vs. 7 - redeemed and forgiven.

vs. 9 - makes known His will to us.

vs.11 - given an inheritance.

vs.13 - sealed.

vs.14 - given a guarantee

vs.2:4 - loved us

vs.2:5 - made us alive with new life

vs. 2:7 - objects of His eternal grace

vs.2:10 - we are His masterpiece.

vs.2:19 - citizens of heaven/part of the family of God

Mr. Stanford makes this comment in the Green Letters – “Our primary preparation for experiencing the Christ life is to know what our position, possessions and privileges in Christ already are”.

F. A baby eagle and some turkeys:

Some time ago, I heard a story of a baby eagle that fell out of its nest and was adopted by a family of turkeys. All his life, he went around pecking in the dirt looking for something to eat, rather than flying high like an eagle, because no one told him he was an eagle. And many of us Christians are just like that baby bird; we're down here pecking around on the earth rather than seated in the heavenlies with Jesus, because no one has explained to us who we are in Christ.

G. And now comes the critical phase, the key to it all;

In most instances of appropriation, there is a waiting period between the acceptance and the receiving - often of years. Our only responsibility is to patiently wait on Him during the time necessary for Him to work all of this into our lives. Remember the time chapter - Psalm 27:13,14

H. The perturbing pause:

Isaiah 64:4b – Miles Stanford has written a sequel to “The Green letters” entitled “Position to Person”. He has titled chapter three, “The Pause and the Problem”.

Chapter 4 – “The Cause of the Pause” – Mr. Stanford gives us some valuable thoughts regarding this all important gap between the actual appropriation, and the practical experience.

At one point, he refers to "this perturbing pause". He writes: “In the midst of this grace awakening many believers begin to experience a spiritual slackening, a vague vacuum, a perplexing pause, an inexplicable lull”.

The effect of this “perplexing pause” is a deepening sense of frustration and this unrest and inner turmoil is intensified by the tormenting conclusion that the Lord is not doing anything about it, and no one seems to understand or be of any real assistance.

I. Problems increase:

Personal problems develop, only to be worsened by difficulties in the family or church relationships, and these seem to be aggravated by the world around with all it's problems. This combination presses in to become just too much for our present spiritual condition. 1 Peter 5:10

Here wavers an increasing number of awakened believers today. They have grown to a certain point; they have experienced a certain amount of freedom from the reign of sin, coupled with growth in the Christ life..... Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21

Yet the spiritual capacity does not seem to keep pace with the need....

J. No shortcuts:

In the matter of Christian development there is no shortcut, no quick and easy way. God is building a testimony in us. Only He knows the bleeding hearts that we will encounter in life. We can only teach the lessons that we have learned. 2Cor.1:3,4

So then the third element necessary for our appropriation. (1) - After we have seen our possessions in Christ, and (2) - become aware of our need, (3) then we must give Him the necessary time to work the appropriation into our every day walk. If we are looking for our needs to be met in the next interview, the next devotional book, the next series of special meetings, then reality will never come.

K. Closing thoughts:

It might be helpful to end our time by considering a verse in Hebrews 12 which makes it rather clear the consequences of failing to appropriate and take possession of God's grace...The consequences of returning to enjoy the wilderness.....Hebrews 12:15

Again, we can talk about faith and God's timing, acceptance, His purpose, His methods of molding us into the image of Christ and our completeness for the rest of our lives, but unless we begin to appropriate it, there will be no benefit to us.

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. Define “appropriation” in your own words.
2. What does waiting on God have to do with appropriation?
3. Explain how positional truth relates to appropriation.
4. What are some areas of our lives that we tend to rely on our own strength, rather than appropriation of our position in Christ?
5. What two essentials do we face as we attempt to appropriate in our daily lives?
6. Explain this statement: “What one does and says must flow from what he is.”
7. How do you see Ephesians 4:1 in light of our study of appropriation?

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 11 IDENTIFICATION

Grasp The Issue:

All believers have been united with Christ in His death. In this union with Christ, the flesh, the body of sin - the entire fallen, sin ruined being with it's intelligence, will and desires - is judged and crucified. By faith, the believer reckons/counts himself dead unto sin.

However, if the difference between Christ dying for us, and our dying with Him, has not been recognized, acknowledged and applied, it may safely be said that the flesh is still the dominating factor in life.

Sound Bites: (Sound bites are short statements to get us thinking about the issues. They may either be true or false.)

God's way of deliverance from sin as a master is through diligent prayer for strength.

Like Christ, all believers have died to sins power.

Jesus died to pay for our sins, and now the least we can do is try to live a sinless life.

The blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my "old man", I need the cross to crucify me.

Study the Scriptures:

Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14-15; Colossians 2:10-13; Psalm 19:13

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

IDENTIFICATION

by Miles Stanford

As our thinking moves along from the Substitutionary (birth) truths, on to the Identification (growth) truths, it might be good to consider briefly what leaders, honored of God through the years, have to say about identification, as centered in Romans 6.

Even H. Hopkins, “The trouble of the believer who knows Christ as his justification is not sin as to its guilt, but sin as to its ruling power. In other words, it is not from sin as a load, or an offense, that he seeks to be freed--for he sees that God has completely acquitted him from the charge and penalty of sin--but it is from sin as a master. To know God’s way of deliverance from sin as a master. To know God’s way of deliverance from sin as a master he must apprehend the truth contained in the sixth chapter of Romans. There we see what God has done, not with our sins--that question the Apostle dealt with in the preceding chapters--but with ourselves, the agents and slaves of sin. He has put our old man--our original self--where He put our sins, namely on the cross with Christ. ‘Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him’ (Rom. 6:6). The believer there sees not only that Christ died for him--substitution--but that he died with Christ—identification”(Thoughts on Life and Godliness, p. 50).

Andrew Murray: “Like Christ, the believer too has died to sin; he is one with Christ, in the likeness of His death (Rom. 6:5). And as the knowledge that Christ died for sin as our atonement is indispensable to our justification; so the knowledge that Christ and we with Him in the likeness of His death, are dead to sin, is indispensable to our sanctification” (Like Christ, p. 176).

J. Hudson Taylor: “Since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! I am dead and buried with Christ -- ay, and risen too! And now Christ lives in me, and ‘the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ Nor should we look upon this experience, these truths, as for the few. They are the birthright of every child of God, and no one can dispense with them without dishonoring our Lord” (Spiritual Secret, p. 116).

Wm. R. Newell: “To those who refuse or neglect to reckon themselves dead to sin as God commands, we press the question, How are you able to believe that Christ really bare the guilt of your sins and that you will not meet them at the

judgment day? It is only God's Word that tells you that Christ bare your sins in His own body on the tree. And it is that same Word that tells you that you as connected with Adam, died with Christ, that your old man was crucified, that since you are in Christ you shared His death unto sin, and are thus to reckon your present relation to sin in Christ--as one who is dead to it, and alive unto God" (Romans, Verse by Verse, p. 227).

Lewis Sperry Chafer: "The theme under consideration is concerned with the death of Christ as that death is related to the divine judgments of the sin nature in the child of God. The necessity for such judgments and the sublime revelation that these judgments are now fully accomplished for us is unfolded in Romans 6:1-10. This passage is the foundation as well as the key to the possibility of a 'walk in the Spirit' (He That Is Spiritual, p. 154).

R. Paxson: "The old 'I' in you and me was judicially crucified with Christ. 'Ye died' and your death dates from the death of Christ. 'The old man,' the old self' in God's reckoning was taken to the cross with Christ and crucified and taken into the tomb with Christ and buried. Assurance of deliverance from the sphere of the 'flesh' and of the dethronement of the old man' rests upon the apprehension and acceptance of this fact of co-crucifixion"(Life on the Highest Plane, Vol.II, pp. 78, 79).

Watchman Nee: "Our sins were dealt with by the blood, we ourselves are dealt with by the cross. The blood procures our pardon, the cross procures deliverance from what we are in Adam. The blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my old man: I need the cross to crucify me--the sinner"(The Normal Christian Life, p. 25).

L.E. Maxwell: "Believers in Christ were joined to Him at the cross, united to Him in death and resurrection. We died with Christ. He died for us, and we died with Him. This is a great fact, true of all believers" (Christian Victory, p. 11).

Norman B. Harrison: "This is the distinctive mark of the Christian--the experience of the cross. Not merely that Christ died for us, but that we died with Him. 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him' (Rom. 6:6)" (His Side Versus Our Side, p. 40).

F.J. Huegel: "If the great Luther, with his stirring message of justification by faith, had with Paul moved on from Romans 5 to Romans 6 with its amazing declarations concerning the now justified sinner's position of identification with his crucified Lord, would not a stifled Protestantism be on higher ground today? Might it not be free from its ulcerous fleshiness?" (The Cross of Christ, p. 84).

Alexander R. Hay: "The believer has been united with Christ in His death. In this union with Christ, the flesh, 'the body of sin' -- the entire fallen, sin-ruined being with its intelligence, will and desires--is judged and crucified. By faith, the believer reckons (counts) himself 'dead unto sin' (Rom. 6:3-14)" (N.T. Order for Church & Missionary, p.310).

T. Austin-Sparks: "The first phase of our spiritual experience may be a great and overflowing joy, with a marvelous sense of emancipation. In this phase extravagant things are often said as to total deliverance and final victory. Then there may, and often does, come a phase of which inward conflict is the chief feature. It may be very much of a Romans seven experience. This will lead, under the Lord's hand, to the fuller knowledge of the meaning of identification with Christ, as in Romans six. Happy the man who has been instructed in this from the beginning (What Is Man? P. 61).

J. Penn-Lewis: "If the difference between 'Christ dying for us' and 'our dying for Him,' has not been recognized, acknowledged, and applied, it may safely be affirmed that the self is still the dominating factor in the life" (Memoir, P. 26).

Wm. Culbertson: "Who died on the cross? Of course, our blessed Lord died on the cross; but who else died there? 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him' (Rom. 6:6-8) (God's Provision for Holy Living, p. 46).

Reginald Wallis: "God says in effect, 'My child, as you reckoned on the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation, now go a step farther and reckon on His representative work for your victory day by day.' You believe the Lord Jesus died for your sins because God said so. Now take the next step. Accept by faith the further fact that you died with Him, i.e., that your 'old man was crucified with Him'." (the New Life, p. 51).

James R. McConkey: "Because He died 'death hath no more dominion over Him,' and because of our union with Him, 'sin shall not have dominion over you,' even though it is present in you. Our 'reckoning' ourselves dead to sin in Jesus Christ does not make it a fact--it is already a fact through our union with Him. Our reckoning it to be true only makes us begin to realize the fact in experience." (The Way of Victory, p. 16).

THE GREEN LETTERS #8 – “IDENTIFICATION”

A. Introduction:

In this lesson we'll be looking at our eighth spiritual growth principle, which is Identification. Identification is a Biblical truth that seems to be one of the most difficult for growing believers to understand and appropriate. We would probably be safe in saying that, many Christians will probably never grasp this truth of our identification with Christ.

B. Man's problem, the flesh:

For many of us, the beginning of seeing these truths for the first time, may have started many years before as the Lord engineers/orchestrates circumstances in life that clearly reveals how terribly sinful the indwelling flesh really is. An interesting Scripture to consider is Romans 7:18; Romans 7:15-20, 24.

The flesh, which basically is the power of sin that dwells within us, is nothing more than an inward desire to do wrong. We inherited it from Adam, we got it at birth, and it will remain with us until death. It's horrible, exceedingly sinful, and it will never change.

C. God's provision for victory over the flesh:

No longer I, but Christ:

Please turn to Galatians, Chap. 2. Here the Apostle Paul gives us his definition of the Christian life in Galatians 2:20. – “It is no longer I, but Christ”. He is not stating some high level of Christianity here, but rather he is presenting what should be normal for every Christian. I live no longer, but Christ lives His life in me. God makes it clear in His word that He has only one answer for every human need, and that is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 2:1-2

D. Back to the problem:

Let's turn back now to Romans 5. As was mentioned earlier, inside of each of us is a self centered sin nature, the flesh, an inward desire to do wrong; remember several weeks ago we looked at the word sinner Romans 5:19. You may recall that in an earlier lesson the comment was made that “a sinner is a sinner because he was born a sinner, not because he commits sin.”

E. God's way of victory is through crucifixion:

This verse 19 makes it real clear that our bondage to sin and self came by birth; therefore deliverance from sin and self comes only by death. The Lord's way of victory over sin and self is not through suppressing self centered desires, nor through confession of sins; God's way of victory is through crucifixion...deliverance is only through death. Romans 6:1-14

F. Short commentary on Romans 6:

vs. 1 - Paul here addresses the issue of abusing grace.

vs. 2 - We Christians have died (past tense), not for sin but to sin. (to its power)

vs. 3 & 4 - The word baptism in vs. 4 means identification; therefore we could read

vs. 4 this way: We are buried with Him by identification into death, that as Christ was raised from the dead so we also should walk in newness of life.

vs. 6 - The word knowing here is to understand completely.

vs. 11 - Reckon/count on (chair illustration) Many Christians, when they begin to understand their union with Christ try to place the emphasis on reckoning...

We must realize that vs. 11 is of no use without vs. 6. The secret of reckoning is revelation. We must have a revelation from God. Matthew 16:13-17

vs. 13 - Here we see the word "yield". At first glance it would appear that we are to, through human effort, yield, or present, our members, but that is far from the truth that Paul is setting before us. There is a progression here in verses 6-13, and to miss that is to miss a key point of the text. The progression is in the words know in vs. 6, reckon in vs. 11, and now yield in vs. 13. If we really know something (completely understand) to be true, then it naturally follows that we reckon it so, or believe it, trust, count on it, and then it also follows that we will just naturally yield, present or carry out.

vs. 14 - Notice the outcome of all this; sin will no longer have dominion or power over us, and the reason why sin will not have power over us, because we are not under the law (law is man working for God), but under grace (grace is God working for man). Law begins by asking the question what must man do, and grace begins by asking the question, what has God done.

G. The same Scripture that says He died, also says that we died:

Let's drop back a moment and focus on our death with Christ again. As was mentioned before, many Christians have a hard time with this.

The same Holy scripture that says He died for us, Romans 5:8, also says that we died with Christ. Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:8.

Here is something to think about; if I believe in the death of Jesus, then I can believe in my own death just as surely as I believe in His. Let's ask this question: Why do we believe that Jesus died? Because the word of God says so.

Here is something else to give some thought to: When Jesus was crucified, two thieves were crucified at the same time. We don't doubt that they were crucified. Why? Because the scripture says so.

We believe in the death of the Lord Jesus, and we believe in the death of the two thieves, what about our own death? Again, Galatians 2:20.

H. We that are dead, are free from sin:

Christ died, and that is a fact, the thieves died, and that is a fact; we died, and that is also a fact. We were in Christ when He died; 1 Corinthians 1:30; the self that we hate was on the cross in Christ, and we that are dead are free from sin. Romans 6:7. God's way of deliverance is altogether different from man's way. Man's way is to try and suppress sin by seeking to overcome it, but God's way is to remove the sinner.

I. Even the godliest of men have a terrible potential for evil:

This is why the godliest of men still have within them the most terrible potential for evil. As a matter of fact, it's the godliest of men who know it best. They have learned through experience, that flesh does not change for the better by improving it, but rather by crucifying it.

Abraham discovered this when he went down into Egypt and lied to Pharaoh -

Genesis 12. Moses discovered this when he struck the rock - Numbers 20:1-12.

Samson discovered this in the arms of Delilah - Judges 17. David discovered this when he sent Uriah to his death and committed adultery with Bathsheba - 2 Samuel 11. Peter discovered this when he denied Christ and wept bitterly through the streets of Jerusalem - Luke 22.

J. Set free by crucifixion:

Many Christians pray for God to make them stronger to overcome sin, but this is not God's way. God's way of delivering us from sin is not to make us stronger and stronger, but by making us weaker and weaker. 2 Corinthians 12:9,10; Is. 40:29. God sets us free from the dominion of sin not by strengthening our old man, but by crucifying him.

Remember the day when we saw clearly that Christ died for us; we all should be equally clear as to the time when we finally see that we died with Christ, and then reckon it so. Notice the repeated statements in Chap. 6 of our actual identification

with the death of Christ. Verses 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11,13 and also Colossians 2:20; Colossians 3:1-3.

K. Quote from Miles Stanford:

“Fruit springs out of death. Self-centeredness is always barren and solitary. The way of victory is the way of the cross. The Christian names that are honored in history are names that stand over graves where the old man was buried long before the body died.”

L. Closing comments:

There’s no other way to be set free from sin's power...to turn back in unbelief from the Biblical truth that we died with Christ, is to turn back to what?

