

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Fellowship Bible Church

Principles of Spiritual Growth

Bible Study Guide

From the leadership development ministry of

FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH MISSIONS

Acknowledgments

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PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #1

"Faith"

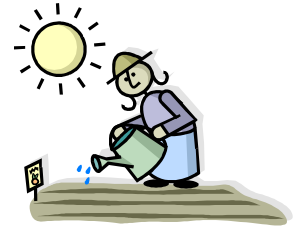
A. Introductions:

Our focus for this study will be **SPIRITUAL GROWTH PRINCIPLES**.....



.A verse that may be a help as we begin our study is **2 Pet.3:18** . -

Notice that this is a growth process - unlike salvation which is an event, spiritual maturity is a process. Is. 28:9-13



There appears to be a common weakness in our churches today. Good God loving Christian people who are struggling in their relationship with the Lord, struggling in their service to Him,

struggling in their relationship to one another, these are good church going folks who are beat down by the problems of life - many have lost their joy and zeal for the Lord. Rather than walking by faith

the Christian life, many which inevitably the area of spiritual



and depending on the Lord for the power to live are relying on their own efforts to walk this walk, results in defeat and no significant progress in growth.

B. We are designed to run on God's power:

Let's give some consideration to the following statement.....

WE ARE DESIGNED TO RUN ON GOD'S POWER, NOT ON THE POWER THAT WE CAN CRANK OUT...

C. 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. **Heb. 11:6; 10:38. Rom.**

14:23 – We could probably say that the Christian life is nothing more than a walk of faith.

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

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

Read - **Rev 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, (**1Tim. 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.

E. The Lord helps those who trust in Him:

The Christian life is not a walk of me producing/performing, but rather receiving by faith. **Col. 2:6; Rom.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....

F. 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. **Gal.3:1-3**

G. Faith from start to finish:

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

Gal.2:20b



H. Sowing seeds of doubt:

Often times, one of the greatest hindrances to our spiritual growth turns out to be well meaning Christians who have sowed seeds of doubt in our minds about this Bible, and about God Himself.....**Ps.3:1-2**

I. 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 Sam.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 **Matt. 27:39-44** –

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

J. 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.

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

Turn now to **Ps.33:22; Matt.8:13; Matt.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.

L. Some examples:

It might be good for us to end our time today by looking at a couple of men in scripture who had varying degrees of faith....One had great faith, the other started out well, but along the way began to doubt. **Josh. 10:5-14; Matt.14:22-31.**

M. Concluding thoughts:

Another interesting Scripture to consider..... **Ps.119:89**

Notice His word is settled in heaven...I can't change it, you can't change it, Satan can't change it, and God won't change it...IT IS SETTLED.

This book is full of the wisdom of God...It is full of encouragement from Him...It is full of His comfort, His mercy, His love and grace and strength, and it is all settled in Heaven and we can put our faith and trust in it here on earth.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #2

"Time"

A. Introduction:

Today we will be considering the "Spiritual Growth principle" of **"TIME."**

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. **Phil. 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.

However, there is no short-cutting 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. **Mk. 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 **Ex. 23:29, 30; Is. 28:10.**

D. Godliness is a mystery:

1 Tim. 3:16—"Great is the mystery of Godliness"---It is very important that we understand that Godliness (God-likeness) is a mystery. (Something which is beyond our

human intellect. Something that cannot be intellectually understood, but spiritually understood.)

An interesting question to consider; what is Godliness? When is a man Godly? Is it when he imitates God; when he imitates Christ? NO; Godliness is not man imitating God, there would be no mystery in that. But rather **Godliness or God-likeness is God reproducing Himself in a man.** Miraculously and mysteriously molding him into the image of Jesus Christ. This is the mystery of Godliness.....

E. The Holy Spirit's role:

2 Cor. 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. **Ps. 46:10; Ps. 4:4-5; John 15:5; Rom. 12:1; Jn. 3:30**

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.)

F. An Old Testament example – Moses:

I think one of the greatest examples of a man who was not willing to wait on God's timing was Moses....**Acts 7:17-22**

Approximately 400 years prior to the life of Moses God told Abraham that he was going to raise up a Deliverer for his people and save them from a wicked pharaoh.... And now the time was rapidly approaching...

By God's grace, Moses had been saved from death as an infant. **Ex. 1:22-2:10.**

Now Moses is placed in Pharaoh's household and adopted by his daughter and given all the privileges of royalty, including a magnificent education.

He was trained as a statesman, soldier and administrator and by the age of 40 he was a polished, scholarly man who could have taken his place in any society. Look again at **Acts 7:22.**

This is a picture given to us by God of a man in the prime of life, highly qualified, standing, it would seem, upon the threshold of a brilliant career.

However, in fact, he was a man only a few hours away from a tragic blunder that would bring to frustration all his ambitions and render him useless to both God and man for 40 years.

Ex. 2:11-15. Here we have an example of a man who was trying to do God's work in man's way and man's time.



We Christians today, are no different than Moses, we must stop setting our own agenda and time schedule and let God be God. Unfortunately at this point Moses had not learned this, and so in his time and in his strength he tried to tackle the job. As it turned out, he couldn't even bury one Egyptian successfully...he must have left his toes sticking out of the sand. However 40 years later, in God's time, God Himself took on the job and buried the whole Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

G. Consequences of doing God's work in man's way:

Moses tried to do God's work in man's way and with the best of intentions he became a murderer rather than a missionary.

So for the next 40 years, we find Moses in the back side of the desert while the Lord does that all important work of bringing him to maturity.

H. What about you and I?

Can we wait for God, or will we, like Moses, become discouraged with the delay and take things into our own hands?

I. 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. **Ps. 27:13,14; Ps. 62:1, 2 & 5; Ps. 123:1, 2; Is. 30:18; Is. 40:31;**

Some of our greatest blessings and growth spurts, come while waiting on the Lord. **Deut. 8:16; 1 Pet. 5:10; Is. 50:10,11.**

J. The Spirit is faithful:

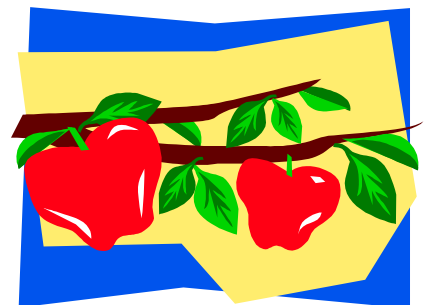
The question of coming into true spiritual maturity rests not with us but with the Holy Spirit. It is not a question of our effort or ability, but of the absolute faithfulness of the Spirit of God. Can we depend on Him to do all the work entrusted to Him, in His time? **Jn. 16:13,14.**

K. Spiritual growth is a gradual and sometimes painful process:

Fruit ripens slowly; days of sunshine and days of storm are both necessary.

God'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.

Spiritual growth is a gradual process, and the finer the organism, the longer the process. If God wants to make an oak tree, He takes a hundred years, but to make a squash plant He takes only six months.



However, we live in an impatient society; we are a people who want fast results. We find many Christian books that promise immediate spiritual maturity...but that is not God's way. In Gods perspective, time is not a factor. **2Pet.3:8.**

L. “A great cloud of witnesses”

The following paragraph is from “The Green Letters” by Miles Stanford.

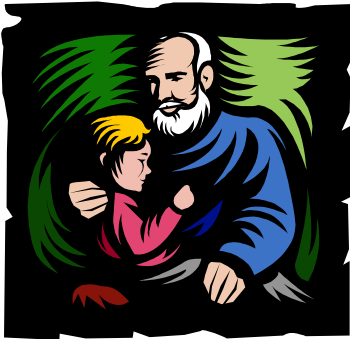
“We might consider some familiar names of believers whom God obviously brought to maturity and used for His glory, names such as Pierson, Chapman, Tauler, Moody, Goforth, Mueller, Taylor, Watt, Trumbull, Meyer, Murray, Havergal, Guyon, Mabie, Gordon, Hyde, Mantle, McChayne, McConkey, Deck, Paxson, Stoney, 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.”

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #3

“Acceptance”

A. Two introductory questions:

The third principle of Spiritual growth for us to consider is, **“Acceptance”**...



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? (Eph. 1:3-6).

B. 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**

C. It's either law, or grace”

Turn now to **Rom. 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. **Rom. 11:6;**

D. 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 **Gal. 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.

E. The great debate:

Acts 15:1, 2 and 6-10 - The dispute here is over the law, and to place it on the children of grace is to test or provoke God.

Notice **vs. 10** again; it is an unbearable yoke...it is unbearable! However, look at what Jesus says about walking by faith and living under grace. **Matt.11:28-30**.

His yoke is easy, as opposed to the unbearable yoke of the law back in

Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1+7.

Scripture is very clear, Christians are not to be entangled with the yoke of bondage (the law).

F. 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 **Gal. 4:7** says (no more servant, but sons).

G. 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.***



H. Joint heirs:

Rom. 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.

Rom. 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. **Jn. 6:63; Phil. 3:3.**

I. 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

J. A great Biblical example:

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

1 Cor. 15:9-10

K. 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".

Ps.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.

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, conclude 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 **Rom. 8**, God reveals His purpose for each of us personally. **Rom. 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. **Gal. 4:19**

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

In **Gen. 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.

Gen 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. **Gen. 5:3**, and this is exactly how we come into the world, spiritually dead. **Eph. 2:1**

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

However, **Heb. 1:1-3 -Col. 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. **Phil 3:10, Phil. 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; 1Cor.15:36; 2Cor. 7:3** - Notice Paul says, "you are in our hearts to die and live". Die and live, this is contrary to nature.

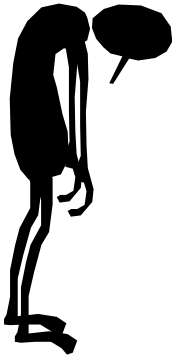
It is always live first then die, but not for we Christians, we must die in order to live. This is the principle of death and resurrection, and can only take place at the cross....**Rom.6:6; Gal.2:20**.

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.

H. A few words regarding God's process:

Now, It is one thing to know what God's purpose is for our lives, and it is another to know His process.....



One of God's most effective means in the process of molding us into the image of Christ is failure.....

Failure in our Christian life and service, is allowed and often orchestrated by God in order to turn us from self to Jesus Christ , who never fails.....

Now let's not lose sight of our subject here this morning...

God's purpose for each of us, which is conforming or molding us into the image of Christ.

How is it done...**2Cor.3:18**

I. Concluding remarks:

God has a natural law in effect that we become like what we focus our attention on. –

Example – I've been told that we can know the kind of music that a teenager listens to just by observing his haircut. As that teen focuses his attention on a particular group, eventually he will be conformed to their image.

(clothing/hair cut, etc.)

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.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #5

"Preparation"

A. Introduction:

The last chapter 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? **2Cor. 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.

Ps. 63:1; Phil. 3:10; 1Pet. 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. **Matt.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.

Ps. 94:12; Hos. 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.

Hos. 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. **Jn. 13:37-38;**

Lk. 22:54-62; Jn. 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 **Jn. 13:37**, but He gave it after Peter had failed to keep his vow and wept bitterly through the streets of Jerusalem.

In **1Cor. 1** the Lord tells us that it is not the wise, or the mighty, or the noble that He uses, but rather He has chosen the weak. **1Cor. 1:26-28**

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; Rom 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. **2Cor. 12:7-10; 2Cor. 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.

Heb. 2:10; Heb. 5:8

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

Heb. 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. **Deut. 8:16; Ps. 66:10-12**

I. King David and Shimei:

A rather interesting story is tucked away in **2Sam 16**. It's the story of King David fleeing from his unreasonable son, Absalom. However, there is another unreasonable little character in this story named Shimei, who the Lord appears to be using for the purpose of molding David into His image. (death to self)

2Sam. 16:5-14 - Notice the confidence and trust that David had in God.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #6

"Complete in Him"

A. Introduction:



In this chapter, we will be looking at **Col. 2** and the subject: **"We are complete in Him."**

Col. 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 **Gen. 1** which is, *"after its kind"*. **Gen. 1:11-12 and 21-25** - As it is with plants and animals, so it is with man – *"after His kind"*. **Gen. 1:26, 27**

However, after the fall, **Gen. 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 **Col. 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 Cor. 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 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 8:17; Eph. 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 (**Col. 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. **Eph. 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. "Great is the mystery of Godliness":

Turn with me to **1 Tim. 3** – It might be helpful to stop a moment and focus on a verse that has great significance regarding this subject of being "complete in Him".

1 Tim. 3:16–GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS---It is very important that we understand that Godliness (God-likeness) is a mystery. (Something which is beyond our human intellect. Something that cannot be intellectually understood, but spiritually understood.)

G. "Godliness" defined:

An interesting question to consider is; what is Godliness? When is a man Godly? Is it when he imitates God; when he imitates Christ? NO; Godliness is not man imitating God, there would be no mystery in that. But rather Godliness or God-likeness is God reproducing Himself in a man. Miraculously and mysteriously molding him into the image of Jesus Christ. THIS IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

H. Only God can make a man Godly:

2 Cor. 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. **Ps. 46:10; 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, 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.)

Some examples:

1. Catholic church--confession;
2. Charismatic churches--speaking in tongues or healing;

3. Liberal churches--church membership and attendance;
4. Legalistic churches--women must not wear pants, no movies.

A rather interesting scripture regarding this is **Col. 2:20-23**.

I. Created in His image:

Let's look further at the mystery of Godliness by considering again **Gen. 1:26, 27**. When God made man in His image, this did not mean that man was created to physically look like God...God is a Spirit (**John 4:24**) and spirits don't have bodies.

Think back to **Gen. 1**: Man was made to bear the image of God, but was God Himself visible? No. Therefore, it was not a physical image which was to reveal God, but rather something else. God designed something in man to reveal Himself, and that something is man's soul (mind, will & emotions). Man's soul is made in the image of God. We have a MIND that can reason like God; we can make CHOICES (will) like God; we have EMOTIONS (love, joy sadness, hate) like God.

J. The mystery of Godliness revealed:

Godliness (God-likeness) is the direct result of God actively indwelling and controlling the soul (mind, will & emotions) of man which ultimately controls the behavior of man.



This is how the image of God could be seen in Jesus Christ, while the person of God remained invisible...AGAIN, THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS...He was made in the physical likeness of man, but God could be seen in His soulish behavior.

Give some thought to this; No one has seen electricity, (not speaking of lightening but electric current) yet an electric light bulb is designed that when it receives the invisible current, it produces light. It's behavior as a light giver is the direct result of the activity of the invisible electric current. In the same way, our behavior is intended by God to be the exact image of His divine nature (the light) and it is only the invisible Spirit of God acting within us (the current) that enables us to behave as God intended: GODLY.

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

2 Peter 1:3--His divine power is all that it takes to be Godly. It's interesting that God created man to be inhabited by God Himself. **John 1:4**--In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men. The light depended on what? The life. Once the life was removed at the fall, (**Gen. 3**) the light went out and there was no more image of God on the earth. **Gen. 5:3**--Notice Adam brought forth a son in his image; (the image of sinful man) there was no more image of God on the earth until **Hebrews 1:1-3**. Finally, after thousands of years, here again is the image of God back on the earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

And now, after trusting Christ as our Savior, God once again begins the process of molding us into His image. It's interesting to consider that His divine power is all that it takes to be Godly. - **2 Pet. 1:3**

L. 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.



PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #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. **Eph. 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. Moving on now to step two:

Once we see what is ours in Christ, the Lord will begin to orchestrate needs in our lives which will cause us to appropriate, to receive God's provision for that need. A great example is seen in **2 Chron. 20:1-24**.

Life is designed to bring a succession of discoveries for our need of Christ, and as we see who we are in Christ and become aware of our needs, we will be brought from a life of childish meandering into a responsible walk of faith.

It will take us from the "Oh, God" help me attitude to a trusting and resting...from begging to appropriation. Oftentimes we find ourselves crying out to God rather than quietly trusting..... **Is. 30:15**.....

H. Comments from L.L. Letgers founder of Wycliff Bible Translators:

It might be helpful for us to note what L. L. Letgers, co-founder of Wycliff Bible Translators has to say about **Eph. 1:3** *"Notice 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 keep praying, O God bless us, bless us in this, bless us in that, and it is already done. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies."*

The Green Letters does such a good job of laying all this out in a simple manner. The believer sees what he possesses in Christ, and the need enables him to reach out and confidently appropriate and accept what the Lord has done.

I. 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 - **Ps.**

27:13,14

J. The perturbing pause:

Is. 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.

K. 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 its problems. This combination presses in to become just too much for our present spiritual condition. **1 Pet. 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.. **Gal.**

2:20; Phil. 1:21

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

L. Enjoying the wilderness:

It's at this point, that many become frustrated and begin to look back at "the flesh pots of Egypt". The closing verses of the first chapter of Joshua gives us the background for some further thought regarding this. Joshua spoke during those three days to the two and a half tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manassah. The story of those two and a half tribes is found in Numbers 32....



In the course of the wilderness journey, the people of Reuben, Gad and Manassah came to a portion of land which was very fertile. They saw in it wonderful grazing lands and pasture for their flocks. It was a land, potentially, of great wealth. They were a rich people, they had many flocks and much cattle, and so they approached Moses and said, "We would rather stay here, on the east side of the Jordan; ***This is all that anyone could desire; We don't want to go into Canaan and be bothered with all the trouble that you are in for when you get over there. It would be a whole lot easier to just stay here....Num. 32:2-5***

Moses seemed to agree with their decision. There really wasn't much else he could do. Basically, God has left the decision to man as to the level of life which he himself is going to live. So they were permitted to stay on the east side of the Jordan and inherit this fertile piece of the wilderness ***on one condition*** – That before they inherit the land on the wilderness side, they must take part in the battle with the people of God in the promise land....**Num. 32:6-23**

It's interesting that Moses actually gave them the privilege of leading the army. The Tribes of Rueben, Gad and Manasseh were to go into Canaan first, then when they had tasted the fruit of the land and had the thrill of victory, Joshua would permit them to go back to the wilderness if they still wanted.

What a moment when Joshua addresses the two and a half tribes, reminding them of their decision, and asking, "what are you going to do.....**Josh. 1:12-15** It's interesting that they were perfectly willing to fulfill their part of the bargain by going into the land, lead the army,

and taste the victories, but they were determined to go back to the comfort and enjoyment of the wilderness.

It's interesting to look through the record of the consequences of this decision made by the two and a half tribes in **1 Chron. 5:25-26**..... What we discover is that these tribes who had tasted of **God's** best, and enjoyed **God's** victory, who had led **God's** Army of **God's** people into the land of blessing, were the first to be taken captive by the Assyrians when they invaded Israel; It appears that they went down into bondage and defeat, and never returned.....***They had entered the promise land and had tasted the blessing, but they turned back to the fleshly pleasures in the wilderness and were trapped in it. Heb. 6:4-6***

Basically, it's not how a man begins his Christian life, but how he ends it that counts. It's one thing to have a grace awakening, but what really matters is whether we, by faith, go on with the Lord across the Jordan.....

We must remember that the crossing of the Jordan illustrates the passing of a Christian from one level of Christian life to another. ***It marks the end of the self-life, and the beginning of the Christ-life.....The end of a life lived by man's efforts and the beginning of life lived by faith.....And between the two, rolls the mighty river Jordan at flood stage – A river of impossibility.....***

M. 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.

N. Closing thoughts:

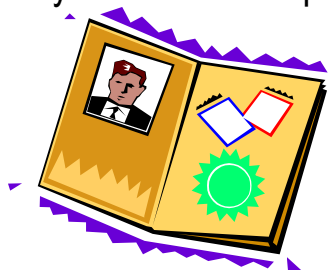
It might be helpful to end our time by considering a verse in **Heb. 12** which makes it rather clear the consequences of failing to appropriate and taking possession of God's grace...The consequences of returning to enjoy the wilderness.....**Heb. 12:15**

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.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #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 **Rom. 7:18; Rom. 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:

But, God has made a way for us to have victory over this flesh, and God's way is explained to us in the 8th chapter of "The Green Letters" which is entitled Identification.

It might be helpful to begin by reading a paragraph or two from Chapter eight of "The Green Letters":

"As our thinking moves along from the Substitutionary (**birth**) truths, (*Christ died for us*) on to the identification (**growth**) truths (*we died with Christ*). It might be good to consider briefly, what some Christian leaders have to say about identification, as centered in **Romans 6**.

Evan H. Hopkins makes this comment: " The trouble most of us believers struggle with is not sin and it's penalty, but sin as a ruling power; sin as a master.

To know God's way of deliverance from sin as a master we must grasp the truth contained in the sixth chapter of Romans. There we see what God has done, not with our sin, since that question Paul dealt with earlier - but with ourselves. We are really slaves of sin. However, God has put our sin nature where He put our sins, namely, on the cross with Christ.

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him" **Rom. 6:6**. We believers must see not only that Christ died for us - **substitution** - but that we died with Christ - **identification**.

R. Paxson: The old I in you and me was crucified **with Christ**. The old man, the old self, was taken to the cross **with Christ** and crucified and taken into the tomb **with Christ** and buried. Assurance of deliverance from the flesh and of the dethronement of the old man rests upon the acceptance of this fact of our co-crucifixion".