To the weary, hopeless struggle of a burdensome, fruitless life filled with guilt, frustration and defeat. It’s obvious from Paul's Epistles that his whole life hung on the fact that he was crucified with Christ. Romans chapter 6 is the basis for a life of holiness, and John 8:32 seems to put everything in perspective.

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. How does Romans 6:1-10 deal with our sin nature?
2. Explain the difference between “substitutionary birth truths,” and “identification” growth truths?
3. What problem did Christ’s blood take care of?
4. If sin is dominating our lives, what has Christ done to free us.
5. Explain the following statement: “Our co-crucifixion with Christ and death to sin are positional truths.”
6. How will faith in the above positional truth affect our daily condition?
7. Comment on Galatians 2:20.
8. How would you explain this statement: “Knowledge that Christ and we with Him in the likeness of His death, are dead to sin, is indispensable to our freedom from sin’s power.”

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 12 CONSECRATION

Grasp The Issue:

Many Christians do not fully understand “Biblical Consecration”. A good definition of consecration is: To dedicate/commit something or someone for sacred use; or to be more specific, for God’s use. So naturally many believe “Biblical Consecration” is nothing more than dedicating oneself to the Lord for His service; which if you think about it, is nothing more than human effort.

Sound Bites: (Sound bites are short statements which are designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.)

Our love for God is the only proper motive to serve Him.

Co-crucifixion with Christ is the path and foundation for consecration.

Prayer can supply the power to live the Christian life.

Uncrucified self refuses to be consecrated, to say nothing of God’s refusal to accept it.

Jesus gave His all for you, now the least you can do is give your all for Him. Gratitude for what He has done, is the basis for Christian service.

Study the Scriptures:

Romans 6:6-14; Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:24

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“Consecration” By Miles Stanford

It might be good to stress several points just here. (1) Never was a believer brought into healthy spiritual maturity by means of pressure meetings, and constant exhortation, nor before he was prepared by the Spirit. (2) Healthy progress is based upon the apprehension, understanding and appropriation of the truths in Christ that make for real growth. (3) The experiential aspect of all truth, and especially these so-called deeper truths, is closed to all but the needy heart. Until one is aware of his need to progress spiritually, he will never be brought beyond the birth truths--a mere babe in Christ. “Therefore let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine of Christ, the Messiah, advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belongs to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance and abandonment of dead words (dead formalism), and of the faith (by which you turned) to God.” (Heb. 6:1, Amp.).

This subject of consecration seems to be badly misunderstood by so many believers. Many, especially those young in the Lord, have been victimized time and again in this matter of surrender, or commitment. The bludgeon most commonly used is: The Lord Jesus gave His all for you, now the least you can do is give your all for Him! The believer is exhorted and pressured to consecrate, surrender, commit his life to Christ on the basis of his love and gratitude for what has been done on his behalf at Calvary.

How often the average congregation is put through this routine. How often the individual believer is maneuvered down front to consecrate and reconsecrate, surrender and re-surrender, commit and recommit himself to Christ! Why is it that after awhile the believer comes to dread such meetings and messages? Well, there are a number of reasons for all this frustration, floundering and failure; and, praise the Lord, there are scriptural answers available to all who need and want them.

First of all, it is utterly futile to expect a believer, by means of consecration, surrender, or commitment, to step from his ground of substitution (Rom. 3-5) onto that of the deeper truths in Romans 8 and 12:1.

There is the all-important area of identification truth in Romans 6 and 7 that cannot be skipped over. Every hungry-hearted Christian yearns to be fully consecrated and conditioned for effective life and service. And from the very outset, until hard experience teaches him otherwise, the well-meaning believer

thinks that since he has the will to obey God and to be what He intends for him, he should attempt to carry it out through personal consecrated effort with His help. He seeks to struggle forward via the love motive, i.e., He did for me, so I must do for Him.

The following two thoughts by Andrew Murray will help here. A superficial acquaintance with God's plan leads to the view that while justification is God's work, by faith in Christ, sanctification (growth) is our work, to be performed under the influence of the gratitude we feel for the deliverance we have experienced, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit. But the earnest Christian soon finds how little gratitude can supply the power. When he thinks that more prayer will supply it, he finds that, indispensable as pray is, it is not enough. Often the believer struggles hopelessly for years, until he listens to the teaching of the Spirit, as He glorifies Christ again, and reveals Christ, our Sanctification, to be appropriated by faith alone.

God words to will, and He is ready to work to do (Phil. 2:13), but, alas! Many Christians misunderstand this. They think because they have the will it is enough, and that now they are able to do. This is not so. The new will is a permanent gift, an attribute of the new nature. The power to do is not a permanent gift, but must be each moment received from the Holy Spirit. It is the man who is conscious of his own impotence as a believer who will learn that by the Holy Spirit he can lead a holy life. Now and then one is called upon to speak out against something that is good, in order to present His best. The love motive from which to live the Christian life and serve the Lord is good, it is high, but it is not adequate--especially because it is not the motivation underwritten by Him.

As growing Christians, it is time for us to see the necessity of going beyond the love motive to the life motive. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21a). Our consecration, surrender, or commitment will never hold up if it is our responding to Him from any other motivation than the response of His life in us. Yielding to Him on any different basis will simply amount to our trying to live for Him in the self-life. And even if that were possible He could never accept it, since in that realm there dwelleth no good thing (Romans 7:18); plus the fact that He has already taken the old life to the cross and crucified it (Romans 6:6; Galatians. 2:20; 2 Timothy 2:11; I Peter 2:24).

J. C. Metcalf sees both the problem and the answer: "The modern teaching of consecration, which is tantamount to the consecration of the 'old man,' seeks to bypass the death sentence and, therefore, only leads to frustration and failure.

When, however, you and I are prepared, in simple humility, to make the fact of our death with Christ our daily basis of life and service, there is nothing that can prevent the uprising and outflow of new life, and meet the need of thirsty souls around us.”

Here is the crux of the matter. The question is, Which Life is to be consecrated to Him, the old self-life, or the new Christ-life? God can accept absolutely nothing from the old--He sees and acknowledges only that which is centered in His Son, who is our Life. Hence God has but one stipulation for consecration: Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (Romans 6:11, 4b).

“Present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead;” (Romans 6:13, ASV). This is the true place of consecration. For believers to ‘consecrate themselves to God’ ere they have learnt their union with Christ in death and resurrection (identification) is only to present to God the members of the natural man, which He cannot accept. Only those alive from the dead -- that is, having appropriated fully their likeness with Him in death -- are bidden to present their members as instruments unto God.”

“God asks us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to Him” (Romans 12:1). Until we have done this, there is nothing else we can do. Notice this exhortation comes after Romans six. There is a reason for this order -- crucifixion comes before consecration. Uncrucified self refuses to be consecrated. This is why so many people with all sincerity walk down the aisles again and again, consecrating uncrucified self to God.” -- H. Duncan. This is why the identification truths must be carefully and thoroughly presented, ultimately understood, and their reality entered into. We cannot even get as far as consecration with them! Many feel that identification is an emphasis,” an interesting subject ministered at a few Deeper Life Conferences, and Keswick Conventions. But these truths were not peripheral; they are foundational. “The sixth of Romans is not an aspect of the truth, but the foundation truth upon which every believer must stand to know anything about victory.”

“All the (identification) truths we have learned about the cross, of our death with Christ, our death to sin with Him, of our conformity to death like the grain of wheat falling into the ground to die, are preparatory to the overcoming life. They are the foundation of, and fundamental to it.”

“A careful study of all the Epistles of Paul will show that they are written on the basis of the cross set forth in Romans six--the fact that God consigns the old

fallen Adam-life to the cross, and has nothing to say to it. God deals with all believers on the ground—‘in Christ you died.’ But the Church of Christ, as a whole, ignores this fact. It treats the fallen creation (self-life) as capable of improvement, and the meaning of the cross bringing to death the Old Adam race as fallen beyond repair, is thus nullified.”

FBC Bible Lessons

“The Cross and the Consecrated Disciple of Christ”.

A. Defining a “consecrated disciple”

- A disciple is a learner, a pupil, a follower of the teachings of another; and a good definition of this word consecration is - To dedicate, commit, surrender for God’s use.....
- So we could say that a consecrated disciple is a dedicated, committed, teachable follower of Jesus Christ.....
- However, we will never be a committed, surrendered, teachable follower, until we get self out of the way, because self will not surrender, self is not teachable, and self will not follow Jesus; thus our great need for the cross...

B. Miles Stanford quote

- " Nothing can set us apart for God; nothing can make us holy, except the cross, because only the cross can keep the flesh/self in the place of death".
- Nowhere was Jesus more clear or firm than when He mentioned discipleship - Luke 9:23.. Take up His cross; the daily giving up of the self life, which can only take place at the cross.

C. If the flesh/self is active, then Christ is not

- Here is an interesting thought to ponder: If the old I/self /flesh is active then Christ is not.
- However, if we walk by faith in the fact that we have been crucified with Christ, then self is rendered powerless by the Holy Spirit and as Jesus leads, we will follow...(A true picture of a disciple).

A closer look at consecration

- It might be helpful if we took a closer look at the term consecration and a key portion of Scripture that seems to be misunderstood by many Christians.
- Romans 6:12-13 The key word here is “yield” or “present,” and we find it used 5 times in verses. 13, 16 & 19.
- Moving on now to Romans 12, where again we see this word yield Romans 12:1

Many have taken this word “yield/present” to mean consecration

- Remember our definition - To dedicate/commit/surrender for God’s use”.

- Many believe Paul to be saying in Romans 12: & Romans 6:12-13 that we are to take action and consecrate/dedicate/commit ourselves to the Lord for His service.....
- And so they set out to serve the Lord, motivated and empowered by self effort/the flesh, and the outcome is failure.....

A good Biblical example

- In Exodus 2, Moses decided to offer himself to the Lord for the purpose of setting his people free.....
- It's interesting to note how far Moses' self confident commitment carried him....
- Exodus 2:11-15.....What we see in this scripture regarding the life of Moses is that God rejected his efforts, and did not give the charge to "Set His People Free" upon seeing his self confident efforts, but rather He gave it after Moses had failed, ran for his life and spent 40 years in the back-side of the desert.....It came only at the END OF SELF.....
- A big failure and Forty years in the wilderness is what the Lord used to bring Moses to the end of self.....
- How about you and I.....what provision has God made that we might come to the end of self?.....The Cross...
- Now God may use a 40 year wilderness experience , but whatever he uses, His object is to move us to the cross which is the only place that we will give up self as we, by faith, see ourselves crucified with Him.....

Crucifixion will always come before Biblical consecration

- In Exodus 29, before Aaron and his sons were consecrated, blood/death was sprinkled all over them - Exodus 29:21
- .Uncrucified self refuses to be consecrated to say nothing of God's refusing to accept it.....Romans 8:7....
- That's why so many sincere Christians walk down the aisle again and again consecrating uncrucified self.....

E. Our position of sanctification is the key to understanding Biblical consecration

- Before we can get a clear understanding of Biblical consecration, it would probably be good to look at our position of sanctification.
- To be sanctified, means to be set apart for God's possession and use....
- Some Scriptures to consider; Genesis 2:3; and John 17:17, 19

- It's encouraging to know that positionally we are sanctified at salvation (positionally set apart for God's possession and use) and as we, by faith, rest in that position, the Holy Spirit gives us the power and desire to consecrate/to dedicate ourselves for God's use.....

F. However, man has a problem

- Left to ourselves, we will not trust and rest in our position of sanctification, because our flesh won't let us.....Romans 7:15 & 18.....Again, the solution is the cross.....Galatians 5:24

G. And God has a solution

- Going back to Romans 6, there is a divine order in verses 6, 11 and 13.
 1. KNOW--vs 6.....
 2. RECKON--vs 11.....
 3. YIELD--vs 13.
- 1. Knowing is the first step in consecration..... Just as we must have knowledge of Christ's crucifixion for salvation, we must also have knowledge of our co-crucifixion for our consecration.....
- 2. Reckoning is a natural response to true Biblical knowledge.....
- 3. Yielding is the end result here, and is not an effort for the believer in the Romans 6 pattern, but rather is simply a natural response to our faith...James 2:18b "I'll show you my faith by my works.".....

H. The subject of consecration is misunderstood by many believers

- Often times we hear a message like this: "Jesus gave His all for you, now the least you can do is give your all for Him."
- We are exhorted and pressured to consecrate, or dedicate, or surrender, or commit our lives to Christ on the basis of our love and gratitude for what He has done for us.
- Be assured that our love and gratitude cannot supply the power to live the Christian life, nor can more prayer supply the power; as indispensable as prayer is, it is not enough.

I. A missionary testimony

- I once heard of a couple who went out as missionaries. They truly loved the Lord and were extremely grateful for all that He had done for them. They spent many hours each day in prayer, but in the end, there was no power to carry on.
- A rather interesting Scripture is found in Jeremiah 12:5.

J. The key to Biblical consecration

- The key to Biblical consecration, yielding, presenting, dedicating, committing our lives to God is not I; nor the love that I can muster, nor the prayers that I can pray---It's not I, but CHRIST. Galatians 2:20; Phippiansl 1:21

K. The self life is unimprovable

- So many of us well meaning Christians seek to consecrate, dedicate, surrender and commit to God what He has totally rejected--SELF/FLESH.
- Our thinking is if we seek the Lord hard enough and pray, that self will become spiritual and thus useful in His service. We must understand that the "self life" is unimprovable.....
- Our natural thinking and the modern teaching of consecration which asks us to commit our lives to Christ through self effort, bypasses the death sentence.

L. True, acceptable, Biblical consecration is most clearly shown in Romans 6:13

- This is the key statement in all of Scripture regarding this subject. "AS THOSE THAT ARE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD."
- Paul is saying that we must present ourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead. (Dead to self)
- Remember Romans 6:7, "he that is dead, is freed from sin." Nothing from the old creation can be consecrated, yielded, or presented, but only that which has passed through death to resurrection.

M. An Old Testament picture of this New testament truth

- Back in Leviticus 8, when God was consecrating the Old Testament Priests; notice how he directed Moses.....Leviticus 8:22-30.....The blood was placed on the right ear, the right thumb, the right big toe, and eventually sprinkled all over the Priest.....Death was written all over them.....Their consecration came only by death.

N. Conclusion

- Now remember our subject."The cross and the consecrated disciple of Christ".....
 - There is only one way to yield/present/surrender/commit/dedicate/consecrate ourselves to the Lord, it can only happen AT THE CROSS as we, by faith, see ourselves co-crucified with Christ.....John 10:11.
-

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. How would you explain this comment: “The modern teaching of consecration seeks to bypass the death sentence, and therefore only leads to frustration and failure.”
2. Does Luke 9:23 have any significance regarding the subject of “biblical consecration”?
3. True or False: Only those “alive from the dead” are bidden to present their members as instruments of righteousness unto God.
4. Comment on the following statement: “True biblical consecration is nothing more than faith/trust/dependence on our sanctification.”
5. Is this a true statement: (explain your answer) “The key to biblical consecration/yielding/presenting, is not I; nor the love that I can must, nor the prayers that I can pray; it is not I, but Christ.
6. How would you explain Jeremiah 17:5-8 in light of our subject “biblical consecration.”

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 13 SELF

Grasp the Issue

It is very important that we understand, as Christians, we are going to be influenced and ultimately controlled by one of two powers. The self-life, or the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The first will make life hell and the second heaven.

Self is the fleshly, self-centered carnal nature that we inherited from Adam. It is ugly, it's horrible - we got it at birth. It will be with us until death and will never change. Vines definition of the flesh, or self, is "human nature deprived of the Spirit of God and dominated by sin".

The basis of life for both an unsaved man and a self-centered carnal Christian is this...Self will – self-love - self trust - exalting one's self.

Which produces self-centeredness - self effort - self conceit - self indulgence - self pleasing - self seeking - self pity - self defense - self sufficiency - self consciousness - self righteousness - self glorification.

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either true or false.

Jesus said, “if you want to follow me, deny self.”

Denying self comes only by a commitment to make Jesus Lord of our life.

Self/the flesh came in by birth, therefore it makes sense that it will only go out by death.

God sees very little good in the flesh.

Self/the flesh yields only to the cross.

Study the Scriptures

Luke 9:23-24; John 3:6; Romans 7:18-24; Romans 8:8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 5:16-21; Philippians 3:3-6

Consult Other Sources

“Principles of Spiritual Growth” by Miles Stanford

One of the most important factors in Christian growth is the Holy Spirit's revelation of the self-life to the believer. Self is the fleshly, carnal life of nature, the life of the first Adam--"dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1); thoroughly corrupt before God (Galatians. 5:19-21); the life in which there is no good thing in the sight of God (Romans 7:18). Nowhere do spiritual principles mean more than here. Plato, with his "Know thyself," was more right than he knew, but still only half right. Paul, with God's "Not I, but Christ," was all right!