J. Penn-Lewis: ***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 self is still the dominating factor in our life.***

D. No longer I, but Christ:

Please turn to **Galatians, Chap. 2**. Here the Apostle Paul gives us his definition of the Christian life in **Gal. 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 Cor. 2:1-2**

E. Back to the problem:

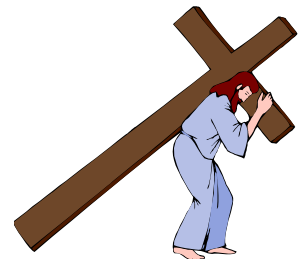
Let's turn back now to **Rom. 5**.

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 **Rom. 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."***

F. 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. **Rom. 6:1-14**



G. 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. **Matt. 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.

H. 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, **Rom. 5:8**, also says that we died with Christ. **Gal. 2:20; Rom. 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, **Gal. 2:20**.

I. 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 Cor. 1:30**; the self that we hate was on the cross in Christ, and we that are dead are free from sin. **Rom. 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.

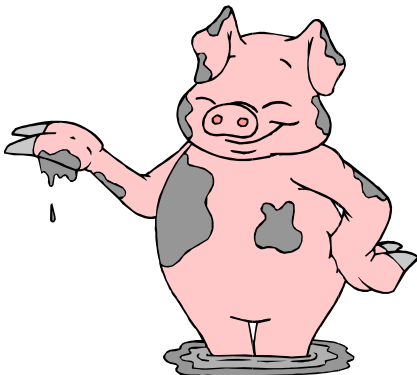
J. The great exchange:

Any positive change that takes place in the life of a Christian does not come about by improving the flesh, but by crucifying it and replacing it with the Holy Spirit. The old nature is rotten through and through, and will never improve; it is entirely without remedy; fit only for death.

K. Pig is pig, and flesh is flesh:

Imagine, if you will, that I have come to the conclusion that pigs have been grossly misjudged, and that I am convinced that they really don't like wallowing in the mud. I have become fully persuaded that all they need is a better environment, education and upbringing. I decide, therefore, to adopt a little baby pig into my family, to prove my point. So I go home and explain to my family that we are adopting this little pig, and I want them to treat it as one of the family.

We give the little pig a Chicago Bulls sweatshirt and some little blue jeans, with faded spots down the sides. We teach it to wipe its feet when it comes into the house, to sit up at the table, to bow its head when we say grace, and to sleep at night between the sheets and the blankets in its own little bed.



It becomes quite obvious to us that it is only a matter of time before we see success. Unfortunately, it is just at this time that somebody leaves the front door open, and like a shot from a gun, the little pig races out that open door, across the yard, and jumps into the muddiest hole it can find, and after rolling over and over, it lies on its back in the mud, little blue jeans and all.

You see, changing its environment and training it to wear blue jeans and a Redskins sweatshirt will never change its nature, because **a pig is a pig**.

Given half a chance, the nature of a pig is to get back to where it belongs, and this we also find to be true in our own lives... ***The flesh within us has never ceased to love sin, and never will.*** Given half a chance, it too will go right back to where it belongs and wallow in the mud. **2 Pet. 2:22; Prov. 26:11**

L. 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, and **as pig is pig, so flesh is flesh**.

Jn. 3:6

M. A great cloud of witnesses:

Abraham discovered this when he went down into Egypt and lied to Pharaoh - **Gen. 12**.

Moses discovered this when he struck the rock - **Num. 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 Sam. 11**. Peter discovered this when he denied Christ and wept bitterly through the streets of Jerusalem - **Luke 22**.

N. Man has an amazing capacity for sin:

We should never be shocked at the amazing capacity for sin that lies within us, for this is our nature. ***Pig is pig, flesh is flesh*** -Again, **Jn. 3:6**.

The Lord Jesus Christ has put in the place of death all our inherited potential for evil (the flesh), and He offers us instead all His limitless potential for good, through the energy and power of His Holy Spirit, and our only responsibility is to believe. **Col. 2:6**

O. 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 Cor. 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 **Col. 2:20; Col. 3:1-3**.

Here are a couple of interesting scriptures. **Gal. 6:14; Rom. 7:4** - dead to sin; dead to the world; dead to the law.

P. 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."

Q. 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.

Rom, chap. 6 is the basis for a life of holiness, and **Jn. 8:32** seems to put everything in perspective.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #9

"Consecration"

A. Introduction:

Our focus for this lesson will be chapter nine of "The Green Letters" and the subject of 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.

B. Consecration is a term that is frequently misunderstood:



It might be helpful if we took a closer look at a key portion of scripture that seems to be misunderstood by many Christians. **Rom. 6:12-13**. The key word here is "yield" or "present", and we find it used five times in **verses 13, 16, and 19**.

Many have taken this word "yield/present" to imply consecration, (which again means to "dedicate for God's use"). So naturally many believe Paul to be saying here that **we are to dedicate ourselves** to the Lord for His service, which **implies** human effort. In fact, some Christians have been known to shy away from teaching "abiding" in **John 15**, and "presenting themselves" in **Rom. 12:1** because they don't fully understand Biblical consecration.

C. Sanctification defined:

Before we can get a clear understanding of Biblical consecration it will be necessary for us to look at our position of sanctification. **To be sanctified means to be set apart for God's possession and use**. Let's take a look at a couple of scriptures to see how God uses this word. **Gen. 2:3; Jn. 17:17,19**.

It is encouraging to know that our sanctification happens at salvation and is the will and work of God. **1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 5:23,24; 1 Thess. 4:3**

D. Consecration is a fruit of faith:

Think back now to our subject of consecration. Remember that our definition for consecration, to dedicate for God's use, implies some action on our part. However, as we have mentioned many times during these studies, our only responsibility is to believe...therefore, Biblical consecration is nothing more than a fruit of faith. **James 2:18b - Consecration, dedicating ourselves, presenting, yielding, is simply a natural response to our faith/trust in our sanctification.** (set apart for God's possession and use).

Consecration does not call on us to do anything, except to rest in our sanctification. Positionally we are sanctified (set apart for God's possession and use) at salvation, and as we rest in that position, the Holy Spirit gives us the power and desire to yield, to present, to dedicate our lives for God's use. **Phil. 2:13**

E. Romans 6 revisited:

As we mentioned in the previous lesson, there is a divine order in **Rom. 6**.

1. KNOW - vs. 6; 2. RECKON - vs 11; 3. YIELD - vs. 13.

Knowing is the first step in **Romans 6**. Just as we must have knowledge of Christ's crucifixion for our justification, we must also have knowledge of our co-crucifixion for our sanctification. Reckoning is a natural response to true Biblical knowledge, and yielding is the end result of the divine order, and is not an effort of the believer in the **Romans 6** pattern, but rather is simply a natural response. Paul reminds us later in the book of Romans of the importance of this final step of yielding/presenting; **Rom. 12:1**

F. Love and gratitude cannot supply the power to live the Christian life:

As we mentioned before, the subject of consecration is frequently 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". **2 Cor. 5:14,15**. We are exhorted and pressured to consecrate, or dedicate, or surrender, or commit our lives to Christ based on our love and gratitude for what He has done for us. I can assure you that our love and gratitude cannot supply the power to live the Christian life; (this again is self-effort).

G. Quote from Andrew Murray:

"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 since it is not God's way to motivate His people". (However, many times it is implied that the reason some have failed in ministry, or failed in the Christian life, is because they have lost their love for the Lord)

As growing Christians it's probably time for us to see the necessity of going beyond the love motive to the life motive. **Phil. 1:21a**

H. Neither can prayer supply the power to live the Christian life:

Just as love and gratitude cannot supply the power to live the Christian life, neither can more prayer supply the power; as indispensable as prayer is, it is not enough.

I. Missionary testimony:

“When my wife and I went to Southeast Asia as missionaries, we truly loved the Lord and were extremely grateful for all that the Lord had done for us; We spent many hours of each day in prayer, but in the end there was no power to carry on.”

J. Not I, but Christ:

The key to Biblical consecration, yielding, presenting is not I; nor the love that I can muster, nor the prayers that I can pray...***It's not I, but CHRIST.*** Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; Phil. 2:13

So many of us well meaning Christians seek to consecrate, dedicate, surrender and commit to God what He has totally rejected; SELF. Our thinking is if we seek the Lord hard enough and pray, our old man will become spiritual and thus useful in His service. We must understand that the "self life" is unimprovable.

K. Old Testament examples:

Rom. 15:4 – *O.T. written for our learning.*

1 Cor. 10:6, 11 – *O.T. written for our example and warning.*

Let's go back and look at some Godly Old Testament examples, men who tried very hard to consecrate themselves (present/yield/dedicate)

Remember a fellow by the name of Noah...look what God says about him in **Gen. 6:5-8**.

However, **Gen. 9:20**.

And then there was King Asa, **2 Chron. 14:1-5**. However, **2 Chron. 16:7-12**

How about Solomon, **1 Kings 10:-1-6, 23,24**; However, **1 Kings 11:1-10, 14**

Let's not forget the disciples - **Matt. 26:30-56**. The disciples couldn't consecrate themselves, even with Jesus right there with them.

A rather interesting scripture in all this is **2 Cor. 10:18**.

L. Consecration comes only by death:

Our natural thinking and the modern teaching of consecration which asks us to commit our lives to Christ through self effort, bypasses **Rom. 6:6** and the death sentence. Remember **Gal. 2:20**...*"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me"*.

It's interesting back in **Leviticus 8**, when God was consecrating the Old Testament Priests; notice how he directed Moses...**Lev. 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.



M. Living the Christian life as one who is alive from the dead:

True, acceptable, Biblical consecration is most clearly shown in **Rom. 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 for us to present ourselves unto God **as those who are alive from the dead**. Remember **Rom. 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.

When we KNOW, (understand completely) and reckon, presenting/yielding ourselves to Him just naturally follows... **1 Cor. 15:9,10**

N. Conclusion:

The Christian life, the Christ life begins with **Rom. 12:1** - just presenting ourselves, and as we by faith rest in that truth, God does the rest; As **Phil. 2:13** states, He gives us the power and desire to do His good pleasure, not mine.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #10

"Self"

A. Introduction:

Often times in our lives we encounter Christians who are very intelligent and rather clever, and strong and appear to be righteous...in fact, maybe just a little too bright, and a little too clever, and frequently there seems to be so much of **self** in their righteousness that it appears to be somewhat seems to be somewhat righteous.



B. 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 - **Gal.5:19-21**; "The life in which there is no good thing in the sight of God - **Rom. 7:18a-24** (overview); Not every Christian comes to the point of **Rom. 7:24**... ***The agony of realizing that within dwells a self-centered sin nature that is bent on doing wrong.***

The basis of life for both the unsaved man and carnal Christian is this...

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. The most needy Christian is one who is unaware of his/her flesh:

Of all the needy Christians in this world, the most needy are not those who are having a heart breaking, agonizing struggle over self-centeredness (the flesh), but rather those who are having no struggle at all, and who don't know it and are satisfied and jogging along unaware. No believer will come to know Jesus as his life until he knows, like Paul, how wretched the self life really is.

The first step to salvation is knowing that we are sinners, and the first step to spiritual maturity/becoming disciples of Christ is coming to **Rom. 7:24**.

D. Two kinds of Christians:

It might be helpful to take a closer at the self life... **1 Cor. 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 Cor. 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?

E. 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. Rom. 7:22,23; Gal. 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 (**Gal. 5:22,23**); However, more often the flesh is dominating the scene and the deeds of the flesh are very evident. **Gal. 5:19,20**; This inward conflict also results in outward conflict. **1 Cor. 3:3,4; 3 Jn.9:10**;



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



In **Rom. 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. **Rom. 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 with someone?

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

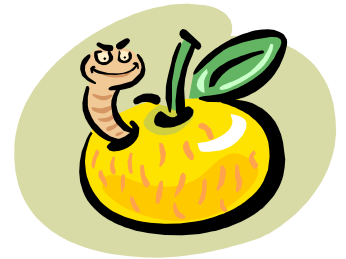
The carnal Christian never grows up. Nothing on earth is quite so exciting to parents, than a new baby...but oh, the heartache to those parents if that child remains a baby in body or mind, and so it is with God. How it must pain Him to see His children remain in a prolonged infancy.

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. **Heb. 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. Jn. 15:2

The focus here is on fruit bearing, no fruit of the Spirit, no fruitful ministry.

Rom. 10:2.

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

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

6. It's a life of rebellious pride. Turn to a rather interesting Scripture. **Ex. 8:4-10.** It's amazing to me that Pharaoh didn't tell Moses to remove those frogs immediately... Why would he want to spend one more night with those stinking frogs? Yes of course Pharaoh is unsaved here and for that reason this is not a good analogy...But looking back over our carnal Christian lives, we probably see ourselves a lot like Pharaoh. There is the continuous conflict and repeated defeat, fruitlessness and double mindedness...but more than that there is this rebellious pride (It's not a big deal to me, you can take them away tomorrow if you like).

Luke 4:33-35 - Notice that one last rebellion.

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

F. 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".

G. Self revelation precedes divine revelation:

The believer who is going through struggles and failure is the Christian in whom God is working. **Heb. 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. **Ps. 66:10-12**;

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #11

"Self Denial"

A. Review:

Let's quickly review the last ten lessons regarding our subject of "*Spiritual Growth Principles*".

1. Faith
2. Time
3. Acceptance
4. Purpose
5. Preparation
6. Complete in Him
7. Appropriation
8. Identification
9. Consecration
10. Self

B. 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.

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. **Rom. 7:18a**. Even the very best which the flesh can produce, God rejects.

D. Paul's flesh:

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

Rom. 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 **Rom. 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. **Jn. 3:6; Jn. 6:63; Phil. 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 Jn.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:

Is. 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. **Rom. 6:6,14; Gal. 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 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:

Jn. 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 Cor. 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 Cor. 7:3.**

K. The principle of “death and resurrection”:

One of the greatest of all Biblical principles is this “principle of death and resurrection”. It is applicable to every area of life.

THE WORLD SAYS:	GOD SAYS:
Be strong/fight for rights/claw to top.	2 Cor. 12:9,10; Is. 40:29
Have pride in self/feel good about self.	Prov. 29:23; Rom. 7:24
Demand rights/let your voice be heard.	Is. 30:15
Lord helps those who help themselves.	Lord helps those who trust in Him.

L. 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 (**Gal. 2:20**).

M. Concluding thought from J. Penn Lewis:

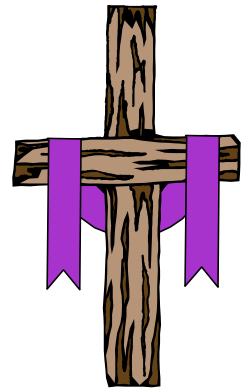
"If our dying with Christ has not been recognized, acknowledged and applied, we can be sure that self is still the dominating factor in our lives.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #12

"The Cross"

A. Introduction:

Our subject for this lesson, "***the cross***", may possibly be the most difficult of all Biblical concepts to understand. Writer Miles Stanford begins chapter 12 of "The Green Letters" with this comment: "the Holy Spirit does not release the treasures of the word quickly nor easily (deep calleth unto deep). There is much time, studying, praying, meditating, trusting and experiencing involved. True spiritual growth comes in no other way, but, praise the Lord, it does come. Understanding and appropriating the facts of the Cross proves to be one of the most difficult and trying of all phases for the growing Christian."



B. Biblical references to the cross:

It might be helpful to look at a few Scriptures that speak of the Cross.

1 Cor. 1:17,18 - Notice that the Cross is set forth as a divine folly to the unbeliever regarding salvation, and it also appears as foolishness to many Christians re this whole area of our co-crucifixion with Christ.

Eph. 2:16 - Presented as the medium of reconciliation. **Col. 1:20.**

C. At the cross two things happened:

It is so very important that we understand that Jesus went to the cross alone, without us, to pay the penalty for our sins. (He was our representative) But He also took us with Him to the cross and there in the sight of God, we all died together with Him. **Gal. 2:20.**

D. At the cross, we were freed from sin's power:

Through the crucifixion of our old man with Christ we believers have been made dead unto sin. We have been freed from sin's power. **Rom. 6:6,7,14.**

E. We can glory/boast in the cross.

Gal. 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.*

F. Man, God's masterpiece:

Before we move on, it might be helpful to take a brief look at how the Lord has made man, and the equipment that He has given man so that He can reproduce Himself in that man.

G. Man is a trinity of three parts: (1 Thes. 5:23)

Let's look at the "**body**" first. What is its purpose? **2 Cor. 5:1** Man's body is nothing more than our earthly house...a temporary dwelling place, and none of us really know how long it will be our home. While we are at home in our bodies it provides us with a means to communicate. With my body I can speak or listen, shake hands, or punch someone in the nose, laugh or cry. So our bodies were designed by God as a means of communication.

However, man has a mechanism to control the behavior of the body and that mechanism is the "**soul**". Now as best as we can understand, our soul is also a trinity (mind, will & emotions).

Now, there is one great difference between man and any other form of created life, and that is man's "**spirit**" (*the part of man that communicates with God*).

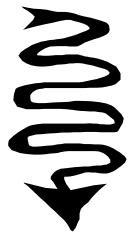
The human spirit is what God has given to man that enables him to receive the life of God. At salvation the Holy Spirit indwells man's spirit.

An interesting verse is **Prov. 20:27**. The human spirit is the lamp (*lightbulb*) of God. The Holy Spirit is the electricity. Now, what electricity is to an electric lamp, or oil is to an oil lamp, the Holy Spirit is to the human spirit. **1 Cor. 2:11**.

Here is an interesting thought...when the human spirit is without the Holy Spirit, it leaves the soul abandoned as a ship without a rudder and it becomes an easy prey for every evil influence.

H. Downward spiral of sin:

Eph. 4:17-19 - Notice the downward progression here. **1.** Walk in vanity; **2.** Understanding darkened; **3.** Alienated from God; **4.** Past feeling; (callousness) **5.** Work all uncleanness.



I. At the fall, man became an instrument of unrighteousness:

Of course this all began with the fall of Adam. At the fall, man became self centered rather than God centered/independent of God, rather than dependent.

The Bible has many names for this self-centeredness...**1)** sin nature; **2)** old man; **3)** flesh; **4)** power of sin...(Basically, it's an inward desire to do wrong).

Thinking back again to the fall, when man turned away from God, God withdrew from man, and now being void of God, and the Holy Spirit no longer controlling man's behavior

mechanism (soul) with truth, Satan who is the Father of what? Lies **Jn. 8:44**, began to corrupt and misuse man's behavior mechanism (soul). Therefore, man's body became an instrument of unrighteousness rather than righteousness, and ***man became infinitely worse than an animal, because now, empty of God and invaded by this sin nature, his body and soul could be controlled by the devil himself.***

J. The O.T. is often a physical picture of N.T. spiritual truth:

Now with all this in mind, let's turn to **Rom. 15:4** (*O.T. is for our learning;*

1 Cor. 10:6,11 (*O.T. is an example and a warning*).

The Old Testament is often a physical picture of a New Testament spiritual truth.

K. The book of Esther is a physical picture of the workings of the flesh:

Turn back now to the book of Esther. There is probably no other book in the entire Old Testament which better illustrates the flesh and our need for the cross, nor is there a book which demonstrates more clearly how one is to walk in the Spirit and become effective for God.

L. King Ahasuerus will represent the "soul of man":

Esther 3:1,2 - King Ahasuerus reigned, we are told in ***chapter one, verse one***, "From India unto Ethiopia, over 127 provinces. As the king in his palace, Ahasuerus will represent for us the **soul of man**, for it was the king who made decisions and laws for the kingdom.

M. The kingdom of 127 provinces will represent the human body:

Throughout the land, those decisions and laws made in the palace by the king had a large effect on the 127 provinces. From the largest city to the smallest village the conduct of the people and the way they behaved was affected by the king's decisions. Likewise, it is within our soul that human behavior/conduct is determined. For instance:

1. With my mind, I think I want to.....
2. With my emotions, I feel like doing it....
3. With my will I decide to.....

N. Haman will represent what the New Testament calls the flesh:

Again, this flesh is an inward desire to do wrong, and dwells within each one of us.

(Rom.7:18) We will notice that from the beginning of the story Haman is already deeply entrenched within the palace, firmly established in the king's affections and enjoying his complete confidence. Notice again **verse one**; the King set his seat above all the princes.

Verse two, in Haman's (flesh) presence, as an act of respect every head had to bow.

Haman (flesh) from within the palace had constant, unhindered access to the king, (soul), and in his own subtle way controlled the king's thinking, which in turn influenced the king's decisions so that by every royal decision that was made, the character of this wicked man made its impact upon the nation (body).

O. Mordecai will represent the Holy Spirit:

On the other hand, sitting in the king's gate outside the palace and having no access to the king, and having no influence whatsoever was one who refused to bow in the presence of Haman - his name was Mordecai. **Est. 3:2b, 3.**

Mordecai will represent the Person of the **Holy Spirit**. Now, the Holy Spirit (Mordecai) is the enemy of the flesh (Haman) - **Gal. 5:17.**

The overall picture here at this point is that of an unsaved man. His soul dominated by the flesh and destitute of the Holy Spirit, just as the king was dominated by Haman and void of the counsel of Mordecai.