For one to get beyond just knowing about the Lord Jesus, and enter into a consistent and growing personal knowledge of a fellowship with Him, one must first come to know oneself. Introspection is not involved her--the Holy Spirit uses experiential revelation. First, the believer learns "Not I," then, "but Christ." First, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone," Then Abut if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). First, "always delivered unto death," then, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest" (2 Corinthians 4:11). In service: first, "death worketh in us," then, "but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:12). All resurrection life springs out of death, else it would not be resurrection life--His risen life (Romans 6:5, 6). We are to yield ourselves unto God as those who are alive from the death (Romans. 6:13).

For some years now the evangelistic scene has been dominated by a conversion known as "commitment," which often, sad to say, amounts to little more than a spiritual miscarriage. When there is a bit of life it usually blossoms overnight into full bloom, and soon becomes heavy with the fruit of "dynamic," "radiant," personality coupled with busy, rushing service. The tragedy of this sort of thing is that self is at home and thrives in the glow of it all, and is rarely found out for what it really is. All is indiscriminate "hearts and flowers."

The healthy new birth, based on deep conviction of sin, and repentance toward God, starts out clear and strong with love and devotion to the Savior. But, before long, there comes the sickening realization of an element within that pulls one back to self-centeredness, to the world, to the rule of the law, to sin. This learning by heartbreaking experience of the utter sinfulness and reigning power of self in the everyday Christian life, is the means whereby we come to know the Lord Jesus beyond the birth phase--as our Savior; on to the growth-phase--as our Lord and

Life. "To me to live is Christ." No believer will truly come to know the Lord Jesus as his Life until he knows by experience the deadly self-life deep within for what it is.

At a Spiritual Life Conference many years ago, Dr. C. I. Scofield said, "Not everyone, by any means, has had the experience of the seventh of Romans, that agony of conflict, of desire to do what we cannot do, of longing to do the right we find we cannot do. It is a great blessing when a person gets into the seventh of Romans and begins to realize the awful conflict of its struggle and defeat; because the first step toward getting out of the struggle of the seventh chapter and into the victory of the eighth, is to get into the seventh. Of all the needy classes of people, the neediest of this earth are not those who are having a heartbreaking, agonizing struggle for victory, but those who are having no struggle at all, and no victory, and who do not know it, and who are satisfied and jogging along in a pitiable absence of almost all the possessions that belong to them in Christ."

J. C. Metcalfe gives this same fact an added witness: "Many a young Christian, who has not been warned of this necessary voyage of discovery upon which the Holy Spirit will certainly embark him (Romans 7), has been plunged into almost incurable despair at the sight of sinfulness which is his by nature. He has in the first place rejoiced greatly in the forgiveness of his sins, and his acceptance by God; but sooner or later he begins to realize that all is not well, and that he has failed and fallen from the high standard which he set himself to reach in the first flush of his conversion."

"He begins to know something of the experience which Paul so graphically describes: 'What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I' (Romans 7:15), and, in consequence, he feels that the bottom has fallen out of his Christian life; and then perhaps the Devil whispers to him that it is just no good his going on, because he will never be able to make the grade. Little does he know how healthy his condition is, and that this shattering discovery is but the prelude to a magnificent series of further discoveries of things which God has expressly designed for his eternal enrichment. All through life God has to show us our utter sinfulness and need, before He is able to lead us on into realms of grace, in which we shall glimpse His glory."

Self-revelation precedes divine revelation--that is a principle for both spiritual birth and spiritual growth. The believer who is going through struggle and failure is the Christian who is being carefully and lovingly handled by his Lord in a very personal way. He is being taken through the experience (years in extent) of self-revelation and into death, the only basis upon which to "know him, and the power

of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10).

God works by paradox. Success comes via failure; life springs out of death. The only element in the believer’s life that crumbles is that which has to go anyway--the new life can never be harmed or affected. This disintegration is something the believer cannot enter into nor engineer on his own--self will never cast out self. He has to be led into it by the mercy of the Holy Spirit--into failure; abject and total. “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:11). So often the means utilized by the Spirit is an unsaved mate, or even a saved one! Or poor health, yes and good health, too! A thousand and one things are used by Him--in fact, everything (Romans 8:28, 29), to bring out the worst in us, ultimately enabling us to see that the Christian life has to be “not I, but Christ.” People circumstances are never the cause of failure. Self’s reaction to them is the cause, and the one problem to be dealt with. “It’s me, it’s me, O Lord.”

“Many of us have probably known what it was to rejoice in the grace of God without having apprehended very much the true character of the flesh. It has often been noticed that where there is the greatest exuberance of joy in young converts, there is often a levity which fails to take into account that the flesh is unchanged. In such cases the grace of God is taken up in a self-confident way; there is very little self-distrust, or sense of weakness and dependence. And the inevitable consequence is a fall, or a succession of falls, that gradually bring home to the consciences of believers their utter weakness and incapacity as in the flesh.” --C.A. Coates

Even Hopkins shares some important light on our subject: “How infinite are the forms in which self appears. Some are occupied with good self. They pride themselves on their excellencies. Others are just as much occupied with bad self. They are forever groaning over their imperfections, and struggling with the flesh as if they hoped in time to improve it. When shall we be convinced it is so utterly bad that it is beyond all recovery? Our experience, upward, in the power of God, is just in proportion to our experience, downward, in ceasing from self.

“Is it, Reckon yourself to be weak in reference to sin? No, it is lower than that. Is it, Reckon yourself to be dying? No, lower still. ‘Reckon yourself to be dead--(Romans 6:11)--indeed unto sin.’ Some believe they are weak. But what does that imply? That they have some strength. We must act on the fact that we are dead in reference to sin. We shall not then speak of difficulty as to resisting temptation in reference to ourselves. We shall take the lowest place, and say it is

impossible. But we shall know that what is impossible with self is possible with God. We shall take our place on the resurrection side of the cross, and in so doing we leave behind the old self-life for the new Christ-life. To live in Him who is our Life, is to be in the power of God.” Someone has rightly said that “there are many ‘separated from the world’ Christians who are not ‘separated from themselves’ Christians.”

THE GREEN LETTERS #10

“SELF”

A. The horrible self-life: Luke 9:23,24; Luke 14:26,27 -

One of the most important factors in spiritual growth is the Holy Spirit revealing to us the horrible self-life...self is the fleshly, self-centered carnal nature that we inherited from Adam; totally corrupt – Galatians 5:19-21; "The life in which there is no good thing in the sight of God - Romans 7:18a-24 (overview); Not every Christian comes to the point of Romans 7:24...The agony of realizing that within dwells a self-centered sin nature that is bent on doing wrong.

B. The basis of life for both the unsaved man and carnal Christian:

1. Self will; 2. Self love; 3. Self trust and; 4. exalting one's self, and upon this foundation is built a life that is one huge capital "I". Self-centeredness - self effort - self conceit - self indulgence - self pleasing - self seeking - self pity - self defense - self sufficiency - self consciousness - self righteousness - self glorification.

C. Two kinds of Christians:

It might be helpful to take a closer at the self life... 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

There are two kinds of Christians described in scripture, and it is very important that each one of us knows which one we are. Paul here in 1 Corinthians 3 speaks of Christians as either carnal (self-centered) or spiritual (God-centered).

What kind of Christian am I, which kind are you? Carnal or Spiritual?

How can we know if we are carnal?

D. Marks/characteristics of a carnal Christian:

It might be good if we took some time to look at the marks or characteristics of a carnal/self-centered Christian.

1. A carnal Christian's life is one of continuous conflict, both within and without.

Romans 7:22,23; Galatians 5:17.

What we see here are two totally opposite natures engaged in a warfare within the Christian. Sometimes the Spirit is in control and the believer enjoys brief moments of love, joy, peace (Galatians 5:22,23); However, more often the flesh is dominating the scene and the deeds of the flesh are very evident. Galatians 5:19,20; This inward conflict also results in outward conflict. 1 Corinthians 3:3,4; 3 Jn.9:10;

2. It is a life of repeated defeat. Mark 14:26-38 & 50

In Romans 7 Paul makes it very clear that he had a tremendous desire and that he was attempting to live a holy and righteous life, but that he repeatedly was faced with an overpowering defeat. Romans 7:15. It might be good for us to give some thought to our own lives.

How many times have we determined to stop worrying, or being angry or impatient? How many times have we lost our temper, been full of pride and selfishness? How many times have we neglected the Bible and prayer or had neither the desire nor the strength to share the Gospel?

3. It's a life of prolonged infancy. 1 Corinthians 3:1,2

The carnal Christian never grows up. Nothing on earth is quite so exciting to parents, than a new baby...but oh, the heartache to those parents if that child remains a baby in body or mind, and so it is with God. How it must pain Him to see His children remain in a prolonged infancy.

What are some of the Characteristics of a baby? 1) A baby is helplessly dependent upon others. 2) A baby wants all the attention and is totally self centered. 3) A baby lives in the realm of feelings, extremely circumstantial, if all goes well he is happy, but let his desires not be met and Going back to the first characteristic of a baby, he is helplessly dependent upon others. Hebrews 5:12-14.

One of the reasons that so many Christians remain in that prolonged infancy is that they are looking to human teachers and not the Holy Spirit for spiritual nourishment. We become spiritual parasites living on predigested food and therefore underfed. I remember a time in my own life when I was writing to Miles Stanford for answers to those questions that we would all like some Godly old saint to answer for us. I had written him two letters, and immediately he responded answering my questions; but on the third letter, his response changed to the following. "I'm through answering questions for a while brother. If you're given heavy responsibility, it's necessary for you to think and dig and study, and if you're not ready, it's best to acknowledge it for the sake of others".

4. It's a life of fruitlessness. John 15:2 The focus here is on fruit bearing, no fruit of the Spirit, no fruitful ministry. Romans 10:2

5. It's a life of double-mindedness and hypocrisy. Matthew 23:1-28.

The carnal Christian says one thing and does another. James 1:6-8.

Mark 9:25,26 - Oh how we see this in self centered/ carnal Christians.

E. Quote by J. C. Metcalfe:

“All through life God has to show us our utter sinfulness and need before He can lead us into realms of grace”.

F. Self revelation precedes divine revelation: The believer who is going through struggles and failure is the Christian in whom God is working. Hebrews 12:5-6. God uses a thousand and one things to bring out the worst in us, so that we can see the flesh/self. For what it is: no good thing. Psalm 66:10-12;

Questions to Guide Our Study:

1. What are your thoughts regarding the term “self?”
2. Why is it important that the Holy Spirit reveal to us the horrible self-life?
3. What are your thoughts regarding the following statement: “Next to knowing Christ, knowing self is most important.”
4. What are the two kinds of Christians mentioned in I Corinthians 3:1-3
5. How can we know if we are carnal?
6. In teaching new believers, should we emphasize commitment?
7. Is it a good thing to see one’s self in Romans 7:15-24?
8. Comment on this statement: “Self revelation precedes divine revelation.”
9. What does it mean to reckon one’s self dead?

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 14 SELF DENIAL

Grasp the Issue:

It is interesting to me that man has so many ways of trying to dethrone self, but they are not God's ways. The flesh, self, will not yield to self denial, or control, or revival, or resolutions, or Christian activity or confession; but only to the cross..... Looking at the overall picture of Scripture, God has only one way of dealing with the flesh/ self.it was on the cross of Calvary that God dealt fully and finally with self. Our old self was nailed to the cross, that we might no longer be slaves to sin.

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

Bible study and prayer are God's remedy for the self-life.

Self/the flesh came in by birth, then it makes sense that it will only go out by death.

Good Christian training at home, at church and at school will keep the flesh/self under control.

God has done the work, the old man/self has been crucified.

Revival is needed to change self.

Study the Scriptures:

John 3:6; John 6:63; John 12:23-24; Romans 6:1-14; Philippians 3:3; Galatians 2:20;

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“SELF DENIAL”

by Miles Stanford

When a believer begins to discover something of the awful tyranny of the self-life, or has been endlessly struggling against that tyranny, he becomes intensely concerned about the denial of self with the resultant freedom to rest and grow in Christ. Man has many ways of seeking to escape the thralldom of self; God has but one way. First then, some of these man-centered methods.

MORTIFICATION

Denying oneself certain things for a time, or even for all time, is not even close to the answer since the old nature will adjust and thrive under any conditions--anything short of death to self. “There have been those who have thought that to get themselves out of the way it was necessary to withdraw from society; so they denied all human relationships and went into the desert or the mountain or the hermit’s cell to fast and labor and struggle to mortify the flesh. While their motive was good it is impossible to commend their method. For it is not scriptural to believe that the old Adam nature can be conquered in that manner. It yields to nothing less than the death of the cross. It is altogether too tough to be killed by abusing the body or starving the affections.” -- A. W. Tozer

CONQUEST

Probably the most drawn out and exhausting effort of all is the believer’s struggle to conquer and control this rebel self. More meetings, more Bible study, more prayer are all resorted to, but neither are these God’s answer to this problem.

TRAINING

Here is a favorite that has been tried and found wanting down through the ages. Good Christian training and culture in the right homes, churches and schools have been relied upon to subdue the old nature and bring it into line.

REVIVALISM

Another failure has been the practice of holding special meetings once or twice a year. This involves outside leadership (a stranger to the individual problems), and the devastating revival routine (confession, new resolutions, etc.), in the hope that something will change--but it rarely does, and then not for long.

GROWTH

So many dear Christians just keep plodding (or racing) through the deadening routine of their multitudinous church activities and duties, expecting that in time self will change for the better as they grow. But self never changes into anything but more of the same! “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6a). “Sometimes this self is entirely bad, as when it is angry, spiteful, unkind, unjust, untruthful, unloving, catty. In other cases a good exterior conceals an evil heart, as when we are proud of our humility, conceited about our Christian service, boastful of our orthodoxy. And an over-forwardness and obvious conceit at the sound of one’s own voice spoils many a prayer meeting.”

CLEANSING

Up-to-the-moment confession and consequent cleansing have also constituted a popular method. However, I John 1:9 has to do with sins already committed, and not with the source (self) from which they emanate. “Our sins are dealt with by the blood, we ourselves are dealt with by the cross. The blood procures our pardon, the cross procures deliverance from what we are in Adam. The blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my old man: I need the cross to crucify me--the sinner.”

EXPERIENCES

Today one of the prevalent attempts for something better is to go in for “the baptism of the Spirit,” speaking in tongues, etc. This is by far the most dangerous and pathetic trap of all, as it is simply self, neurotically and religiously rampant. “Calvary precedes Pentecost. Death with Christ precedes the fullness of the Spirit. Power! Yes, God children need power, but God does not give power to the old creation, nor to the uncrucified soul. Satan will give power to the ‘Old Adam,’ but not God.”

Which of us does not know something of the failure of our ways, well-intentioned as they may be? What most do not know is that this very failure is the path to learning, and entering into, God’s way. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Now just what is God’s way of self-denial? He has but one way, and it is on the basis of all His other ways: the principle of the finished work. His way for us in everything is the way He has already traveled, conquered, and completed in Christ.

THE CROSS GOD’S WAY

It was on the cross of Calvary that God, in Christ, dealt fully and finally with self, the nature from which all our sins flow. “We know that our old (unrenewed) self was nailed to the cross with Him in order that [our] body, [which is the instrument] of sin, might be made ineffective and inactive for evil, that we might no longer be the slaves of sin” (Romans 6:6, Amp.). The reason there is no other way for self to be denied is that God has done the work in this way: our identification with Christ Jesus in His death and resurrection! It is done; now ours to believe.

“The ‘flesh’ will only yield to the cross; not to all the resolutions you may make at a conference, not to any self-effort, not to any attempted self-crucifixion; only to co-crucifixion, crucified together with Christ (Galatians 2:20). It is not by putting yourself to death, but by taking, through faith and surrender, your place of union with Christ in His death. That is the blessed barrier of safety between you and all the attractions of the flesh, and that makes the way open to do the will of God.” -- G. Watt.

The cross of Calvary resulted in the death of the Lord Jesus, both for sin, and unto sin. In that He died unto sin, He died out of the realm of sin, and He arose into the realm of “newness of life,” eternal life. And our identification with Him on Calvary took us into death; down into the tomb; up into “newness of life” (Romans 6:4). First, Romans 6:3 – “Baptized into his death”; then, Romans 6:4—“Buried with him”; then Romans 6:5—“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”; also, Colossians 3:3—“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”; therefore, Romans 6:11—“Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Praise the Lord! it all happened at Calvary: our sins were paid for, our sinfulness was dealt with, and both the ultimate--death. And we receive the benefits of the work of the cross simply by reckoning on, believing in, the finished work of the cross. First, through the Word, we find out what God did about our problem. Then, as we become thoroughly convinced of the fact and begin to understand it clearly, we are able to agree to “reckon” it true. And as we exercise faith in God’s fact, we begin to receive the benefits of that finished work in experience. Was it not true in the matter of our justification? Yes, and we will likewise find it to be true in the matter of our emancipation from the slavery of the self-life.