P. So what is so bad about Haman?

You may think that we are being a bit harsh on Haman...what has he done to deserve it? Well the truth is, that Haman is full of hate, and hidden in his heart beneath that deceptive charm there is murder. His ways are the ways of death. Scripture clearly shows us that he hated the Jews. **Es. 3:10; 8:1; 9:10; 9:24.**

Why did Haman hate the Jews? Without going into too much detail, if we were to trace back the generations leading up to Haman we would find this...

Remember Isaac's two sons (Jacob & Esau)? Think back now...God said in **Rom. 9:13** "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I hated". Why did God hate Esau? Because Esau had thought little of and rejected his God given birthright. His attitude was, what do I need of God's birthright? **Gen. 25:29.** I'm independent and self-sufficient. And what we see in Scripture is that, **God does nothing with a man who will not admit that he needs God.**

Esau rejected God's grace. He despised his birthright, and God never forgave him. **This is the basic attitude of sin, It makes God irrelevant.** Now Esau had a grandson named Amalek, and Malachi tells us that the descendants of Esau were a people against whom the Lord has contempt forever. **Mal. 1:4** and **Ex. 17:16** tells us that God was at war with the descendants of Amalek from generation to generation. Why? Because dwelling in these Amalkites was the sin of Esau, the man who refused his birthright.

There was no good thing in Amalek. There was absolutely nothing salvageable in Amalek. There was nothing in Amalek upon which God would look with favor. Therefore, God sent King Saul out to utterly destroy Amalek. **1 Sam. 15:1-3**; However, verse **7-9**.

Let's think this through. King Agag was a descendant of Esau, the one who despised his birthright. Agag also was the king of the Amalekites, and Haman was an Amalekite. How do we know that? **Esther 3:1**. Now the Amalekites were the long established enemies of Israel (God's people). ***So here in the book of Esther, in the person of Haman, descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites - Amalek was at it again.***

It's interesting to note that Herod the Great, who in his attempt to kill the Lord Jesus, ordered the destruction of all the children in Bethlehem two years of age and under. He also was a descendant of Esau, and now here was Haman true to his breed, and within his wicked heart there seethed this inherited enmity against God and His people.

Q. Haman had an anger problem:



Back now to Esther & Haman. If there was one thing which really angered Haman, it was the fact that in the king's gate there was one who looked him straight in the eye, and whose head was never bowed in his presence. **Esther 3:2b-6 & 8-9..**

Notice what Haman told the king in verse 8..."their laws are different". What did he mean by that? I believe Haman was referring to God's law (Bible).

So it was that Haman (*the flesh*) approached King Ahasuerus (*representing the human soul*) and persuaded him with his deceptive ways that the introduction of God's law into the affairs of the kingdom could only cause more problems for the king, and that the Jews, who represented that law, must be done away with. King Ahasuerus was sold out to Haman, just like the soul of the unsaved man is sold out to the flesh. **Esther 3:12,13**. The murderous law was published "according to all that Haman had commanded. Notice, "in the name of king Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's ring". What an accurate picture this gives of the human soul, dominated by the flesh and becoming a part of every fleshly ambition that would resist God. It did not look good for the Jews.

R. Enter Esther the Queen:

Let's consider for a moment the role Esther must play. Esther the queen will represent the **human spirit**, and before Mordecai could come into the life of the king, he had to first come

into the life of Esther, just as the Holy Spirit must first indwell the human spirit at salvation before He can begin to influence and control the human soul.

It is interesting to discover how Mordecai came into the life of Esther. **Esther 2:7**. Mordecai came into the life of Esther on the basis of adoption. What a beautiful picture this is of the Holy Spirit. **Rom. 8:14,15; Gal. 4:4-7;**

After the adoption it became Mordecai's responsibility to educate and care for his adopted daughter and to guide her steps, so it is now the responsibility of the Holy Spirit in our lives to accomplish these things **Jn. 14:16,26; 16:13**.

S. The Holy Spirit grieved:

Here is something else to consider. In the opening verse of Esther, chapter four, we have another picture - it is of the Holy Spirit grieved. **Esther 4:1; Eph. 4:30**. (grieve not the HS of God).

Notice that Esther did her best to comfort Mordecai, but he would not be comforted. She sent clothing to clothe him and to take away his sackcloth from him, but he would not receive it. **(4:4)** Again, the picture here is clear, for although Mordecai (the HS) had come into the life of Esther, he had not yet gained access into the presence and confidence of the king. There, Haman still dominated the scene. This is a picture of a carnal Christian. (Saved, but not walking/controlled by the Spirit)

Esther, being unsuccessful in her attempts to comfort Mordecai by her own efforts, decided that the only sensible thing to do would be to ask Mordecai to explain the situation to her and to receive his instructions. **4:5** Mordecai responded immediately as the HS responds immediately to us the moment we stop leaning on our own understanding and look to Him to lead us into truth. **4:7,8a**.

T. Revealing the flesh:

Esther had to discover the kind of company she had been keeping in the palace - and it wasn't a pleasant discovery. It is always an ugly experience when the HS introduces us to our own Haman, and reveals the evil that dwells within. **Rom. 7:18**.

U. Back to Esther:

She was shocked to discover that the affairs of the kingdom had been placed in such wicked hands, however, she was even more alarmed at Mordecai's instructions for her - **4:8,9**. The reason Esther was shocked at Mordecai's instructions was that the penalty for entering into the presence of the king unsummoned was death. This was the law of the land. It was not simply that those who crossed the threshold into the presence of the king without being

called would be put on trial and judged - sentence was automatic. ***The moment Esther's foot crossed the forbidden line she knew that she would die, except for the unlikely event that the king would hold out to her the golden scepter.*** It was little wonder then that Mordecai's instructions came as a shock to her. So she sent her reply: **4:10,11.**

Can you imagine how Esther must have felt. From **chapter two, verse 20** we understand that Esther had not yet revealed that she was a Jew, but now she must come out into the open and identify herself with God's people. In doing so she would expose herself to Haman's hatred of the Jews. I was wondering if she may have been thinking, "If Haman is as wicked and cunning as Mordecai makes him out to be, then I must survive, for the sake of my people. Maybe I can outwit him". I want to say this: The lesson to be learned was as hard for Esther then as it is for us today. It was not her responsibility to hang Haman (flesh). That belonged to Mordecai (HS) **Gal.5:17**; Esther had to die to her efforts to hang Haman, so we too must die to our effort to deal with the flesh. The flesh is God's problem.

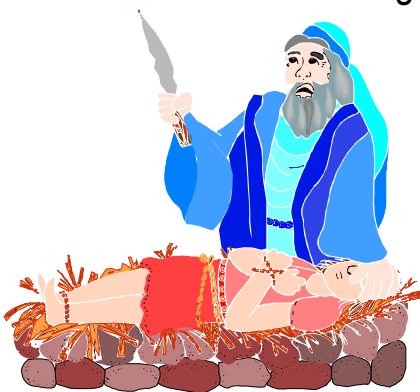
Esther 4:15,16. Esther now was alive to God and dead to self. Notice...three days and three nights, only the golden scepter could raise her from the dead on that third morning as she entered uninvited into the presence of the king.

V. Three days, and three nights:

What an amazing picture. Three days and three nights. The third morning. So many places in scripture this is mentioned. It was on the third morning that Joshua took his people into the place of death in the depths of Jordan.

Three days and three nights Jonah was in the belly of the whale, thrown overboard at his own request, dying to his own self-will, only to be raised again on the third morning and brought up on the seashore to save a perishing people.

It was on the third morning that Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off - **Gen.**



22:4. The place where a knife was to be plunged into the heart of his only son, Isaac, and as the knife flashed in the sunlight on that third morning, God provided a ram in the thicket as a substitute and raised Isaac from the dead. **Heb. 11:18,19.** Death to self is the price that we must pay if we want to be raised from the dead on the third morning to live and walk and share the resurrection life of Jesus Christ on earth. **Col. 3:1-4; Rom. 6:4.**

W. Back again to Esther:

So with lips quivering, legs trembling and with a heart pounding ready to burst, it was a pale faced timid little girl who stepped out on that third morning and crossed the threshold of the royal court into the presence of the king, uninvited. She had nothing to lose, for she was already dead. Can you see the importance, the freedom in all this? **Jn. 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:36.**

Esther 5:1,2 - God had raised her from the dead. Dead to self and alive to God.
Rom. 6:11 & 13.

Back to Esther...at this point all responsibility now rested on the shoulders of Mordecai. All that was left for Esther to do was depend on Him. **Esther 5:3-5; Rom. 15:13.**

X. Haman (*the soul*) puffed up with self-importance:

Needless to say, Haman was puffed up with pride at this double invitation to dine with the queen and "went out that day extremely happy **5:9a**. When Haman got home he called for his friends and Zeresh, his wife, and gave them a typical exhibition of the flesh **5:10-12**. Inflated with self-importance, Haman tells his friends and wife that he is not only now the king's favorite, but also the queen's. However, in all of this there was just one thing that spoiled it all - **5:9b**.

There was one person who still remained unbowed in his presence, and who was unimpressed, and in a sudden fit of fury Haman protested to his wife and friends. **Esther 5:13.**

At this point, things were not looking too rosy for Mordecai, there was a gallows in the garden and it looked like Mordecai was going to hang.

Y. The King's insomnia:

We've mentioned many times of God's orchestration/timing...**6:1**. That night. of all nights - the night between the two banquets, just when Mordecai seemed to have been in such danger, and on the eve of his intended execution - precisely that night the king could not sleep. He tossed and he turned, he threw the blankets off and he pulled the blankets on, he lay on his back he lay on his side, he counted sheep, but still he could not sleep. At last, in desperation, he called for the book of records and they were read before the king. **6:2**. The king suddenly became aware that Mordecai had saved his life. The story is tucked away in the last three verses of the second chapter. **2:21-23**. Somehow the king had never stopped to think that but for Mordecai's intervention he would have been killed. Startled at the thought, the king said **6:3**.

The answer to this question was crushing to the king. There is nothing done for him. Filled with a sense of urgency the king decided that something had to be done immediately to right this wrong, and the king looked for someone to whom he might entrust this responsibility. Again God's orchestration/timing. The picture is magnificent. Look who came into the court just at that precise moment? **6:4-5.**

Z. God's awesome timing:

Think about the timing of all this. ***Just as the king was preparing to honor Mordecai, Haman came in for permission to hang him.*** The king was still fully convinced of Haman's integrity, and to whom could he more confidently entrust the responsibility of honoring Mordecai than to Haman himself - **6:6.** Utterly self centered, and totally inflated with self importance, it seemed inconceivable to Haman that the king would want to honor anyone but himself. Therefore, everything that he suggested was designed for his own advantage. **6:7-9.**

AA. Haman was the King's favorite, wasn't he?