“The powerful effect of the cross with God, in heaven, in the blotting out of guilt, and our renewed union with God, is inseparable from the other effect--the breaking down of the authority of sin over man, by the crucifixion of self. Therefore Scripture teaches us that the cross not only works out a disposition or desire to make such a sacrifice, but it really bestows the power to do so, and completes the work. This appears with wonderful clarity in Galatians. In one place the cross is spoken of as the reconciliation for guilt (3:13). But there are three more places where the cross is even more plainly spoken of as the victory over the power of sin; as the power to hold in the place of death the ‘I’ of the self-life; of the flesh (the outworking of self); and of the world (2:20; 5:24; 6:14). In these passages our union (identification) with Christ, the crucified One, and the conformity to Him resulting from the union, are represented as the result of the power exercised within us and upon us by the cross.” -- Andrew Murray

As we learn to stand upon the finished work of Calvary, the Holy Spirit will begin to faithfully and effectively apply that finished work of the cross to the self-

life, thereby holding it in the place of death--inactive--resulting in the “not I, but Christ” life.

THE GREEN LETTERS #11

“SELF DENIAL”

A. Introduction:

Chapter 11 is simply entitled "self denial".

It might be helpful to begin by saying as Christians we are going to be influenced and ultimately controlled by one of two powers; The self life, or the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The first will make life hell and the second heaven.

B. Define “flesh”:

In our last lesson, we saw that self is the fleshly, self centered carnal nature that we inherited from Adam. It is ugly, it's horrible - we got it at birth. It will be with us until death and will never change. Vines definition of the flesh, or self, is "human nature deprived of the Spirit of God and dominated by sin".

C. God sees nothing good in the flesh:

God sees nothing good in the flesh. Romans 7:18a. Even the very best which the flesh can produce, God rejects.

D. Paul's flesh:

Notice what Paul says about his flesh - Philippians 3:4-6. Paul's flesh was educated, cultured, moral and even religious, yet it was totally unacceptable to God. Romans 8:8

E. There is a blindness to the flesh:

It's interesting that unlike Paul, few Christians are willing to admit that the flesh/self is controlling their lives; There is a blindness to the subtle, clever, deceitful workings of the flesh.

If the more horrible sins are absent from our lives, then we tend to rest in a complacent sense of goodness (self-righteousness). We fail to realize how obnoxious to God are the more "culturally" acceptable sins such as (embellishing stories, sarcasm, impatience, worry, etc.). Few people come to Romans 7:24

F. Martin Luther once said:

"I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great Pope self."

What is the solution? How do we dethrone Pope self?

G. Man's ways:

It's interesting that man has so many ways of trying to dethrone self, but they are not God's ways. Let's look at a few of man's ways that writer Miles Stanford points out in "The Green Letters".

1. Many, many Christians are working very, very hard to deny self and give up certain things (fasting monk), but denying self through self effort is not even close to the answer. (overcoming the flesh with the flesh).
2. Others of us try to conquer or control self...more church services; more Bible study; more prayer. Again, this is not God's answer.
3. Training is another favorite that has been tried, and failed. Good Christian training, in good Christian homes, and good Christian churches, and good Christian schools; but all of this will not bring the old nature/self, into line.
4. Another failure is revival...we pray for revival and confess our sins and make new resolutions in hope that something will change, it rarely does.
5. Others just keep plodding along through the routine of a multitude of church activities and duties expecting in time that self will change for the better...but self never changes into anything but more of the same. John 3:6; John 6:63; Philippians 3:3. The only thing the flesh will ever produce is more of the same.
6. Up to the moment confession is another method that many of us have used for a number of years. 1 John 1:9. This has to do with sins already committed and not with the source or root problem. (self.)
These are just some of the many ways that man uses to try and overcome self.

H. God's way:

Isaiah 55:8,9; What then is God's way of dealing with self? He has but one way... It was on the cross of Calvary that God dealt fully and finally with self.

Luke 9:23; Luke 14:27...our old self was nailed to the cross, that we might no longer be slaves to sin. Romans 6:6,14; Galatians 2:20.

Give some thought to this - self/flesh/sin nature, etc. came in by birth, then it makes sense that it will only go out by death. God has done the work...it is finished. Our only part is to believe.

I. The flesh will only yield to the cross:

Here is an awesome thought to consider: the flesh, self, sin nature, will only yield to the cross, not to self denial, or control, or revival, or resolutions, or Christian activity or confession; but only to the cross. Our old self has been crucified with Christ.

J. There can be no fruitful life without death:

John 12:23,24 - Here the Lord is using nature and seeds to illustrate the spiritual truth that there can be no fruitful life without death. I Corinthians 15:36. The life of a Christian has death as its source, therefore the growth of our new life is from the grave of our old life. 2 Corinthians 7:3.

K. The cross is God's way:

It was on the cross of Calvary that God, in Christ, dealt fully and finally with self. The flesh will only yield to the cross; not to resolutions or self effort, but only to co-crucifixion; crucified together with Christ (Galatians 2:20).

L. Concluding thought from J. Penn Lewis:

"If our dying with Christ has not been recognized, acknowledged and applied, we can be sure that self is still the dominating factor in our lives.

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. What are some ways that man tries to change/control the flesh/self?
2. Comment on the following statement; “The Lord helps those who help themselves.”
3. What is God’s way to deal with the flesh?
4. Comment on 1 Jn. 1:9 (up to the moment confession) regarding this whole area of self-denial.
5. The world says, “Be strong, fight your way to the top”; but what does the Bible say?
6. How would you explain the following statement? “Self never changes into anything except more of the same.”
7. What are your thoughts regarding this statement? “The life of a Christian has death as its source.”

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 15 THE CROSS

Grasp The Issue:

“If the difference between ‘Christ dying for us’ and ‘our dying with Him’, has not been recognized, acknowledged and counted upon, it may safely be affirmed that the old man is still the dominating factor in the life.” --Selected

“At the beginning of our Christian life we are concerned with our doing, not with our being: we are distressed rather by what we have done than by what we are. We think that if only we could rectify certain things we should be good Christians, and we set out therefore to change our actions. But the result is not what we expected. We discover to our dismay that it is something more than just a case of trouble on the outside--that there is in fact more serious trouble on the inside. We try to please the Lord, but find something within that does not want to please Him. We try to be humble, but there is something in our very being that refuses to be humble. We try to be loving, but inside we feel most unloving. We smile and try to look very gracious, but inwardly we feel decidedly ungracious. The more we try to rectify matters on the outside the more we realize how deep-seated is the trouble. Then we come to the Lord and say, “Lord, I see it now! Not only what I have done is wrong: I am wrong.” --Nee

In Romans 7 Paul describes bondage to sin. Romans 7:15&17 “For that which I do I understand not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

Sound bites: (“sound bites” are short statements designed to get you thinking about the issue. They can be either true or false)

--The cross kills.

--The cross is for salvation but has no effect on my daily life.

--The knowledge that Christ, and we with Him on the cross, have died to sin, is indispensable to our growth.

--I need to suppress my sinful desires for God to work in my life.

--The cross in its daily application keeps the flesh experientially inoperative in the place of death, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Study the Scriptures:

Romans 6:1-14, Galatians 2:20 & 6:14, Philippians 2:5-8, I Corinthians 2:1,

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“THE CROSS”

by Miles Stanford

Studying these truths is hard work. Right? Although spiritual hunger and need are prime requirements for light and understanding, the Holy Spirit does not release the treasures of the Word quickly nor easily. “Deep calleth unto deep” (Ps. 42:7). We have to be prepared, and even then there is much time and digging and praying and mediation and yearning and experiencing involved. True spiritual reality comes no other way, but, praise the Lord, it does come this way!

Understanding and appropriating the facts of the cross proves to be one of the most difficult and trying of all phases for the growing believer. Our Lord holds His most vital and best things in store for those who mean business, for those who hunger and thirst for His very best as it is in our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer’s understanding of the two aspects of Calvary gives the key to both spiritual growth and life-giving service.

“Calvary is the secret of it all. It is what He did there that counts, and what He did becomes a force in the life of a Christian when it is appropriated by faith. This is the starting point from which all Godly living must take its rise. We shall never know the experience of Christ’s victory in our lives until we are prepared to count (reckon) upon His victory at the cross as the secret of our personal victory today. There is no victory for us which was not first His. What we are in experience He purchased, and what He purchased for us we ought to experience. The beginning of the life of holiness is a faith in the crucified Savior which sees more than His substitutionary work. It is a faith which sees myself identified with Christ in His death and resurrection.”

Actually, our Father has trained every one of us for clear-cut, explicit faith in this second aspect of Calvary: our individual identification with the Lord Jesus in His death to sin and rising to resurrection ground. This training taught us thoroughly in the first realm: believing and appropriating the finished work of His dying for our sins-justification. Now we are asked just as definitely to believe and appropriate the further aspect: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him”(Rom. 6:6); “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (v. 11).

Our intelligent faith, standing on the facts of Calvary, gives the Holy Spirit freedom to bring that finished work into our daily lives. We stood on the fact of

His dying for our sins, and this act of faith allowed the Holy Spirit to give us our freedom from the penalty of sin--justification. Now, once we come to see the fact of the further aspect, we are urged in the Word to stand on the liberating truth of our dying with Christ in His death to sin, which allows the Holy Spirit to bring into our lives freedom from the power, the enslavement, of sin--progressive sanctification. And of course when we stand with Him in glory, we will be forever free from the presence of sin--entirely sanctified and glorified.

“As our Substitute He went to the cross alone, without us, to pay the penalty of our sins: as our Representative, He took us with Him to the cross, and there, in the sight of God, we all died together with Christ. We may be forgiven because He died in our stead; we may be delivered because we died with Him. God’s way of deliverance for us, a race of hopeless incurables, is to put us away in the cross of His Son, and then to make a new beginning by recreating us in union with Him, the Risen, Living One (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is the Holy Spirit who will make these great facts real and true in our experience as we cooperate with Him; and so the plague of our hearts will be stayed, and we shall be transformed into the likeness of Christ.”

“Through the crucifixion of the old man with Christ the believer has been made dead to sin, he had been completely freed from sin’s power, he has been taken beyond sin’s power, he has been taken beyond sin’s grip, the claim of sin upon him has been nullified. This is the flawless provision of God’s grace but this accomplished fact can only become an actual reality in the believer’s experience as faith lays hold upon it and enables him moment by moment, day by day, though temptation assail him, ‘to reckon’ it true. As he reckons, the Holy Spirit makes real; as he continues to reckon the Holy Spirit continues to make real. Sin need have no more power over the believer than he grants it through unbelief. If he is alive unto sin it will be due largely to the fact that he has failed to reckon himself dead to sin” (Ruth Paxson).

The Reformation brought into focus once again the emphasis upon spiritual birth, without which there can be no beginning. What is lacking amongst believers to this day is the proper emphasis on growth--not just to be saved, and heaven by and by. What sort of salvation would we have if our Father simply saved us from the penalty of our sins and then left us on our own to deal with the power of sin in our Christian life and walk? But most believers feel this is about as far as He went and are struggling to get on the best they can, with His help. And this is the Galatians error, so prominent even now throughout born-again circles. We must be brought back to the two basics: freed from the penalty of sin by His finished work;

freed from the power of sin by His finished work. “Justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24); “We walk by faith” (II Corinthians. 5:7); “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Colossians. 2:6).

“We are not left to deal with the old life ourselves; it has been dealt with by Christ on the cross. This is the fact which must be known, since on that fact is built the New Testament principle and doctrine of holiness. In other words, Calvary is as much the foundation of sanctification as of justification. Both gifts spring from the same work and are two aspects of the same salvation.”

Now, as long as the believer does not know this dual aspect of his salvation, the best he can do is seek to handle his sins via confession (I John 1:9)--that is, after the damage has been done! This takes care of the penalty of the product but not the source. Is it not time we allowed the Holy Spirit to get at the source and cut off this stream of sins before they are committed? Is this not infinitely better than the wreckage caused by sin, even though confessed? When believers get sick and tired of spinning year after year in a spiritual squirrel cage--sinning, confessing, but then sinning again--they will be ready for God's answer to the source of sin, which is death to self, brought forth from the completed work of the cross.

“When God's light first shines into our heart our one cry is for forgiveness, for we realize that we have committed sins before Him; but once we have known forgiveness of sins, we make a new discovery--the discovery of sin, and we realize that we have the nature of a sinner. There is an inward inclination to sin. There is a power within that draws us to sin, and when that power breaks out we commit sins. We may seek and receive forgiveness, but then we sin again; and life goes on in a vicious circle--sinning and being forgiven, but then sinning again. We appreciate God's forgiveness, but we want something more than that, we want deliverance. We need forgiveness for what we have done, but we need deliverance from what we are.”

Our reckoning on the finished work of our death to sin, in Christ at Calvary, is God's one way of deliverance--there is no other way because that is the way He did it. We learned not to add to a finished work in the matter of justification, and now we must learn not to add to the finished work of emancipation. We will be freed when we enter His prepared freedom--there is no other.

“The believer can never overcome the old man even by the power of the new apart from the death of Christ, and therefore the death of Christ unto sin is indispensable, and unless the cross is made the basis upon which he overcomes the

old man, he only drops into another form of morality; in other words, he is seeking by self-effort to overcome self, and the struggle is a hopeless one” (C. Usher).

Marcus Rainford refused to stop short of God’s ultimate for freedom: “It is not to be a mere passing impression of the mind when we are undisturbed by active temptation; no mere happy frame of spirit when under temporary refreshing from the presence of the Lord; no self-flattering consciousness of a heart exercised in good works; from none of these is the believer to infer his practical mastery over sin, but on the ground Christ died unto sin, and [he] liveth unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

“I must recognize that the enemy within the camp--the flesh, the old nature, self, I, the old Adam, is a usurper. By faith I must reckon him to be in the place that God put him--crucified with Christ. I must realize that now my life is hid with Christ in God; that He is my life” (Ian Thomas).

There is no strength in ourselves against the law of sin which is in our members. The Father has left us as much dependent upon the Lord Jesus’ work for our deliverance as for our forgiveness! It is wholly because we died with Him on the cross, both to sin and to the whole legal principle, that sin’s power, for those in Christ, is broken. --Wm. R. Newell

I have found nothing so difficult to myself, and I perceive it in others, as to realize practically as an absolute fact that my old man is gone in the judgment of the cross from the eye of God. If we accept this simply we should neither look for good or bad from that which is judicially crucified; and then, as this is realized and counted upon, the Lord Jesus would be our entire Object and occupation; the Spirit of Christ would lead to nothing else. --J.B. Stony

GOD'S MASTERPIECE THE CROSS OF CHRIST #1

"The Message of the Cross"

A. Introduction

- The kind of Christian life set before us in the New Testament is so far above the actual experience for so many of us Christians today that it almost seems impossible.....Yet, there it is in scripture for all to behold.
- Every sincere Christian wants to know how to live the victorious Christian life; how can we overcome temptation and be used of the Lord in a great way?.....
- How can we find freedom from anxiety, and worry, and fear and really know that peace which passes all understanding?.....
- How can we live the kind of Christian life that we teach in our Sunday schools and preach from our pulpits?.....
- There is really only one way, and that is by gaining a full understanding of the cross....

B. A quote from T. Austin Sparks out of "The Hungry Heart" devotional.....

- "It is for the lack of a complete understanding of the meaning of the cross, that so many Christians are carnal and try to live for God out of themselves. This goes to the root of the continual weakness and poverty of their Spiritual lives. The only answer to this is a new knowledge of the cross, not only as to sins and a life of victory over them, but as to Christ who supplants/replaces the natural man."

C. Blindness to the true meaning of the cross

- Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3:13-15.....
- For the Jews, the message of the O.T. was a hidden mystery, and this darkness still exists when Moses is read today.....It is vain when the prophets are read.....The deep meaning of the Psalms cannot be understood.....The book of Isaiah makes no sense.....David speaks a language that cannot be heard.....
- The veil upon the hearts and minds of the Israelites will not be removed until they turn to Christ... 2 Corinthians 3:16
- In the same way, there appears to be a veil which blinds the minds of Christians so that they may not look into the deeper truths of God's Word.....
- For sure, we "Born Again Christians" have had a glorious sunrise when we came to know Christ, however, few of us ever come to see the full glory of the

noonday sun. The reason is that there has never been, for most Christians, an unveiling of the glory of “the cross of Christ.”

D. God has nothing more wonderful to reveal to man than the cross

- Revelation 5 - Think about all of the wisdom of all the angels, and combine that with everything that they have seen and heard, and give some thought to this; the angels know of no one so awesome as the “Lamb who was slain”....Revelation 5:12.
- Notice Paul’s comment in 1 Corinthians 2:1,2.....
- The cross/Jesus Christ crucified, will stand out in eternity as “God’s masterpiece.”.....