Haman could just see himself being led through the streets of the city. After all, what could be more logical than this, he was the king's favorite, wasn't he? **6:10.** Imagine the look on Haman's face.

It's interesting to consider that the king was sincere in selecting Haman to honor Mordecai, because he was ignorant of the character of the man. For the same reason we too may attempt to use the energy of the flesh in a genuine desire to honor the Lord, but what we will discover now is what the king discovered then, that the flesh will go along with us. It is quite prepared to engage in every form of Christian activity, even though it may seem to honor Christ, if that be the only chance of survival.

The flesh will sing in the church choir, teach a Sunday school, preach from the pulpit, go to Bible School and volunteer for the mission field. If only it can keep its neck out of the noose...**6:11-13.**

BB. Haman is exposed and hanged:

Let's read on. **6:14-7:7** - The enemy had been revealed and for the king it was now clear. This was the moment of truth - you know it is the same for each of us, when the Holy Spirit, through the human spirit, reveals the wickedness of the flesh. **7:8-10.**

CC. The flesh exposed and crucified:

As we mentioned before, when the Lord Jesus Christ died for us He not only paid the price of our redemption, but there was identified with Him and nailed to His cross, that old sin nature, the flesh, which for so long has dominated our soul.

It might be helpful to once again look at **Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20** - This is the truth being expressed in the Book of Esther, when Haman was hanged. No longer could he influence or control the king (soul), and the kingdom, representing the human body, was no longer to be the instrument of his evil acts. **Rom. 6:13.**

DD. The great exchange:

It's interesting to consider that the remarkable change which took place in the character of the king did not come about by improving Haman, but by replacing him with Mordecai. ***It was not a question of change, but rather exchange.*** Haman was rotten through and through, and he never changed. He was entirely without remedy; fit only to die upon his own gallows.

This is exactly what God has to say about that old nature, called the flesh, which dwells within each one of us.

EE. Closing thought:

There is no strength or power in ourselves against the flesh/our Haman that dwells within us. The Father has left us as much dependent upon the work of the cross for our daily deliverance from the flesh as for our salvation. My encouragement to you is: whenever you sense the flesh/Haman, influencing your soul and ultimately controlling the behavior of your body, go back to the Cross. It has been crucified (hung), rendered powerless (and our part in all of this is to believe).

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #13/14

“Discipleship and the Process of Discipleship”

A. Introduction:

Today, we'll be looking at discipleship and the process of discipleship. Let's begin with **Gal. 2:20** and Paul's definition of the Christian life.

Obviously, the cross is a basic ingredient for spiritual growth and hopefully this morning we'll begin to see just how important it really is.

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. **Gal. 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 Pet. 3:18; James 5:7 - For many of us it has been a long season of growth. **Phil. 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. **Ps. 115:3; Ps. 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. **Phil. 2:13; Heb. 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, clever, 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 wine press, a big fish prepared for them through which they will one day pass....**1 Pet. 5:10; James 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-4**

I. Down, down into death, until there is nothing left but Christ:

Eventually 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...**Ps. 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). Then watch the Holy Spirit give you the power and desire to follow Him/to be a disciple.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #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:

Ps. 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...**Deut.8:16; Heb. 12:11; Is. 50:10,11..**

D. There is a rest for the people of God:

Heb. 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. **Heb. 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. **Jn 6:44; Col. 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 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 Pet. 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 Chron. 21:1-15; David

Dan. 3:1-30; Shadrach, Meshack & Abednego

Each of these men, David, Shadrach, Meshack & Abednego 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 **Matt. 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. **Matt. 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.

Matt. 11:28-30.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #16

"Help"

A. Introduction:

Our focus for this lesson will be chapter 16 of this book "The Green Letters", which is simply entitled **"Help"**. It might be helpful to begin our time this morning by asking two questions.

1. Does God need our help? The answer here is obviously no.
2. Do we need God's help? Hopefully we'll answer that question through our study.



B. A beautiful, but barren city:

2 Kings 2:19 - Here was a beautiful city, but beneath that external beauty was a barrenness. When it says that the water was naught, it doesn't mean that there was no water, but rather that it was stale/stagnant...and when it says that the ground was barren, it doesn't mean that it produced nothing. If that was so, the city would not have been so beautiful...the word barren here means to miscarry. Think about this. In the spring everything was growing beautiful and budding, but just as the fruit was about to ripen it fell to the ground prematurely to rot and never

to reproduce. This was the heartbreak, the miscarriage of this beautiful city...so deceptive, and this is the picture of many Christians today.

They are good people...they talk all the Christian lingo and mean every word...they are not hypocrites, they're just tired and overwhelmed with a sense of defeat, frustration, futility and barrenness. Outwardly, no one knows. They smile and shake hands and say God bless you...they look good on the outside, but inwardly they know what we don't; that for years they have labored in vain. The fruit that appears to others has fallen to the ground. **Jn. 15:6**

C. Beautiful lives, but barren:

Unfortunately, there are many stories such as this; Christians who have served the Lord with every ounce of strength they could muster out of a sense of duty, love and devotion and as the years went by they became increasingly more weary, empty, stale, stagnant, fruitless, withered.

D. A true story:

Some years ago, I heard a story of two, young in the Lord, Christian men who were very good friends. One evening as they had fellowship together, one of the men commented that he would like to know what is meant by the term "mighty in spirit". The two agreed to study it out separately and to one-day come together to compare notes. When that day finally

arrived, the two friends found that they disagreed. One believed that the term “mighty in spirit” meant a walk of faith, and the other saw it as a walk of humility. The two men agreed to disagree, and went their separate ways. The man of faith went off to do great things for the Lord as God empowered him, while the other man’s life was filled with fruitless frustration and failure as he set out to make himself humble.

E. Mans efforts to overcome the empty, barren, wilderness life:

It is interesting how many different ways we Christians find to try and overcome the empty barren wilderness life - some of these ways are more prayer; fasting, confession, accountability. Another big favorite is spending more time in the Word. Now these are good things, but not God's way. Let's look at another Old Testament scripture.

F. Manna and the Word:

When the Israelites came out of Egypt they were to go through the Red Sea and right into the promised land, but because of unbelief they wandered in the wilderness and God sustained them for 40 years in that wilderness with a little white wafer called manna.

Manna was the spiritual meat which the church in the wilderness fed on throughout those 40 years of wandering. The taste of manna was like oil

- **Num. 11:7,8.** Now in the language of the Bible, oil speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and each day when the Israelites saw the manna it reminded them of the presence of God...(Remember, one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to bring to remembrance) **Jn. 14:26.** It's interesting that in **Ex. 16** we read that manna also tasted like honey.

Ex. 16:31.



Oil and honey - The Holy Spirit reminding God's people of a land they were to possess, that would be flowing with milk and honey.

Something for us to give some thought to is that there is not much substance in a wafer, just enough to stimulate the taste buds and make the hungry desire more.

An interesting thought to consider is as follows: Often the daily manna is used as a picture of our daily feeding on the word, and it's a good picture, in that they went out each morning and gathered and ate. Daily feeding on the word. **Deut. 8:2,3.**

Back now to the Israelites - The more they fed on manna, the more they tired of it and complained. **Num. 11:6.** It became dull, monotonous, boring...does this not often describe our feeding on the word?

Another interesting thought is that our daily Bible reading (feeding on the Word) is designed by God to allow the Holy Spirit to wet our appetites for the deeper and sweeter truths which

ultimately lead us to our promise land. Remember, our promise land is not a physical place, but rather a place of spiritual abundance, Old Testament promise land, **Deut. 8:7-9**; New Testament promise land, **Gal. 5:22,23**; **Eph. 5:18-21**. Basically, we could say that reading the word is designed to show us our inheritance in Christ, and lead us in to our Canaan.

Back to the Israelites. The more they had of manna, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, the more they disliked it.

If we were honest, many of us Christians would probably say, "that's me".

The word of God has become dull and boring and quite frankly, I'm tired of it. My quiet time has degenerated into a mechanical performance, and much like that barren city in **2 Kings**, it provides me with little or no pleasure or profit.

G. Sustained by the word, but not satisfied:

Like the Israelites, we are sustained by the Word, but not satisfied. It's interesting to consider that all those 40 years in the wilderness, the Israelites were never satisfied, because the manna was only given to sustain life (to keep them alive), never to satisfy.

God never intended them to be satisfied in the wilderness. They were only to be satisfied in the Promised Land.

The same is true for us...God will never satisfy us in the wilderness. (The Word of God will sustain us during our difficult wilderness wanderings, but it will never satisfy us).

H. God's remedy for the barren life:

Turning back once again to **2 Kings 2** we see God's solution for a weary, empty, stale, stagnant, barren life. **2 Kings 2:20-22**. Salt at the source was Elisha's solution.



Keep in mind that salt in the Old Testament is a picture of the risen Lord Jesus Christ...so what is our solution to a weary, empty, stale, stagnant, barren life...Jesus Christ, **Jn. 15:4,5**. He didn't just die to get us out of hell and into heaven. **Jn. 10:10**.

It might be helpful to consider **Rom. 7:24** at this time. "*Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver us*". Of course, the answer is in **vs. 25**, Jesus Christ.

I. Christianity is more than a religion:

You see, Christianity is more than a religion, it's a way of life and Jesus Christ is the very life content of the Christian faith.

I Thess. 5:24 - Notice that the one who calls us, is the very one who will also carry out what He calls us to do. A good example of this is **I Thes. 4:7** - "be ye holy for I am holy". Faithful is He who calls us to a holy life who will also do it.

J. More Biblical proof:

Some other scriptures that make this real clear (**Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13, 20,21**). We must begin to trust Jesus Christ, not only for the death that He died to redeem us, but also for the life that He lives and waits to live through us.

Rom. 5:10 - Notice that we are reconciled (brought from the place of an enemy to the place of a friend by His death, however, this verse goes on to say that we are saved (*the amplified version translates this word "saved" as daily delivered from sin's dominion*) by His life. We must become dependent upon the life of Christ within.

K. Miles Stanford begins chapter 16 entitled, "Help", with this comment.

"For most of us, it's time to stop asking God for help. He didn't help us to be saved, and He doesn't intend to help us live the Christian life. Immaturity considers the Lord Jesus a Helper. Maturity knows Him to be our life."

Someone once said, "It is not difficult to live the Christian life, it is impossible...that is without Jesus Christ".

L. Joint heirs with Jesus:

Rom. 8:17 – "Joint heirs with Jesus"--everything that He is and everything that He has, is ours if we simply walk by faith in dependence upon Him. We must believe to receive. **Heb. 4:2; Rom. 5:2** (access by faith into the grace in which we presently stand).

M. Faith is all that it takes to live the Christian life:

All that Jesus is, is available to us as we walk by faith, and faith is all that it takes to live the Christian life. **Col. 2:6,7**.

Way back in the book of Genesis, Abraham learned this, and I really like what Paul had to say about him. **Rom. 4:19-21**.

N. Christian living is not our living with Christ's help:

Christian living is not our living with Christ's help, it is Christ living His life in us. **Gal. 2:20**. Paul insisted, "For to me to live is Christ". **Phil. 1:21**.

Oftentimes we Christians are found begging God for help when He has clearly shown us in His word that He has already done what we are asking help for. **2Pet. 1:3,4.**

God could never answer a prayer for help re: salvation (oh, God, help save me). The same principle holds true for the Christian life. Jesus Christ is our all. **Col. 2:9,10.**

God is not honored in our continually asking Him for help. Look with me at **Phil. 4:19.** How can we beg for help? Our responsibility is to see in the Word all that is ours in Christ, and then trust Him for that which we need. **1 Cor. 3:21,23.**

O. Burgoon, you're out of control:

Some years ago I met a Christian man by the name of Jim Burgoon, and I asked him how he had come to know the Lord. He responded by saying that one day, his wife had come home from the doctor and announced to him that she was pregnant with their seventh child. Immediately, he said, I turned and walked into the bathroom, looked in the mirror, and said 'Burgoon, you're out of control'. I then went outside, down the street, and into the first church I found. The secretary led me back to the pastor's study where I explained my problem, and he led me to the Lord."

P. Closing comment:

For the most part, we're just like Jim Burgoon...we're out of control, and we need more than Christ's help, we need His life.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #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 **2Cor 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. **2Cor. 4:12; Col. 1:24**. Each of us must be thoroughly cultivated (refined) before God can effectively use us to cultivate others. **2 Cor. 1:3-5; Ps. 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 Cor. 3:18** His goal is to see Christ in believers. **Gal. 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 **Matt. 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 Pet. 5:2,3; 1 Tim.4:12; 1 Thess. 2:7-12**

E. Unfortunate example:



Some time back, I heard of a fifteen-year-old boy who put a shotgun to his chest, and pulled the trigger. The boy's unsaved father asked the pastor who was speaking at the funeral to share his thoughts openly as to why his son had come to such a horrible end. As the pastor spoke with family members, teachers and friends, it became quite obvious that this young man had no godly example in his life. He basically had the normal problems of a fifteen year old, but was overwhelmed by them, because there was no one to share a "message of hope", or to live it out before him.

F. 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 **Phil. 1:21**. It's going back to the cross and seeing old self crucified so that Christ can now live in and through us. **Gal. 2:20**. (*Notice that crucifixion precedes the Christ life*)

G. The Christian life can only be explained in terms of Jesus Christ:

We mentioned in a previous study that it is impossible to live the Christian life, that is, without Jesus Christ. It's interesting to consider that the Christian life can only be explained in terms of Jesus Christ. **1 Cor. 2:1,2**.

If there is any human explanation for our lives, if we can explain our lives in terms of human effort, or will power, or talents, or money, or courage, or intellect, or dedication, or sacrifice, then although we may possess the Christian life, we aren't living it.

If the way we are living our lives can be explained in human terms, then there is no difference between us and our unsaved neighbor or co-workers, because the way they live their lives can be humanly explained also. Therefore, the only difference they see is that we are religious..

H. Old Testament pictures often times reveal New Testament spiritual truth:

Over the past number of weeks we have had the opportunity to go back into the Old Testament and see how the Lord has used Old Testament scriptures as a physical picture to teach us spiritual truths.

We talked of how the Israelites came out of Egypt and that God intended for them to immediately enter the promised land...however, they spent 40 years in the wilderness because of unbelief.

Last week we looked at manna and how it is a physical picture of our daily feeding on the Word of God.

I. Consider the Jewish Passover:

Let's go back again today to the Israelites in **Ex. 12** to the Passover, which was to be a very special day. **Ex. 12:1-10**. This is an Old Testament picture of our salvation. Notice the Passover lamb in **vs. 5**. (Christ, our Passover lamb **1 Cor.5:7**).

J. How was the Passover to be celebrated?

It might be helpful to focus for a moment on how the Passover was to be celebrated - **Ex. 12:11**. On the day that the blood was to be applied they had to be ready, equipped for a journey, and not just a short trip, but the beginning of a new life in a new land. From that day on they would never be the same, just as it should be on the day of our salvation.

K. It's not real clear whether they celebrated the Passover in the wilderness:

An interesting thought to consider is; The Israelites were to go right out of Egypt into Canaan, however because of unbelief they wandered 40 years in the wilderness. It's not real clear whether the Lord commanded them to celebrate the Passover each year while they were in the wilderness, but what if He had.

Look back with me to **Ex. 13:1-4+8**. The Passover was to celebrate their coming out of Egypt. Can you imagine the response of a boy in the wilderness, whose father told him that they were going to celebrate coming out of Egypt? He had just eaten manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for supper, and everyone knew what they boy was going to have for breakfast the next morning. He probably commented to his father, why are we celebrating...I've heard that things were much better in Egypt.

L. A thought to ponder:

Could it be possible that this is why so many children grow up unsaved or rebellious in Christian homes today? Could the reason be that so many Christian parents are living in the wilderness and therefore are not examples to their flock? Their children have seen so little of

what it means to walk with a risen Christ. They've seen nothing of the joy of the Christian life. (Fruit of the Spirit).

They probably look around at their unsaved friends and say, "man...things are better in Egypt". There appears to be a rather simple solution to raising Godly children and that is being a Godly example.

M. 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.

N. 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?

Phi. 2:5-8; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Gal. 5:22,23.

O. Another Old Testament picture:

Deut. 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. **Prov. 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 - **Prov. 14:12.** When we enter into God's rest we give up the right to do what is right in our own eyes.

P. 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.

Q. 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 Pet. 5:2.**

R. 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. **Col. 2:7.**

S. We can only teach the lessons that we've learned:

Cultivation/a refining process is the prerequisite for a ministry of cultivating others. **Jn. 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.

T. Concluding remarks:

I'll never forget an assistant pastor's comment as he witnessed God's refining/cultivating process in a young family in his church. This family had gone through a number of very difficult trials, and one day as this pastor sat trying to encourage the young husband and father in the midst of one of the more devastating trials he commented, "God must have something very special for you to take you through all this. Only He knows the bleeding hearts that you must one day minister to". **Heb. 10:32**

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #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.

I think **1 Cor. 13:7** gives us a word picture of continuing on.... Oh, how I wish we could bypass this chapter. If I had my way I would go to God on behalf of all of us and say, now God, we've been studying spiritual growth principles for several months now and we've learned a lot. It's time for You to miraculously move us into a place of maturity. Unfortunately,

that is not God's way.

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”.

Ex. 23:29,30 gives us a physical picture of this spiritual truth.

“Many of these development areas are just plain desert - 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 grinds to a halt; everything seems to add up to nothing. It is during these necessary times that we often feel that God has ceased to carry out His part, and there is little or no use in continuing on, and yet there is a hunger deep within that will not allow us to quit.” **Ps. 63:1-8; Ps. 73:1-26.**

C. More from Miles Stanford:

Mr. Stanford goes on to ask this question: “Are we to love and trust and respond to God only when He seems to be "blessing" us? What sort of love would that be? **Self-love!** You may have noticed that God strips everything away from time to time to give us the opportunity of

loving and trusting and responding to Him just because He is God. God is in the process of bringing us to a place where nothing matters but him.” **Phil. 3:7-8**

An interesting comment from Paul in **2 Tim. 4:16-18**.

D. Feet first:

It appears that Mary of Bethany 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). **Jn. 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.

Jn. 11:28-32

E. 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.

F. A lot of childish self-centeredness:

During the early years of our Christian life, let's face it, there is a lot of childish self-centeredness, which our Father patiently tolerates. We are self-focused and our attitude is Jesus died for **my** sins. God has saved **me**, the Cross was for **my** sake, **my** joy and **my**

relief. There is a great deal of immature, self-centeredness that dominates these early years. We pray for and expect God's blessings in all areas of our lives. We look for relief from difficult times, and freedom from the guilt and inconvenience of sin, and desire from Him peace, joy, and a comfortable life.

G. The way up is down:

However, in His time, the Lord begins to reveal a sinful malignancy that dwells within each one of us. **Rom. 7:17 & 20**. Down, down we go into the defeat of **Rom. 7:23,24**.

H. A growing freedom from the power of sin:

By means of this futile struggle against sin, the Lord is guiding us into the identification truth of **Rom. 6**. **Rom. 6:6, 11** As we appropriate the truth of **Rom. 6:6**, we begin to enjoy a growing freedom from the power and reign of sin, **Rom. 6:14**, and our daily lives begin to reflect less of the works of the flesh and more of the fruit of the Spirit.

I. However...

Hopefully, this is where many of us are today. Lord willing, we're beginning to experience freedom from sin's power; **however**, even while growing in "deeper truth", we are probably still more occupied with the self-life than with Christ. Unfortunately at this point, most of us are still occupied with **me**, focusing on obtaining joy and peace and self control, rather than focusing on the only One who can give us that joy and peace.

For many of us it has been, "that I may know freedom from sin and that I may know truth, that I may know peace", rather than "that I may know Him" **Phil. 3:10; Jn. 17:3**.

J. 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. **Rom. 6:3-5**
2. Notice also that the prodigal son went from glory down, down and up to greater glory. **vs. 22, 23; Ps. 71:20,21; Job 42:10-12-17; Phil. 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. **Rom. 8:28**.

K. God's paradoxical progress:

All this paradoxical progress, ***the way up being down***, has a strong tendency to make us feel that the Lord has forsaken us.

A number of years ago, the Lord began this process in an extremely self-confident and self-focused couple who were in missionary training. The husband was so confident in his prayer life that he believed God would do whatever he asked, and he openly shared that in chapel one day. Later that afternoon, a young man came to him and asked; “what will you do when the day comes that God does not answer **your** prayer, **your** way?” The response was, “I can’t ever imagine that happening”. Well it wasn’t long until it did happen. Part of the training was a three day/32 mile hike, and the men started out at 5AM with full packs in the pouring down rain. By 10 o’clock, our friend began to experience pain in one leg, and by noon he was really hurting; but no problem he thought, “I’ll just pray and the Lord will take the pain away”. So he prayed and prayed, but the pain got so bad that he eventually cried out, ***“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me”***. Some time later, he shared I can’t tell you how confused I was that day; I didn’t understand God’s paradoxical process, the way up is down”.