E. Our objective is to unveil the cross of Christ.....

- The central event, in all of history, is the cross.....We even tell time by it.....
- It is also the central event in Christianity.....In the Old Testament and gospels, everything looks forward to it; after the fact, everything looks back to it....
- However, few Christians ever come to the place, spiritually, where they are able to see the full glory of the cross.....
- Interesting Scripture - Philippians 3:18.....

F. Examining the cross through the Scriptures

- 1 Corinthians 1:17,18 - Notice that the Cross is set forth as foolishness to the unbeliever regarding salvation, and it also appears as foolishness to many Christians regarding this whole area of our co-crucifixion with Christ.
- Colossians 1:20 - Notice that it is presented as the medium of reconciliation.....Not only are we reconciled to God by the cross, but also to each other - Ephesians 2:16.
- At the cross two things happened.
 1. Jesus went to the cross alone, without us, to pay the penalty for our sins. (He was our representative)
 2. He also took us with Him to the cross and there in the sight of God, we all died together with Him. Galatians 2:20.
- Please turn with me to Romans 6:6
- Through the crucifixion of our old man with Christ we believers have been made dead unto sin. We have been completely freed from sin's power. Romans 6:6, 7, 14

- Galatians 6:14 - We are to glory in the cross. (paradox) (Notice at the cross, the world is crucified to me and I unto the world) These are just a few random thoughts re the significance of the cross.
- G. The true message of the cross – The principle of death and resurrection All throughout the Old Testament and on into the gospels, we see little glimpses of the cross, and wherever we see it, the message is always the same.....There is one consistent principle taught, one consistent message, and that message is “The Principle of Death and Resurrection”.....
- The “principle of death and resurrection” is probably the greatest, and most needed Biblical principle taught in Scripture, and yet it seems so elusive to the greater majority of Christians.....
 - John 12:23-24 - In verse 24 Jesus uses the image of a seed to illustrate this great Spiritual truth.....The thought here is that there can be no fruitful life without death.....
 - In the same way, if our lives are to be fruitful, at some point the Holy Spirit will begin to loosen us from our comfortable surroundings and we’ll find ourselves dropped into a cold darkness in life that smears and injures our nice shiny outer covering; and worst of all, that outer covering begins to disintegrate and fall to pieces. All that is not Christ, no matter how nice in appearance, is revealed for what it is. Just self..... There must be a further stripping away, right down to the germ of life, right on down until there is nothing left but Christ, who is our life.....Down, down into death.....

H. Quote by Watchman Nee

- “The Lord graciously laid me aside once for a number of months, and put me into spiritual darkness. It was almost as if He had forsaken me, almost as if nothing was going on, and I had really come to the end of everything. And then by degrees, he brought me back again. (Resurrected me) There must be a full night in the sanctuary. It cannot be hurried. He knows what He’s doing Job. 13:15.....

I. Life springs out of death

- 1 Corinthians 15:36; 2 Corinthians 7:3.....
- Our greatest example is Christ Himself.
- Philippians 2:5-8. Notice again verse 5.....
And now verses 9-11.....

- Look with me at 2 Corinthians 4:10-11..... The key to being great for God, is death.....Death to self..... 1 Peter 5:5-6

Questions to guide our study

Read Romans 6:1-14

- a. How many times does the writer make mention of “death”, “died” or “crucified” in the first fourteen verses of Romans Chapter 6?
 - b. What is meant by the word “sin” in verses 1, 2, 6, 7 & 14?
- List all the things true of believers in this passage.
- List all the statements made about Christ.
- Describe the progression of “know” in vs. 6, “reckon” in vs. 11 and “yield” in vs. 13.
- What are your thoughts about Romans 6:14?
- Describe in your own words Galatians 2:20
- Comment on Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10 -
 - A. Explain “the old man/the new man”
 - B. How is “the old man” put off, and “the new man” put on
- Explain this statement - For believers, there must be death before there is life. (2 Corinthians 4:10-12)
- Ephesians. 4:22-24; Colossians. 3:9-10
 - A. What is being referred to by the “old man” and “new man”?
 - B. How is the “old man” put off and the “new man” put on?
- 2 Corinthians. 4:10-12 - Explain this Scripture in your own words.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 16 DISCIPLESHIP

Grasp the Issue

We often come across Christians who are bright and cleaver and strong and righteous; possibly a little too bright and a little too clever - there seems to be so much self in their strength and in their righteousness. They seem to have everything to make them disciples of Christ except crucifixion.

If we are to be true disciples, then God has a winepress prepared for us, through which we will all pass one day, which will turn our hardness of nature into gentle love.

A disciple is a learner, a pupil, and a follower of the teaching of another. We will never be a learner, which really boils down to being teachable, until self is out of the way, and self is only taken out of the way at the cross. The key to discipleship is the cross.

“The Lord graciously laid me aside once in my life for a number of months and put me spiritually into utter darkness. It was almost as if He had forsaken me, almost as if nothing was going on, and I had really come to the end of everything, and then by degrees, He brought me back again. There must be a full night in the sanctuary in darkness. It cannot be hurried, He knows what He is doing.”

Watchman Nee

“How blessed that our Father is patient and loving and determined in order to utterly detach us from earthly ties and fuse us into a living union with Himself. His love will not shrink from reducing us to the very dust and despair of death. We may find the whole inward fabric of our lives overwhelmed and burned and blasted to the very extreme of endurance, shrink not fearful soul, this is the Father’s undoing of the self life.”

L.E. Maxwell

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

A person must be a missionary or involved in full time Christian service to be a disciple of Christ.

The cross is an imperative part of being a disciple.

Having little or no money is a true sign that a believer is a disciple of Christ.

The process of becoming a disciple is not always an easy process.

Discipleship is based on commitment.

Key Passages:

Luke 9:23; Luke 14:27; Philipians 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 4:10-13

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

DISCIPLESHIP

by: Miles Stanford

A disciple is one who first maintains the fellowship of the cross, which results in fellowship with his Lord: discipleship. “The atonement of the cross and the fellowship of the cross must be equally preached as the condition of true discipleship.” “Christ is the answer, but the cross is needed to clear the way for Him.”

In spiritual progress our Lord never pushes. He is our file leader (see Heb. 12:2), and He leads us step by step. We struggle and fail (self-effort), which sets up a yearning for the answer to this depressing failure. In time we see the scriptural facts of deliverance in the cross (identification), and that in turn produces the required hunger to enter into that freedom, freedom for fellowship with the answer--our risen Lord Jesus.

“Nothing can set us apart for God, nothing can make us holy, except as the cross is working in us, because the cross alone can keep the hindrances to holiness in the place of death” (G. Watt). “Back of all successful work for the lost is an inward spiritual impulse; and back of the impulse is the Holy Spirit who reproduces Christ in us; and the brand mark of it all is the cross, the living experience of which must both enter and control the life before we are fit for service” (J.E. Conant).

Nowhere was our Lord Jesus more explicit and firm than when He mentioned discipleship. “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (14:27). His reason for this is simple: Self cannot and will not follow Him, but taking up one’s cross results in death to self and newness of life in Christ Jesus.

A disciple is one who is free from the old and free for the new. In other words, scriptural words: “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (Romans 6:11). And for this the Lord Jesus clearly states that each must take up his cross. Here is the ultimatum, so now the “how.”

But first, how not to take up one’s cross: “Christians need to understand that bearing the cross does not in the first place refer to the trials which we call crosses, but to the daily giving up of life, of dying to self, which must mark us as much as it did the Lord Jesus, which we need in times of prosperity almost more than adversity, and without which the fullness of the blessing of the cross cannot be disclosed to us” (Andrew Murray).

“May we cease to confuse the words ‘a cross’ with ‘the cross.’ Sometimes believers in self-pity bemoan themselves, and say, ‘I have taken, or must take up my cross, and follow Jesus.’ Would that we would lose sight of our ‘cross’ in His cross, then His cross becomes our cross; His death, our death; His grave, our grave; His resurrection, our resurrection; His risen life, our newness of life.” No, taking up our cross does not mean the stoical bearing of some heavy burden, hardship, illness, distasteful situation or relationship. Enduring anything of this nature is not bearing one’s cross. Taking up the cross may or may not involve such things, but such things do not constitute our cross.

The believer’s cross is the cross of Calvary, the one on which he was crucified with Christ (see Galatians 2:20). There the eternal emancipation proclamation was signed with the blood of the Lamb and sealed by the Spirit of God. Every believer is thereby freed from all bondage, but not every believer is aware of this liberating truth.

Sad to say, the only believers who are interested in freedom are those who have come to the place of hating instead of hugging their chains. “It is true that the intellect is stumbled by the cross; yet the antagonism to the cross is mainly moral, both in the sinner and in the saint, for its message is only welcomed by those who desire freedom from the bondage of their sins, and who hunger and thirst after the experiential righteousness of God.” Yes, the need must be intense, as Norman Douty says: “The Divine way (via the cross) for spiritual emancipation is just as offensive to the child of God as the Divine way for salvation is to the lost.”

When the believer begins to really see the cross for what it is--a place of death--he is inclined to hesitate about choosing such fellowship. Our Lord Jesus understands this well, but there is no other way, since that is the manner in which He finished the work on our behalf. So He simply allows our needs to continue their relentless pressure until we finally bend to His inevitable way of the cross.

We will be ready to take up our cross when self becomes intolerable to us, when we begin to “hate our life” as spoken of in Luke 14:26. This deep burden of self and hunger to be like Him cause the function of the cross--crucifixion--to become attractive. The long devastating years of abject bondage make freedom in the Lord Jesus priceless--the cost becomes as nothing to us! We begin to share (think of it!) the attitude of our Lord Jesus and of Paul. “For the joy that was set before him,” the Lord Jesus “endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2). The attitude of the Apostle Paul became: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). “Let this mind [attitude] be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Yes, we begin to glory in the cross, our very own freedom from all that enslaves, from all that would keep us from fellowship with our risen Lord. So we begin to take up our cross, our liberation, our personal finished work held in trust for us so long and patiently by the Holy Spirit. Talk about your trust funds!

And here is how we take up and bear our cross: Finally prepared by our needs, aware that our bondage was broken in Christ on Calvary, we definitely begin to rely on that finished work--we appropriate. Our attitude becomes: I gladly and willingly take, by faith in the facts, my finished work of emancipation that was established at Calvary; I reckon myself to be dead indeed to sin and alive to God in Christ. This is taking up one's cross. As we learn to do this, we begin to find these facts true in experience. The Holy Spirit brings that finished work of death and applies it to all of the old nature, which is thus held in the place of death--the death of Calvary. If and when we turn from the facts and begin to rely on anything or anyone else, including ourselves, self is released from the cross, as active and enslaving as ever. Through this process we are patiently taught to walk by faith, to maintain our attitude of reliance on the finished work of the cross.

Adolph Saphir wrote: "The narrow path, commencing with the cross--'Ye have died with Christ'--ending with the glory of the Lord Jesus, is the path on which the Lord draws near and walks with His disciples."

'Christ liveth in me.' The Lord within lives as the sole source of life. The old 'I' has no contribution he can make to Christian life and service; he can never be harnessed to the purposes of God. Death is his decreed portion. There cannot be two masters in our lives. If the old 'I' is in active possession of us then Christ cannot be. But if we gladly take hold of the great fact of redemption--'I have been crucified with Christ'--then Christ by His Spirit takes up the exercise of the function of life within us, and leads us as His bond-slaves (disciples), in the train of His triumph.'"

PROCESS OF DISCIPLESHIP

by: Miles Stanford

In the parable of the sower the seed sown “on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). The principle of growth is always “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:28). Therefore, “the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it” (James 5:7). As this clearly exemplifies, “he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28:16).

For most of us it has been a long season of growth from the tiny green blade up to the “full corn in the ear.” So many seek to settle for this stage: saved, with heaven assured--plus a pacifying measure of Christian respectability, at least in church circles. Here we have the believer as a normal grain of wheat containing life inside a more or less shiny golden covering, in fellowship high up on the stalk with similar kernels of wheat. This is but a stage, not the goal. And, like middle age, this can be a dangerous stage--one of seeking a “much deserved” rest, of basking aimlessly in the fellowship of meetings, classes, etc., or ignoring or forgetting the struggles and growing pains of the tiny green blades down at one’s feet and expecting and exhorting them to shape up and mature without delay.

This is all very cozy but costly, snug but sterile. “The seed of corn may be beautiful, but it is hard. The germ of life is locked up within its shell and cannot get out. Therefore it produces nothing. Here is the reason why so many Christians, even preachers, are so unfruitful. Only one here and there is a soul winner. When the grain of corn is buried it dies, and that hard exterior surface softens and decays, in order to give nutriment to the young sprout, which would otherwise die and thus cause a crop failure. One must reckon himself dead to the hard, cold, selfish ‘I’ before the softening influence of the Holy Spirit can operate, qualifying the believer in the service of God. Many want to do God’s work but are unable, because of the ‘flesh’ in their lives.”

Our Father understands all this, and it is He who takes the initiative in the matter. He drops the seed of dissatisfaction into our hearts; He begins to show us that there is far more to this Christian life than just being saved and active for Him. And it is necessary for Him to engineer our exchange from carnal kernel Christians to fruitful fellowshipping disciples. From an infinite number of ways, He chooses the most effective for each individual’s transition. And in the hand of the Husbandman, there is no fear, but freedom.

“We often come across Christians who are bright and clever, and strong and righteous; in fact, a little too bright, and a little too clever--there seems so much of

self in their strength, and their righteousness is severe and critical. They have everything to make them saints, except . . . crucifixion, which would mold them into a supernatural tenderness and limitless charity for others. But if they are of the real elect, God has a winepress prepared for them, through which they will some day pass, which will turn the metallic hardness of their nature into gentle love, which Christ always brings forth at the last of the feast.”

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field . . . He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom” (Matthew 13:24,37,38). The Lord of the harvest plants, or buries, Christians as seeds in a field, which is the world.

Through the Husbandman’s patient and loving cultivation the grain of wheat high up on the stalk begins to fear being garnered alone and hungers to bring forth “much fruit” (John 12:24). Here is God’s motivation for discipleship: that filial heart-hunger for fruit bearing. The believer finally pleads to be made fruitful at any cost, and then he hears the Lord say, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (v. 24). “Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35). In loving response to this hunger the Holy Spirit silently and gently begins to loosen the grain from its comfortable bindings and supports in the ear. “When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” (4:29). As a result, sooner or later the grain of wheat finds itself, not high up on the stalk, but dropped to the earth, into the cold and strange darkness. And still worse, the earth smears and injures that nice, shiny golden coat. Worst of all, the coat begins to disintegrate and fall to pieces. All that is not Christ, no matter how nice in appearance and profession, is revealed for what it is--just self.

There is a further stripping, right down to the germ of life, right on down until there is nothing left but Christ, who is our life. Down, down into death. Patience, grain of wheat: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). When the believer takes up his cross for discipleship, the process of death begins to set in. The disciple finds himself a seed sown by the Son, planted in a home, office, hospital, church, parsonage or mission station. Whatever or wherever it is, there will be the death from which resurrection life follows. “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you” (2 Corinthians 4:11,12). We need to enter deeply into the truth that Christ the beloved Son of the Father could not enter

to the glory of heaven until He had first given Himself over to death. And this great truth, as it opens to us, will help us to understand how in our life, and in our fellowship with Christ, it is impossible for us to share His life until we have first in very deed surrendered ourselves every day to die to sin and self and the law and the world, and so to abide in the unbroken fellowship of discipleship with our crucified and risen Lord.

All truths we have learned about the cross, of our death with Christ, of our death to sin with Him and of our conformity to death like the kernel of wheat falling into the ground to die, are preparatory to the overcoming life. They are the foundation of and fundamental to it.

THE GREEN LETTERS #13/14

“DISCIPLESHIP AND THE PROCESS OF DISCIPLESHIP”

A. Introduction:

Today, we'll be looking at discipleship and the process of discipleship.....

B. Emphasizing the importance of the cross:

It might be helpful to give considerable thought to the following statement.

“Nothing can set us apart for God; nothing can make us disciples, except the cross, because only the cross can keep the flesh/self in the place of death”. Nowhere was Jesus more clear than when He taught on discipleship in Luke 9:23.....

C. Defining the term “disciple”:

It's probably necessary that we stop a moment and define the term disciple.....

A disciple is a learner, a pupil, a follower of the teachings of another...We will never be a learner, which really boils down to being teachable, until we get self out of the way, and we can only get self out of the way at the cross.....

D. The key to discipleship is the cross:

Remember Luke 14:27. Bear his cross, the daily giving up of the self life, which can only take place at the cross. Take up His cross...denying self/dying to self, which can only take place at the cross. Phil. 2:5-8.

How can we consistently have this mindset? It can only happen at the cross. It is not a cross, but the cross...not my cross, but His cross. The believer's cross is the cross of Calvary, the cross on which we were crucified with Jesus Christ. Galatians 2:20.

E. If the old “I” is active, then Christ is not:

Give some thought to this: If the old I/self /flesh is active then Christ is not, but if we walk by faith in the fact that we have been crucified with Christ, then self is rendered powerless by the Holy Spirit and as Jesus leads us, we will follow...(disciples).

However...for most of us, we are not walking by faith in the fact that the flesh has been crucified and rendered powerless...therefore Jesus is unable to lead us and we aren't following.

So what does the Lord do? Does He just get impatient and give up? No, not at all; it's just not that easy.

F. A long season of growth:

2 Peter 3:18; James 5:7 - For many of us it has been a long season of growth.

Philippians 1:6 - Notice He who has done a good work in you, He will perform it.

Please give some thought to this...It is so important that we understand that God is almighty and sovereign. Not you, not me, not Satan, but God. He alone does whatever He pleases. Psalm 115:3; Psalm 135:6.

G. God is not limited by anything that man does, or does not do:

Any system of religious thought which suggests that God is limited by the thoughts, prayers, or actions of man is just plain foolishness. The order of truth is seen in the first phrase of the Bible -- "In the beginning God". It is God who planned, He executed and it is He who will do His good pleasure. Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:20, 21.

The true system of Biblical thought begins with God and man is conformed to the plan and purpose of his Creator, not the other way around.

H. Remember the story of Jonah?

We often come across Christians who are a lot like Jonah, bright and clever and strong and righteous. There seems to be so much of self in their strength and their righteousness appears to be a bit self righteous. They have everything to make them saints except crucifixion. But if they are really God's chosen vessel, He has a winepress, a big fish prepared for them through which they will one day pass....1 Peter 5:10; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-4

I. Down, down into death, until there is nothing left but Christ:

Sooner or later we Christians find ourselves dropped into a cold and strange darkness and our nice shiny outer appearance begins to disintegrate and fall to pieces. All that is not Christ, no matter how nice in appearance, is revealed for what it is.....self....There is a further stripping away right down to the germ of life....Right on down until there is nothing left but Christ who is our life....Down, down into death.....Job 13:15.....

J. Watchman Nee made this statement:

“The Lord graciously laid me aside once in my life for a number of months and put me into utter darkness. It was almost as if He had forsaken me, almost as if nothing was going on, and I had really come to the end of everything, and then by degrees, he brought me back again (resurrection)..... There must be a full night in the sanctuary, in darkness. It can't be hurried, He knows what He is doing..... Looking back over our Christian lives, many of us will see God consistently taking us through some experience that forced our spiritual expansion. We didn't choose it, God did...Psalm 66:10-12

K. Comments from L. E. Maxwell:

“How blessed that our Father is patient and loving and determined in order to utterly detach us from earthly ties and fuse us into a living union with Himself. His love will not shrink from reducing us to the very dust of despair and death. We may find the whole inward fabric of our lives overwhelmed and burned and blasted to the very extreme of endurance, shrink not fearful soul, this is the Father's undoing of the self life”.

L. Concluding thought:

If we want to be a disciple of Christ (a learner, a teachable follower), there is only one way, die to self; not through self effort, but by faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ. (knowing, reckoning that self/flesh has been crucified, rendered powerless) And then watch the Holy Spirit give you the power and desire to follow Him/to be a disciple.

Questions to guide the study

1. Based on what we have studied and read so far, describe a disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. Why is understanding and distinguishing the difference between the old nature and the new nature important in discipleship?
3. Is the cross a key element in discipleship? if so how and why?
4. Read John 13:37; John 18:15-18&24-27; John 21:15-17. In light of these Scriptures, how do we see the process of discipleship in the life of Peter?
5. How do we see the process of discipleship taking place in our own lives?
6. Explain this statement: “The atonement of the cross and the fellowship of the cross must be equally taught as the conditions for true discipleship.
7. Comment on Luke 9:23-24.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 17 RESTING IN THE LORD

Grasp the Issue:

The issue at hand is, Resting in the Lord.....There is a great difference between sloth and rest; many times when the term “Resting in the Lord” is used, it is misinterpreted to mean a “lazy Christian” which is far from the true meaning of the term.

From the beginning of time, we see the principle of man entering into God’s rest. In the creation, God worked from the first to the sixth day and then rested on the seventh. The seventh day became the Sabbath of God; it was God’s rest. But what about Adam? Where did he come in? He was created on sixth day; so God’s seventh day was actually Adam’s first. Whereas God worked six days and then rested, Adam began his life with the Sabbath rest. It’s interesting that God works before He rests, while man must first enter into God’s rest in order to work.

The Christian life is not man asking God “what must I do”; (That’s law) but rather asking “what has God done”. (That’s grace)

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

Because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:29 that the “time is short”, we Christians must give our all for the Lord.

True Christianity involves; trusting and resting, depending and walking, rather than striving and wrestling and running.

“There is a rest for the people of God.” Hebrews 4:9

There is no rest for the wicked

“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest.” Hebrews 4:11

Study the Scriptures:

Psalm 37:7-9; Psalm 95:11; Psalm 116:7; Matthew 11:28-30; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 3:8-4:11

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“REST”

by Miles Stanford

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest” (Hebrews 4:9-11a). So many of the life-giving truths in the Word consist of two intertwining halves that are inseparable. “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.” As for labor, it is true that there is a great deal of struggling and searching, pleading and agonizing, in the process of discovering and understanding truths fitted to our needs. And much of the same pathway is trod (or crawled) in an effort to appropriate and enter in. All this is not in vain; it is necessary. But it is not the key that opens the door to reality. Rest is the key to entering into rest!

In the important but exhausting labor process we come to see the needed truth; we become sure of our facts; we begin to realize something of what is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. The appropriation of, the resting in the reality must be on the basis of faith, not struggle and labor. We are told to reckon, to count upon what we now know to be true of us in Him as set forth in the Word. “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). We are to quietly and steadily look to our Father in confident trust, and thankfully receive that which He has given to us in His Son. “These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good” (Psalm 104:27, 28).

Norman Grubb shares a good word on the principle of labor and rest: “Take as an example the learning of a foreign language. You are faced with a series of hieroglyphics in a book, you hear a medley of sounds around, which mean absolutely nothing. Yet you know that it is a language that can be learned. More than that, you have gone there to learn it. Now that is the first rung in the ladder of faith. However weak or waveringly, in your heart you do believe that you can and will get it. Otherwise, obviously you wouldn’t try to learn it. So you plod on. Many a time faith and courage fail, the mind is weary and the heart is heavy, and you almost give up. But not quite. To give up is faith’s unforgivable sin. On you go at it. Months pass. It seems largely to go in one ear and out the other. Then--the length of time depends on the difficulty of the language and the ability and industry of the pupil of course--a miracle seems to happen. The day or period

comes when, without your hardly realizing it, what you are seeking has found you; what you are trying to grasp has grasped you! You just begin automatically to speak the language, to think it, to hear it. What was an incomprehensible jumble of sounds without, has become an ordered language within the mind.

“So, in the spiritual labor of faith, the moment or period comes when we know. Every vestige of strain and labor is gone. Indeed, faith, as such, is not felt or recognized any more. The channel is lost of in the abundance of the supply. As we came to know that we were children of God by an inner certainty, a witness of the Spirit in our spirits; so now we come to know that the old ‘I’ is crucified with Christ, the new ‘I’ has Christ as its permanent life, spirit with Spirit have been fused into one; the branch grafted into the vine; the member joined to the body, the problem of abiding becomes as natural as breathing.”

Thank God for the needs that just will not allow the hungry heart to stop short of finding them met in Him. “It is necessary to remember a fundamental principle in the spiritual life: that God only reveals spiritual truths to meet spiritual needs.” “How many rest on the initial stage of the new birth: ‘Begotten again...of incorruptible seed through the Word of God’ (I Peter 1:23), and fail to press on to know ‘Begotten...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...unto an inheritance’ (I Peter 1:3).”

Through the years the hungry-hearted believer finds he has been brought a long way, and each step of the way has been personally experienced: reality which springs from faith founded upon the facts of the Word. “The more clearly we enter by faith into objective truth, or what is true of us in Christ, the deeper, more experiential, and practical, will be the subjective work in us, and the more complete will be the manifestation of the moral effect in our life and character.” --C.H.M.

Yes, brought a long way, walking a step at a time, by faith: The rest of faith concerning our justification; the rest of faith concerning our acceptance; the rest of faith concerning our position in Christ Jesus; the rest of faith concerning our identification with Christ in death, resurrection and ascension. Each step established in the rest of faith brings us to the next one. Each must be settled before the next can be rested upon.

I cannot be too strongly stated that unless the believer is firmly established in the steps of Romans 1-5, he cannot truly enter and rest upon the truths of Romans 6-8, no matter how many special meetings and conferences he attends or so-called revivals he becomes involved in. “Dr. James of Albany, who was used to bring hundreds into the deeper truths, declared that he usually found that ‘failure in the higher stages of the Christian life was due to imperfect understanding and

acceptance of the gospel of salvation in its fundamental principles.’ It is a rare thing to be able to sit down and teach, because in most settings today one is limited to dealing with ‘the first principles of the oracles of God’; and can go little further than the basic facts of the new birth. You cannot deepen spiritual life that is not there! You will only build askew if the foundations are not properly laid! A lack of appreciation of the wonder of a full salvation in Christ, opens the door to every kind of overbalance, and spells continual frustration and failure.”

Often believers manage to trust God for truths they need, only to slip from grace over into the legal realm in seeking to produce the particular truth in their life or service. Once in possession of a truth, we are to rest--He will produce. “In actual experience, when we have apprehended our deliverance through death with Christ, the self-life often appears more alive than ever! Just here God would have us stand firm (rest) upon His written Word. The increasing revelation proves the surrender to the cross to be real, because the Holy Spirit takes us at our word, and reveals all that He has seen lying underneath--reveals it that it may be dealt with at the cross. Our part is to yield our wills, and take God’s side against ourselves, whilst the Holy Spirit applies the death of the cross to all that is contrary to Him, that it may be really true that we who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24).

“The faith that receives from the hand of the Father is in two stages, and we are not to give up just because the struggle-and-labor phase does not produce the prize. ‘According to your faith be it unto you.’ And, do not let us forget, faith begins by being a labor (Heb. 4:11) or fight (I Tim. 6:12), although it is consummated in a rest (Heb. 4:3). That is to say, the first stage of faith is always the battle of taking hold by the will, heart, and intelligence of some truth or promise which is not real to us in experience, and declaring it to be ours in spite of appearances. We do not appear to be dead unto sin and alive unto God. We are told to believe it, and so we dare to do so and declare so. A thousand times, maybe, faith will be assaulted and fall: unbelief will say ‘nonsense,’ and we shall belie our declaration of faith; but the labor of faith means that we deliberately return to the assault. Once again we believe and declare it. This we persist in doing. As we thus follow in the steps of those who ‘by faith and patience inherit the promise,’ a new divine thing will happen within us. The Spirit will cooperate with our faith (as He is invisibly doing all the time), and to faith will be added assurance. Labor will be replaced by rest. The consummation of faith has been reached.”

“True activity is that which springs out of, and is ever accompanied by, rest. It is only as we know what it is to be ‘still,’ that we are ready to ‘go forward.’ ‘We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go.’“ -- E.H.

Let us take care lest we get out of soul-rest in seeking further blessing. God cannot work whilst we are anxious, even about our spiritual experience. Let us take Him at His Word, and leave the fulfillment of it to Him.”

THE GREEN LETTERS #15

“ REST”

A. Introduction:

Spiritual growth principles is our subject, and in this lesson we'll be looking at chapter 15 of "The Green Letters" which is entitled "Rest".

B. A missionary testimony:

Psalm 37:7a – “During the first year of missionary training, my wife became quite ill...(headaches, dizziness). The doctors were unable to find the problem and as the days and weeks and months went by with her condition worsening, we became rather anxious. We were directed to a neurologist whose initial diagnosis was a brain tumor. I can't begin to describe to you the anxiety that was in my heart that day. The staff at the training center sensed that we were worried and unsettled rather than peacefully trusting the Lord...so one evening we were invited over to one of the staff's homes and they shared with us their concern that we weren't resting in the Lord.

Resting in the Lord...I wasn't quite sure what that meant. I was familiar with terms like trusting in the Lord, walking by faith, giving it to God...but resting in the Lord seemed to be a whole new dimension. It almost sounded like one could actually have peace in the midst of a tremendous trial; that we could be content in any and every situation in life. I went home that evening a bit confused...one thing I knew for sure, they were right...but confused as to what to do about it.”

C. Rather than trusting and resting, we strive, and wrestle and run:

We like so many other Christians, when there are hard times, when trials come, we focus on the circumstances and we try to get out from under those circumstances rather than remain and rest in the Lord. We become action oriented. Our minds race off to what can I do to remedy this situation. How can I get out of this mess? Rather than praying, and trusting and resting, we strive and wrestle and run...Deuteronomy 8:16; Hebrews 12:11; Isaiah 50:10,11..

D. There is a rest for the people of God:

Hebrews 3:8-11 Although this scripture refers to the nation of Israel and is written in the context of our heavenly reign, I believe we can draw an application to our lives today. As we read on, please notice the number of times the word rest is used, keeping in mind that it is always in the context of faith. Hebrews 3:12-4:11.

“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest”...there is a great deal of struggling and studying and laboring in the process of understanding and appropriating Biblical truths in our lives. Often times It looks like we are searching and laboring, but in reality, it is not us. John 6:44; Colossians 1:29; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 2:13.

E. Knowing God is key:

As has been mentioned in an earlier lesson, In this vital spiritual growth principle of “rest”, it is extremely important that we know God, not just know about Him. 2 Peter 1:2,3 – “Through the knowledge of Him”. To the degree that we don't know God, we'll trust and find ourselves “resting” in other things.

F. Some Biblical examples who rested in the Lord:

Let's look at some folks in scripture who really knew their God, therefore they could trust Him and consequently rest in Him.

1 Chronicles 21:1-15; David

Daniel 3:1-30; Shadrach, Meshack & Abednigo

Each of these men, David, Shadrach, Meshack & Abednigo all walked by faith...they knew and trusted their God and rested in Him. It was not their wrestling faith which won the victory, but their resting faith.

G. What's our sinking point?

Can you trust God in every situation in life? Do you know Him? Do you know that He is a good God that He loves you, that He has your best interest at heart...health, finances, family relations, job? Are you able to rest in Him?

In Matthew 14 Peter trusted Jesus enough to get out of the boat under normal conditions...but when a storm came up fear replaced faith and down he went.

Matthew 14:22-31

How far can we trust the Lord? What is our sinking point? It appears that we all have one.

H. It might be helpful to close with this scripture.

Matthew 11:28-30.

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. In your own words, explain the following Scriptures;
 - a. Colossians 1:29
 - b. Philippians 2:12-13
 - c. Hebrews 4:11A
2. Why is it so hard for Christians to “rest in the Lord”?
3. By teaching new believers to “rest”, are we encouraging them to be lazy Christians?
4. Share your thoughts regarding Hebrews 4:9. Is there a rest for the “people of God” today? If so, who are those people, and what is that “rest”?
5. In Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5, Paul tells us to “redeem the time”, how would you reconcile those Scriptures with our subject of “resting in the Lord”?
6. In Matthew 11:29 the Lord tells us that we can find “rest for our souls”. In your own words, explain “soul rest”.
7. Explain the following statement: “God works before He rests, while man must first enter into God’s rest in order to work”.
8. What part does faith play in this whole issue of “resting in the Lord”?

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 18 CULTIVATION

Grasp the Issue:

Because God is the great Husbandman, (farmer), the beginning of His cultivation process in we Christians is always downward. Patiently, persistently and painfully our Father digs down into the recesses of self, down into that wretched flesh revealing to us just what we are in ourselves. One major purpose for this is so that others may see Christ in us.

It's interesting to give thought to this; each of us must be thoroughly cultivated (refined) before God can effectively use us to cultivate others. This cultivating process is carried out by the Holy Spirit and His ultimate object is to form Christ in us.

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

Cultivation is basically a refining process.

The cultivating process is effectively carried out through much effort on our part.

We are not saved to serve, but rather, we are matured to serve.

We can only teach the lessons that we've learned.

In the long run it's not what we are that matters, but rather what we do and say.

Study the Scriptures:

Psalm 40:1-3; Matthew 23:1-33; John 15:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:10-12; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:2-3

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“CULTIVATION”

by Miles Stanford

There can be little question concerning the importance of balance, so vital in the mechanical, physical, esthetic, and spiritual realms. Faulty balance often results in disintegration; and possible devastation to the surrounding area.