Ps. 51:16,17.

L. 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.

M. Where “the Christ Life” begins:

We have mentioned a number of times that the Christ life begins at Rom. 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 Rom. 12:1

Paul arrived at this point early in his Christian life. **Acts. 9:1-6.** Later on Paul wrote this - **2 Cor. 3:4,5;** The church at Macedonia is another great example – **2 Cor. 8:1-5.**

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 Thes. 5:24.**

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #19

"Position VS Condition"

A. Introduction:

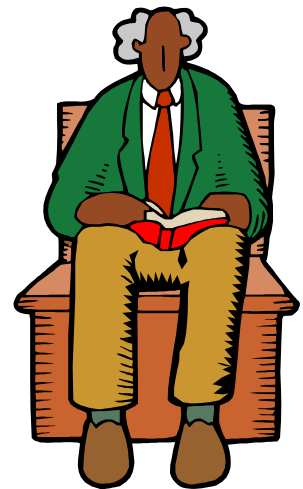
It might be some help to consider a rather interesting book written by Watchman Nee entitled "Sit, Walk, Stand". This book is actually a commentary on Paul's letter to the Ephesians; and like so many of Paul's epistles, the letter to the Ephesians is divided into two sections (doctrinal and practical), but if we look a bit closer, we will find that the last half, the practical section, is subdivided again according to its subject matter.

So overall, we could say that we really have three subdivisions;

1. **Chapter 1-3** - doctrinal (our position in Christ - sit).
2. **Chapter 4:1-6:9** - practical (our life in the world - walk)
3. **Chapter 6:10-end** - practical (our attitude to the enemy - stand).

B. The Christian life begins with sitting:

in the first section of the letter we see the word **sit** which really is the key to that section **Eph. 1:20; Eph. 2:6**. God made Jesus to **sit**....and made us to **sit** with Him. The true Christian life does not begin with walking; it begins with **sitting**. It really begins with a man in Christ, **seated**, by faith, together with Him in the heavens. **I Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:1-3**.



C. God invites us to sit and rest in our position:

So at the beginning of Ephesians we are invited to **sit** and rest in our position and enjoy all that God has done for us. **Eph. 1:16-19**.

In the spiritual realm, to **sit** down is simply to rest our weight, our load, ourselves, our future, everything upon the Lord and let Him bear the responsibility. **I Pet. 5:6,7; Matt. 11:28; Ps. 55:22; Ps. 84:5-7**.

A rather interesting scripture re this walk of faith and rest - **Heb. 3:18-4:11**.

D. From the beginning of time we see this principle of man entering into God's rest.

In the creation God worked from the first to the sixth day and 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 the 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.

Here is something to think about - God works before He rests, while man must first enter into God's rest in order to work. A good example is the Gospel: God first completed the work of salvation and man does nothing but can enter, by faith, directly into His finished work.

E. "I believe God's going to save us"!

I once heard a story of a missionary in Thailand who was teaching a group of tribal people chronologically through the Bible. One evening after teaching the ten commandments, the people were very quiet, which was rather unusual for this particular group, so the missionary asked them what they were thinking. They responded by saying; "we've done all these things, we've committed all these things. We're going to hell, what can we do? The missionary took them back to what he had already taught them and asked; "remember in Noah's time, when God was going to destroy the world because of the sins of the people, could Noah save himself"? The people responded, "No, God saved him. "What about in Sodom and Gomorrah, when God was going to destroy the cities because of the sins of the people; could Lot save himself"? Again, the answer was "No, God saved him". "What about down in Egypt"? "No, God saved them". "What about at the Red Sea"? "No, God saved them".

The missionary leaned back and waited a moment, and all of a sudden one man stood up and said, "I believe God is going to save us"; another man corrected him, "I believe He's already done it, we just don't know what He's done".

F. God has done everything in Christ:

A rather interesting Scripture to consider - **Luke 14:15-17** (*come for all things are ready*). True Biblical Christianity is this; God has done everything in Christ, and all that is left for us to do is to step by faith, into the enjoyment of His finished work.

G. The prodigal son:

Of all the parables in the gospels, the story of the prodigal son probably gives us one of the best illustrations of all this...**Luke 15:11-32**. In these verses Jesus reveals what gladdens the Father's heart...it is not an older brother who is continually working for the Father, but rather a younger brother who does nothing at all for him, and let's the father do everything for him. It is not an older brother who always wants to be a giver, but a younger brother who is always willing to be a receiver. When the prodigal son returned home having wasted all

that was given him, the father never spoke one word of rebuke for the waste, nor did he even ask about his finances; there was no concern over all that was spent; he only rejoiced over the opportunity that the son's return gave him for spending more. In this parable the younger son was all wrong, but he came home and found rest in his position...son of a wealthy father.

H. All spiritual life and growth is based upon the principle of position.

It's interesting to give thought to the fact that through physical birth, we entered our human family position, (*upper middle class, Caucasian, born in America, etc.*) we are the product of our position.

A good example is the king of Thailand. He was born into the royal family, he did nothing to gain that position. Another example is In a small town in the Alleghany Mountains of Pennsylvania, there was a little girl Betsy who was born into a wealthy family who lived in a very comfortable home in a beautiful part of town; while on the other side of tracks, there were twins born into a family so poor, that they were forced to live in a dilapidated, rat infested house that was situated next to the town dump. While Betsy slept and played safely in her beautiful home, the twins were in a very dangerous situation. Left alone at six months old, while their mother went off to the grocery store, the rats feasted on the boys and damaged an arm so severely that amputation was the only solution. None of these people did anything to gain their position.

I. We are the product of our position:

John 3:3-6 As it was in our physical birth, so it is in our spiritual birth. When we are born again into the family of God, we are positioned in Christ. **1 Cor. 1:30**; Our position is in Him - **Acts 17:28**.

Spiritual birth has placed us into an accepted position in Christ.

And now **2 Cor. 5:17**. This is the position in which every believer has been placed (***new creation***).

Here is a key thought...If we miss this, we've missed the whole point of our study.

If we are to grow and become fruitful, our faith must be anchored in our position in Christ.

Our daily condition is actually a product of our eternal position.

Think back to the King of Thailand/Twins.

Our position - is who we are in Christ.

Our condition - is what we are in our daily lives.

Our position - is unchangeable.

Our condition - is variable.

Our position - affects our condition, but in no way does our condition affect our position.

J. Mephibosheth

Remember the Old Testament is often times a physical picture of a spiritual truth.. Look with me to **2 Sam. 9**. As we read through this chapter, notice how the position that Mephibosheth was born into affected his condition.

K. Position of justification:

Let's look at how faith in our position can actually affect our condition...for example, our position of justification **Rom. 5:1** - positionally we are declared righteous and treated as such by God (a fact believed).

Now remember **Gal. 5:22,23**. As we by faith rest in our justified position, we can stop trying to work our way to heaven and we will begin to experience new found peace and joy and freedom in the Lord. (no fear of Hell).

K. Faith in our position, gives us a deep assurance:

Another area is assurance of salvation. It is based squarely on our position. Rarely will a new believer feel saved. **Rom. 8:16**. The human spirit lies beyond the range of consciousness, therefore assurance of salvation is not gained through one's senses.

As we rest in our position by faith in the scriptural facts, the Holy Spirit gives us a deep assurance, a joy, a peace, a freedom. **Is. 32:17**.

L. Position of acceptance:

Positionally we are accepted. **Eph. 1:6**. This is one of the most vital positional truths. When a believer rests in his position of acceptance, he is freed from self effort. It is only natural in this society to seek acceptance through production (law) rather than reception (grace) to consent to be loved while unworthy is very difficult - **Rom. 5:6-10**.

As we learn to rest in our position of acceptance, we grow to expect less and less of ourselves and more and more from Him. **Ps. 62:5; 2Cor.3:4,5**.

M. Position of completeness:

Here is another freeing truth. We are complete in Him. **Col. 2:6-10**. All that we will ever need for our Christian life, now and forever, is ready and waiting in the Lord Jesus complete. **2 Pet. 1:3**.

As we by faith rest in our position of completeness, the Holy Spirit works out that completeness in our condition...no more striving to become complete; We are complete in Him. (Scott's letter)

M. Eternally secure:

Here is another; our position of eternal security.... We are unconditionally and eternally secure. **Jn. 10:28,29; 2 Tim. 1:12.**

Resting in our eternally secure position frees us from the futile self-effort of striving to keep from sin in order that we not lose our salvation. If Christ can save us, what would ever make us think that He cannot keep us saved? **Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; Jude 24.**

N. Position of identification:

Here is another biggie - our position of identification. The trouble that we face as born again Christians is not sin as to its penalty, but sin as a ruling power, sin as a master. To be freed from sin as a master, we must rest in our position of identification with Christ and His crucifixion. **Rom. 6:6,11.** The old I in you and me was positionally crucified with Christ...the old man, self, the flesh, power of sin was taken to the cross with or in Christ and crucified and taken into the tomb with Christ and buried. **Gal.2:20;** speaks of our death. Deliverance from the power of sin rests in our acceptance of this fact of co-crucifixion. **Rom. 6:14.**

O. Jesus Christ is full provision for our Christian lives:

2 Cor. 3:5. As we by faith rest in our position the Holy Spirit begins to work it out in our condition. In other words, our condition begins to reflect our position. By faith we abide and live in Him, and by faith His life is developed in us.

P. Abide in our position:

Turn with me to **John 15:1, 2A, 4, 5.** Here we see that He brings forth fruit. If we really stop and think about it, the branch produces nothing for the vine, either for others or for itself...the vine; the positional source of life produces it all. All that is left for the branch to do is to abide, rest in its position, source of life. As we believers abide in the vine, rest in our position in Christ, much fruit (the fruit of the Spirit) is manifested in our condition.



Q A great example of resting in our position is Paul in the book of Philippians:

At the writing of this epistle, Paul is awaiting execution, and he writes about the joy of the Christian life. **Phil. 1:12-18; 3:1-3; 4:4-7; 4:11-13.** This does not sound like a man on death row.

R. Conclusion:

Interesting Scriptures - **Jn 8:32**; **Jn 11:43-44**. We must take off the grave clothes that are binding us.... The lie that we must produce or perform for God, and instead put on truth/positional truth, which will cut us loose and let us go.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #20

“Carnal Christian, Spiritual Man”

A. Introduction:

It might be helpful for us to take a closer look at something that we briefly discussed in chapter 10 of "The Green Letters", and that is the carnal Christian.

Remember that a carnal Christian is a Christian who is walking in the flesh.

Actually, it would probably be good to go a bit further and not only consider the carnal Christian, but also let's examine a spiritual man. What does a carnal Christian look like; what are the marks or characteristics of a carnal