Our self-life is out of balance--it is one-sided. Like the universal Tea Party:

I had a little tea party,
One afternoon at three;
‘Twas very small, three guests in all,
Just I, myself and me.
Myself ate up the sandwiches,
While I drank up the tea,
‘Twas also I who ate the pie
And passed the cake to me.

Because He is the great Husbandman, the beginning of God’s cultivation of the hungry-hearted believer is downward. Patiently, persistently, and painfully our Father digs down into the recesses of self, more and more revealing to us just what we are, and are not, in ourselves. His reason for this preparation is twofold: That the Lord Jesus might be free to manifest Himself in us; and through us for the sake of others--growing and sharing. “The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (Isa. 58:11).

Each of us must be thoroughly cultivated before He can effectively cultivate others through us. It is not that there will be no service for us until we are spiritually mature, but that most of our service on the way to maturity is for our own development, and not so much that of others. At first the growing believer thinks, and would have others believe, that all his service is effective; but in time he comes to realize that the Lord is not doing so much through him as He is in him. Our Lord always concentrates on the greater need.

“Since the work of God is essentially spiritual, it demands spiritual people for its doing; and the measure of their spirituality will determine the measure of their value to the Lord. Because this is so, in God’s mind the servant is more than the

work. If we are going to come truly into the hands of God for His purpose, then we shall be dealt with by Him in such a way as to continually increase our spiritual measure. Not our interest in Christian work; our energies, enthusiasm, ambitions, or abilities; not our academic qualification, or anything that we are in ourselves, but simply our spiritual life is the basis of the beginning and growth of our service to God. Even the work, when we are in it, is used by Him to increase our spiritual measure. "It is a mistake to measure spiritual maturity merely by the presence of gifts. By themselves they are an inadequate basis for a man's lasting influence to God. They may be present and they may be valuable, but the Spirit's object is something far greater--to form Christ in us through the working of the cross. His goal is to see Christ inwrought in believers. So it is not merely that a man does certain things or speaks certain words, but that he is a certain kind of man. He himself is what he preaches. Too many want to preach without being the thing themselves, but in the long run it is what we are, and not simply what we do or say, that matters with God, and the difference lies in the formation of Christ within."

We are not saved to serve; we are matured to serve. Only to the extent that cultivation reveals self for what it is are we in position to assist others in their cultivation. We find out everyone else by first finding ourselves out. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Proverbs 27:19). To counter-balance knowledge of self, our Father enables us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

This is not only true concerning general service, but also in the matter of our ministry of intercession. More than anything else the service of prayer for others necessitates a triune understanding: that of our Father, of ourselves, and of others. "Praying for others can only flow from a heart at rest about itself, and knowing the value of the desires which it expresses for another. I could not be true or happy in praying otherwise." -- Stoney.

Paul wrote that he would "pray with the spirit--by the Holy Spirit that is within me; but I will also pray intelligently--with my mind and understanding" (I Corinthians 14:15, Amp.).

So many of us, after having entered into some of the deeper realities of our Lord, seek to immediately pull or push others into this wonderful advancement; and then we wonder why they are so slow to learn, and seemingly apathetic in their understanding and concern. We so easily forget the many years it took, and what wandering wilderness ways our Lord had to traverse with us to bring us over Jordan and into Canaan. "Moses had all the wisdom of the Egyptians, yet his idea of delivering Israel was to slay an Egyptian! He had to be trained in God's ways,

having forty years in Midian, and when he was sent back to Egypt God said for him not to trouble about Israel--go direct to Pharaoh--the cause of their chains! God didn't train Israel at the first, but a leader to lead Israel. God seeks to get leaders trained in the knowledge of His ways."

To the extent that we learn how our Father has had to handle us through the years will we understand how He would have us share with others. We must be cultivated to be cultivators. "It is injurious for one believer to be forcing another into 'blessing' which that soul may not be ready for. Forced advance really gives the enemy his opportunity to mislead, for those who try to rush on at the push of others cannot stand alone, nor bear the tests of their assumed positions."

Then too, in all our service, there is the proper motive to be fully considered. "Work should be regarded less with reference to its immediate results, or as to how it may affect this or that person; the great question is, will it, when sifted in His presence, be acceptable to Him? and this acceptability to Him is my reward: "Wherefore we labor that whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to him" (2 Corinthians 5:9). Many seem to droop because there are no grapes and are not happy unless they are doing. Doing is right enough in itself, but the order ought to be from happiness to work, and not work to be happy. It is from the inner circle, the hive, the heart where Christ reigns, the only green spot, the fond enclosure--the sanctuary, that one should come forth to work. The quality of one's work depends on the nature of one's rest--and the rest should be like His own, known and enjoyed with Him. We have but small ideas of how our outward bears the color of our inward, and if our inward is not restful, there cannot be a rest-imparting service, however it may be attempted." -- J. B. Stoney

P.S. "The greatest proof of our love for Christ is that we care for those who belong to Him; '...if you love me, feed my sheep.'"

THE GREEN LETTERS #17

“CULTIVATION”

A. Introduction:

Today we'll be looking at our 17th Spiritual Growth Principle which is "cultivation". The word cultivate actually means to refine or improve. As a rule, when we use that word we just naturally think of cultivating the soil, which would include tilling or digging down deep to refine or improve the condition of the soil.

B. Miles Stanford quote from chapter 17 of "The Green Letters":

“Because God is the great Husbandman, (farmer), the beginning of His cultivation process in we Christians is always downward. Patiently, persistently and painfully our Father digs down into the recesses of self, down into that wretched flesh revealing to us just what we are in ourselves”.

C. God's purposes for cultivation:

One of God's primary reasons for this cultivation process is probably best seen in 2 Corinthians 4:10,11. An interesting thought to ponder is that one of God's main reasons for cultivating/refining us is for the sake of others. 2 Corinthians 4:12; Colossians 1:24. Each of us must be thoroughly cultivated (refined) before God can effectively use us to cultivate others. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; Psalm 40:-1-3. Keep in mind, that this cultivating process is carried out by the Holy Spirit and God's ultimate purpose is to form Christ in us. 2 Corinthians 3:18 His goal is to see Christ in believers. Galatians 4:19

D. Godly examples:

So it is not merely that a man does certain things or speaks certain words, but that he is a certain kind of man. He himself must be what he preaches. Too many of us Christians want to preach without being the thing ourselves. This was the very problem that Jesus had with the Pharisees in Matthew 23:1-33.

You see, in the long run it is what we are and not simply what we do or say that matters with God. It all boils down to Godliness/God-likeness which is God reproducing Himself in a man, and ultimately will result in our being a Godly example. 1 Peter 5:2,3; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

E. How does one become that Godly example?

Remember from our previous study that Godliness is not man imitating God, but rather God reproducing Himself in a man. Likewise, Christ-likeness is not man

imitating Jesus Christ, but rather, Christ reproducing Himself in a man. So our answer can be seen in Philippians 1:21. It's going back to the cross and seeing old self crucified so that Christ can now live in and through us. Galatians 2:20. (Notice that crucifixion precedes the Christ life)

F. Real life example:

Several years ago, I heard of a once rebellious young Christian who turned back to the Lord and became a missionary. When asked what the Lord used in his life to draw him back, the young man made this comment; "I'm walking with the Lord today because my father saw God in everything that he did".

What an awesome testimony to that father.

G. What does Godliness/Christ-likeness look like?

There cannot be too much emphasis put on the importance of being a Godly example. What does Godliness look like when we have it on? What does Christ-likeness look like?

Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galatians 5:22,23.

H. An Old Testament picture:

Deuteronomy 12:1 What Moses is saying to the Israelites here is that when they get into the promised land, this is what they will do. Notice verse 7 - in the promise land they were to rejoice in all that they did. The whole of their lives would be bathed in joy.

Verse 8 – An interesting thought is; in the wilderness every man does what is right in his own eyes, and because of it his Christian walk tends to be drudgery rather than joyful. Proverbs 1:32.

Verse 9 - while we are still doing what is right in our own eyes, we have not entered into God's rest nor His inheritance - Proverbs 14:12. When we enter into God's rest we give up the right to do what is right in our own eyes.

I. Do Christians have rights?

If we were honest, most of us Christians would probably have to admit that we live our lives doing what is right in our own eyes.

1. Do we still claim the right to choose our own career? Do we have that right?
2. Do we still claim the right to choose a mate?
3. Spend money?
4. Where we will live?

We don't have that right, except in the wilderness.

J. A dead-to-self Christian is like a beacon on a hill:

Look around...everyone is living for self...doing what is right in his own eyes.

However, when a Christian is dead to self, he is like a beacon on a hill. People are drawn to him.

Feed the flock of God which is among you. 1 Peter 5:2.

K. Spiritual orphans:

It should grieve us to realize how many abandoned babes in Christ there are - people who have been saved and left to do the best they can on their own/spiritual orphans. There is an ever-increasing need for the ministry of nurturing new believers, that they may be rooted and built up in Him, and established. Colossians 2:7.

L. We can only teach the lessons that we've learned:

Cultivation/a refining process is the prerequisite for a ministry of cultivating others. John 15:1,2.

To the degree that we have been cultivated, refined, pruned by God, we shall be cultivators of others.

It might be helpful to emphasize this...we can only teach the lessons that we have learned. If God is going to use us greatly in others lives, he has but one way to prepare us for that ministry and that is through difficult times.

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. Define the term “cultivate” in reference to Spiritual maturity.
2. Share your thoughts on this comment by Miles Stanford: “The beginning of God’s cultivation of the hungry-hearted believer is downward.
3. So in God’s cultivation process, he patiently, persistently, and painfully digs down into the recesses of self, but for what purpose?
4. In your own words, explain the following statement: “We must be thoroughly cultivated before we can effectively cultivate others.
5. In light of Eph. 2:8-10 and Rom. 8:28-29, would you say that we are saved to serve, or matured to serve? Explain your answer.
6. What significance does 2 Cor. 1: 3-5 have in reference to our subject of “cultivation”.
7. Share your thought on the following Scripture:
 - a. Psalm 40:1-3
 - b. John 15:1-2

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 19 CONTINUANCE

Grasp the Issue:

The word “continuance” has the idea of not giving up; to remain in whatever situation we are in; to be durable; to persevere; to hold fast.

Though we receive our faith from Him, it must be developed or strengthened in us by Him..... Undeveloped faith never progresses beyond the “babe-in-Christ” stage. It’s interesting to note that we will never learn faith in comfortable surroundings; without trials of faith, our trust in Him will never be developed.... Therefore, God strips everything away from time to time and gives us an opportunity to strengthen our faith.... He is bringing us to a place where nothing matters but Him; unfortunately, for the most part, this can be a rather long and at times painful process.....

How blessed that our Father is patient and loving and determined in order to utterly detach us from earthly ties and fuse us into a living union with Himself..... His love will not shrink from reducing us to the very dust of despair and death..... We may find the whole inward fabric of our lives overwhelmed and burned and blasted to the very extreme of endurance..... Shrink not fearful soul, this is the Father’s undoing of the self life.....

Sound Bites: Sound bites are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may either be true or false.

Once a person trusts Christ as Savior, life becomes problem-free.

We need our needs in order to keep us dependant on the Lord.

The way “up” is down.

We must grow “up” to maturity.

Study the Scriptures:

Job 5:17; Job 33:19; Psalm 66:10-12; Proverbs 3:11-12; Isaiah 50:10-11; Luke 15:11-24;
1 Corinthians 13:7; Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Peter 4:12 & 19; 1 Peter 5:5-10

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

“CONTINUANCE”

by Miles Stanford

When we first start out hungry and zealous for Him it is often imagined that extensive progress has been made, when as yet we have barely begun. As our Lord takes us along through the years it slowly dawns upon us that there are vast, almost infinite, areas of development through which He must still lead us.

Many of these development areas are just plain gone--no spiritual activity, no service, little or no fellowship with Him, or others. What prayer there is has to be forced and is sometimes dropped altogether for months at a time. Bible study finally grinds to a halt; everything seems to add up to nothing. It is during these necessary times that the believer often feels that God has ceased to carry out His part, and there is little or no use in seeking to continue on. And yet there is a hunger deep within that will not allow him to quit. “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord know them that are his” (2 Tim. 2:19a).

Are we to love and trust and respond to Him only when He seems to be “blessing” us? What sort of love is that? Self-love? Our Father strips everything away from time to time to give us the opportunity of loving and trusting and responding to Him just because He is our Father. He knows what the cross is going to mean in our lives; He knows the death-march that lies ahead of us in order that there may be resurrection life; He knows the barren, bleeding hearts beyond to whom He must minister through us--hence He is going to bring us to the place where we don't care what happens: He is all that matters!

“Sonship is something more than being born again. It represents growth into fullness. It is quite a good thing to be a babe while babyhood lasts, but it is a bad thing to be a babe when that period is past. This is the condition of many Christians. While sonship is inherent in birth, in the New Testament sense sonship is the realization of the possibilities of birth. It is growth to maturity. So the New Testament has a lot to say about growing up, leaving childhood and attaining unto full stature. With this growth comes the greater fullness of Christ and the abundant wealth unto which we are saved. It is a matter not so much of that from which we are saved, as of that unto which we are saved. The grand climax of the new creation is ‘the revealing of the sons of God’ (Romans 8:19, ASV).” -- T.A.S.

In the beginning we are mainly taken up with the externals of our Christian life, and the Lord allows this for a time. Then, to get us and our externals out of the

way so that the Lord Jesus Christ can be our All, our Father begins to take away much of what we thought we had. Here begins the long cross-centered transition from “do” to “be.” All this paradoxical progress--the way up being down--has a strong tendency to make us feel that the Lord is not taking us on. This is simply a weapon of the enemy, easily parried by letting God be God in the scriptural knowledge that He is our Father.

“It is true that God does take up those who are not worthy and permit them to speak His words years before they fully understand their import; but He does not wish any of us to stop there. We may go on in that way for awhile, but is it not true that, from the time when He begins in us His work of formation through discipline and chastening, it growingly dawns on us how little in fact we knew of the true meaning of what we had been saying and doing? He intends that we should reach the place where we can speak, with or without manifest gifts, because we are the thing we say. For in Christian experience the spiritual things of God are less and less outward, that is, of gift, and more and more inward, of life. In the long run it is the depth and inwardness of a work that counts. As the Lord himself becomes more and more to us, other things--yes, and this must include even His gifts--matter less and less. Then, though we teach the same doctrine, speak the same words, the impact on others is very different, manifesting itself in an increasing depth of the Spirit’s work within them also.” --Watchman Nee

He relentless processing will discourage and baffle us if we simply want heaven when we die. But if we want what He wants, all that we are taken through, including the desert, will encourage us. Thus we will continue because we know that He ever continues to work in and through us that which He began and finished on our behalf in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“If our hearts are really true to Him we may be assured He will lead us on in the knowledge of Himself just as fast as we are able to advance. He knows how much we can take in, and He does not fail to minister to us the very food that is suitable to our present need. We may sometimes feel inclined to be impatient with ourselves because we do not make more rapid progress, but we have to learn to trust the Lord with out spiritual education. If our eyes are upon Him, and we follow with simple hearts as He leads us, we shall find that He leads us by a right way and brings us through all the exercises we need to form our souls in the appreciation of Himself, and of all those blessed things which are brought to pass in Him. We have to trust His love all through, and to learn increasingly to distrust ourselves.” -- C.A. Coates

Paul writes to us, as he did to Timothy: “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:1-3). We rejoice with you as you continue in Him. “The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you” (2 Thess. 3:3a.).

THE GREEN LETTERS #18

“CONTINUANCE”

A. Introduction:

This morning we will be looking at the 18th and final spiritual growth principle of continuance. Let's give some thought to the word continue... To continue has the idea of not giving up; to remain in whatever situation we are in; to be durable, to persevere; to hold fast; in other words, just riding out the storms of life.

1 Corinthians 13:7 gives us a word picture of continuing on.... oh, how I wish we could bypass this chapter. I

B. Quote from “The Green Letters”:

Miles Stanford begins the last chapter of "The Green Letters" with these comments: “When we first start out hungry and zealous for Him, it is often imagined that great progress has been made, when in fact we have barely begun. As our Lord takes us along through the years it slowly dawns on us that there are innumerable areas of development through which He must take us”.

Exodus 23:29,30 gives us a physical picture of this spiritual truth.

C. Often a long and painful process:

God is in the process of bringing us to a place where nothing matters but Him; unfortunately for the most part, this is a rather long and at times painful process... Some years ago, a man shared with me a very painful time in his life when his wife had left him. Eighteen days after she had left and with no contact from her, he found himself sitting on an old rocking chair in his back yard with the Bible reading Psalm 39. In verse 11 he read the following: “With reproofs thou dost chasten a man for iniquity; thou dost consume like a moth, what is most precious to him” The man later shared with me that when he saw this Scripture, he understood that God was perfecting him, and His process included taking the most precious thing in his life away. In that brief moment he later shared with me that God brought him to a point where nothing mattered but God Himself, and that he was content to continue on in life without his wife; just him and God. It's interesting to know that his wife phoned for the first time that evening, and some days later returned to the family.

D. For some of us, it's the prodigal road:

In order to teach us how essential our fellowship is with Him, He allows us to drift (prodigal son) Luke 15:11-24.

Some interesting thoughts to consider:

1. Notice the principle of death and resurrection...vs. 24. It is all throughout the Bible. Romans 6:3-5
2. Notice also that the prodigal son went from glory down, down and up to greater glory. vs. 22, 23; Psalm 71:20,21; Job 42:10-12-17; Philippians 2:5-11.
3. Thinking back again to the prodigal son, notice how the Father just let him fail, and how that failure was used for good. Romans 8:28.

E. The faithful “Hound of Heaven” is relentless:

God's relentless process will discourage and baffle us until we come to a point of brokenness; until we come to the place where nothing matters but Him, and our only desire is His will.

F. Where “the Christ Life” begins:

We have mentioned a number of times that the Christ life begins at Romans 12:1. It's coming to that place where nothing matters but Him. It's a neutral place, a place where we have no agenda of our own. we'll go either way, we just want His way. However, very few Christians seem to arrive at Romans 12:1

Paul arrived at this point early in his Christian life. Acts 9:1-6. Later on Paul wrote this - 2 Corinthians 3:4,5; The church at Macedonia is another great example

—
2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

G. Feet first:

It appears that Mary of Bethany also came to the place in her life where nothing mattered but Jesus. It's interesting that every time we see her in scripture she is at Jesus' feet (which is a position of humble submission). John 12:1-8.

Some interesting thoughts regarding Mary to ponder:

- (1) she seemed to know things the others didn't - vs 7 - (Jesus had told them three times of His coming death; but only Mary seemed to understand).
 - (2) It appears that she was often misunderstood - vs, 4,5.
 - (3) Each time she was misunderstood, we see Jesus defending her - vs. 7,8.
- Luke 10:38-42 - 1. At His feet; 2. spiritual discernment; 3. misunderstood; 4. defended. John 11:28-32

N. Concluding thoughts:

It's interesting to consider Paul and the Macedonian church; both had come to a place where nothing mattered but God; remember their circumstances were not good...Paul was blind, and the church was poor and facing great trials. When we arrive at that place where He is all that matters, which is really "the end of self", and can only be arrived at through the Cross, everything that we are taken through, including the desert, seems to encourage us. Therefore, we will "continue" because we know that He is faithful to "continue" His work in and through us. I Thessalonians 5:24.

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. Explain the difference between the “discipline of correction”, and the “discipline of perfection”?
2. In your own words, share your thoughts on Phil. 3:10.
3. Explain the following process: “God strips everything away from time to time for the purpose of strengthening our faith.
4. What can we learn from the parable of the “Prodigal son”?
5. How would you explain the following comment: “The way up is down”?
6. What are your thoughts regarding the following statement: “God’s love will not shrink from reducing us to the very dust of despair and death. We may find the whole inward fabric of our lives overwhelmed and burned and blasted to the very extreme of endurance..... Shrink not fearful soul, this is the Father’s undoing of the self-life”?
7. Explain in your own words the following: “His relentless processing will discourage and baffle us if we simply want heaven when we die.
8. What are your thoughts about 1 Pet. 4:19?
9. Are the trials/pressures of life coming between you and God, or pressing you closer to God? Explain your answer?
10. What does 1 Pet. 5:10 say to you?

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

LESSON 20 POSITION IN CHRIST

Grasp The Issue:

When we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior, what happens? What difference does it make? What is our destiny, identity, relationship, purpose and new position in Christ?

A godly, fruitful , and dependent Christian life flows only from a thorough understanding of our position in Christ. In this issue we will discover:

- Our new position in Christ
- How our position in Christ affects our everyday life

"By God's doing you are in Christ Jesus"
I Corinthians 1:30

"You were included in Christ when you heard
the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation"
Ephesians 1:13

"In Christ in the sight of God"
II Corinthians 2:17

Sound Bites: ("sound bites" are short statements designed to get us thinking about the issue. They may be either true or false)

"I did not feel anything when I first trusted in Jesus Christ. Did I do something wrong? Did it work? Am I really a Christian?"

"The reason that most Christians never live a fruitful, joyful Christian life is that they do not realize who they are in Christ"

"Now that I am a Christian, it seems like everything is harder. Things I used to have no struggle with, now bother me"

"Now that I am a Christian, everything is better. Almost all my problems seem to have vanished"

STUDY THE SCRIPTURES:

*Ephesians 1:1 - 2:10; Romans 6:1-11; Romans 7:1-6; Colossians 1:12-14;
Colossians 2:10, 3:3

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

POSITION DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED

by Miles Stanford

In most cases, a believer is more aware of his condition than of his position. This is the reason for so much failure and stagnation. If we are to grow and become fruitful, our faith must be anchored in the finished work of our position-- in Christ. There is no basis for faith in our changeable, unfinished condition. "...Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5).

Scriptural, fact-centered faith in the Lord Jesus as our position before the Father is the one means of experiencing that finished work in the growth of our daily condition. Spiritual birth placed us in our accepted position, from which our spiritual condition is being completed, by faith. "...created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Every Christian has been positioned forever in the risen Lord by spiritual birth. But only the believer who knows, grows. It is faith in the facts of our position that gives us the daily benefits of growth in our condition. If the believer is not clearly aware of the specific truths of the Word, he cannot exercise the necessary faith for growth and service. He can only seek his resources in the realm of self. Some of the wonderful positional truths are set forth for our faith in the scriptural illustrations of the grain of wheat, and the vine and the branch.

The Grain of Wheat

In John 12:24 the Lord Jesus said, "Except a corn (grain) of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." This principle of life out of death was then established at Calvary's cross, where He, as the Grain of Wheat, died and rose again. In His resurrection He brought forth the "much fruit" out of His death.

Everyone who would ever place his trust in Christ as Savior, every grain of wheat, was resident in (identified with) the Grain of Wheat, the Head of the new spiritual harvest. Every believer is included in the "much fruit" of His death and resurrection. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5).

The Principle of Reproduction

There is another wonderful principle involved here: like produces like. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (Genesis 1:11, *italics mine*). Our Lord Jesus, as the Grain of Wheat having fallen into the ground in death, and having risen again to life eternal, is still bringing forth the "much fruit", "after his kind". "For whom he [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29, *italics mine*). The Lord Jesus is our life; therefore, as we grow spiritually, the family likeness is manifested. We are gradually conformed to His image, who Himself is the "express image of his [God's] person" (Hebrews 1:3). And, "when he shall appear, we shall be [completely] like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

In the natural realm, the first grain of wheat contained, complete and perfect, the life of every subsequent grain of wheat to this day. It did not abide alone, retaining all, but fell into the ground and died, finding resurrection in the "much fruit" of life out of death. This same principle applies in the spiritual realm. The position, the source of life, of every believer as a grain of wheat, is God's firstborn Grain of Wheat, our Lord Jesus Christ. Each of us is "after His kind"; we have His life. Thus, when we speak of our position, we refer to our place in the risen Lord--our "life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

The principle of position, therefore, both natural and spiritual, is that life in its fullness and completeness is resident in the source, and is transmitted through birth and growth. Resurrection life is explicitly after its kind; it is "conformed to the image" of its positional source. The Lord Jesus Christ as the Father's Grain of Wheat took our place at Calvary, and His death and resurrection brought forth the "much fruit" of similar grains of wheat, believers predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

There is a stillness in the Christian life:

The grain of wheat must fall into the ground
And die; then, if it die, out of that death

Life, fullest life, will blessedly abound.

It is a mystery no words can tell,

But known to those who in this stillness rest;

Something divinely incomprehensible:

That for my nothingness, I get God's best!

--Selected

The Vine And The Branch

Consistent with the principle of position and the principle of reproduction, our risen Lord Jesus is the Vine. As such, He brings forth fruit "after his kind." "I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

In the natural realm, the life that is already complete in the vine is increasingly

The Principle of Position

All spiritual life and growth is based upon the principle of position. It can be summed up in one word: source.

Through physical birth we entered our human family position, from which source we derive certain characteristics. We are the product of our position. Just so in our spiritual birth. When we are born again, the risen Lord Jesus is the source off our Christian life; in Him we are positioned before our Father, in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), "for we are his workmanship, created [born anew] in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:10). Our Father, in redeeming and recreating us, "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6 NASB).

Our position, the source of our Christian life, is perfect. It is eternally established in the Father's presence. When we received the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior, the Holy Spirit caused us to be born into Him. He created us in the position that was established through his work at Calvary. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creature]" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is the eternal position in which every believer has been placed, whether he is aware of it or not. The Christian who comes to see his position in the Lord Jesus begins to experience the benefit of all that he is in Him. His daily state is developed from the source of his eternal standing.

Our condition is what we are in our Christian walk, in which we develop from infancy to maturity. Although our position remains immutable, our condition is variable. Through the exercise of faith, our eternal position (source) affects our daily condition, but in no way does our condition affect that heavenly position. "If [since] ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where

Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1). "Be strong in the Lord--be empowered through your union with Him; draw your strength from Him" (Ephesians 6:10, Amplified).

When we concentrate on our condition, we are not living by faith but by feelings and appearances. The inevitable result is that we become increasingly self-conscious and self-centered. Our prime responsibility is to pay attention to the Lord Jesus, to rest (abide) in Him as our position. There will then be growth, and He will be more and more manifested in our condition. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If the believer does not know of his position in the Lord Jesus, and how to abide in Him as His very life, there will be but one result. He will struggle in his unChrist-like condition rather than rest in his Christ-centered position supplied to the growing branches. The healthy condition of the branches is contingent on their abiding in their position in the vine. The branch is not only a product and a living part of the vine, but that which is produced in the branch is also the fruit of the vine. Actually, the branch produces nothing, either for the vine, for others, or for itself. The vine, the positional source, has everything to do with the development and fruitfulness of all its branches. The responsibility of the branch is to rest just where it was born, to abide in its living position in its living source.

As the believer rests in his position, the life of the Vine (the "fruit of the Spirit") is manifested in his condition-- "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22,23 NASB). The life of the Vine is the life of the branch. The True Vine is established at the right hand of our Father in glory and is the source from which our Christian life flows. The indwelling Spirit of Christ is the living link between Him in heaven and our spirit here on earth. "... he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Taking Our Position

We take our position, not by attempting to get into it, but simply by seeing that we are already positioned in the Lord Jesus. We abide in Him by resting in the fact. We have been in this risen position ever since our new birth. As we come to realize this truth and to "stand in our standing" in Him, we begin to experience the daily benefits of our life that is hid with Christ in God. Our attitude becomes, "I see my position in the Lord Jesus, and I abide there; I rest in Him, not only as my Savior, but as my life." Faith in our position still brings growth in our condition.

Paul prayed for believers, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:17,18). He also said, "Blessed be ... God ... who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3 NASB).

Our Father intends us to know and understand that He has already provided, in Christ our life, everything required for our Christian life both in time and eternity. He is patiently teaching us to have no faith in the old man (self), and to exercise all of our faith in the new Man (Christ). We are told to do in faith what our Father has

already done in fact. At the cross He freed us from the reign of sin and self; in the Resurrection He united us to the risen Lord Jesus. By faith in the work of the cross, the old man is put off; by faith in our heavenly position in Christ, the new man is put on. Hence we are free to dwell within the very Source of every spiritual blessing with which our Father has blessed us.

By considering the old man to have been crucified at Calvary, he is "put off" daily (Romans 6:11a). By considering ourselves as newly created in the risen Lord Jesus, we "put on" the new man (Romans 6:11b). As we escape self's reign of death, we enter into Christ's reign of life.

1. Put Off The Old

a. Fact

"Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him" (Romans 6:6, NASB). "... seeing that ye have put off the old man" (Col. 3:9).

Positionally, we were separated from the old Adamic nature in our identification with Christ on the cross.

b. Faith

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation (manner of life) the old man" (Ephesians 4:22). By faith in our new, sanctified position, we turn from, we consider as crucified, the principle of sin and self within. We count ourselves to be new creations in Christ, having died to sin and self. That is our part in putting off the old man that God put off from us at the cross.

2. Put On The New

a. Fact

"For as many of you as have been baptized [spiritually] into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:10). At our new birth we were recreated in Christ, and our Christian life is now hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3,4).

b. Faith

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14).

"... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

By faith in the positional fact that our Father has placed us in His Son, we abide in Him, we acknowledge our place in Him. By faith, we stand

in the position He has already given us. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (Eph. 6:14).

IV. CONSULT OTHER SOURCES...CONTINUED

Excerpts from The New Creation Christian by Miles Stanford:

"All Spiritual Blessings" An unknown (to me) author shares a series of spiritual blessings that are ours as new creations in Christ Jesus:

1. From the Word of God we have a life that cannot be forfeited. We have been given eternal life in Christ.
2. From this same Word of God we declare that we have a relationship that can never be abrogated. We who were the sons of wrath have been declared to be sons of God.
3. We have a righteousness that can never be tarnished.
4. We have an acceptance that can never be questioned. No angel or demon [not Satan himself] can stand between us and the accomplishment of the promise.
5. We have been judged in a judgment that can never be repeated. He who calls the future as the past is the One who cried out, "It is finished!".
6. We have a title that can never be clouded.
7. We have a position that can never be invalidated. Our Father has seated us in Christ in the Heavens.

In addition to this we have:

1. A standing that can never be disputed. No one can ever bar us from our right to rest in His presence.
2. We have a justification that can never be reversed. We have been declared just, and there is no court to overrule our God.
3. We have a seal that can never be violated. Our Father has positioned us in His Beloved Son and put upon us the seal of the Holy Spirit.
4. We have an inheritance that can never be alienated. The Lord who died to give us the promises, rose from the dead to be the executor of His own estate.
5. We have a wealth that can never be depleted. Our Father has with His Son freely given us all things.
6. We have a resource that can never be diminished. God's foundation will flow to us forever.

7. We have a bank that can never be closed. Our Father is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him.

Here we have a third set of seven treasures freely provided for us by our Father:

1. We have a possession that can never be measured. The eternal Heavens are ours and Eternity also.
2. We have a portion that can never be denied. Our Father who us gave His Son gives us freely all things in Him.
3. We have a peace that can never be destroyed. There is no foe who can ever break through the hedge that He has placed around us.
4. We have a love that can never be abated. This is true because His name is Love, and the fruit of His Spirit is Love.
5. We have a joy that can never be surpassed [another fruit of His Spirit].
6. We have a grace that can never be arrested. Nothing can stop the flow of that which is our Father's very nature.
7. We have a strength that can never be weakened. For it is His strength that is made perfect in our weakness.

There is still a fourth set of seven wonders that are ours in Christ:

1. We have a power that can never be exhausted.
2. We have a salvation that can never be annulled.
3. We have a forgiveness that can never be rescinded.
4. We have a deliverance that can never be thwarted.
5. We have a preservation that can never be hindered.
6. We have an assurance that can never be dishonored.
7. We have a new nature that can never be changed.

There is yet a fifth set of seven prerogatives that are ours in Christ:

1. We have a fruit, the fruit of the Spirit, that can never be destroyed.
2. We have a hunger that can never be unsatisfied.
3. We have an approach, an access, that can never be blocked.
4. We have a blessing that can never be interrupted.
5. We have an attraction [Christ] that can never be surpassed.
6. We have a food that can never be adulterated.
7. We have a comfort that can never be absent.

We also have some Spirit-dependent responsibilities:

1. We have a persecution that can not be evaded.

2. We have a suffering that can never be omitted.
3. We have a warfare that can never be shunned.
4. We have a ministry that can never be shifted.
5. We have a message that can never be repressed.
6. We have a walk that can never be neglected.
7. We have a service that can never be unrewarded.

But if we have those seven obligations that are put upon us by the Word of God, we have a seventh seven of triumphs:

1. We have a Bible that can never be destroyed.
2. We have an intercessor who can never be disqualified.
3. We have a victor who can never be vanquished.
4. We have a resurrection and ascension that can never be prevented.
5. We have a destiny that can never be diverted.
6. We have a hope that can never be disappointed.
7. We have a glory that can never be dimmed.

Questions to Guide our Study:

1. What difference does it make in our lives whether or not we understand our “Position in Christ”.
2. What description in Chafer’s list stands out to you personally, and why?
3. Whose responsibility is it to make our position a reality in our lives?
4. Does our position change our condition?
5. Can our condition change our position?
6. Why don’t all Christians rest in their position in Christ?

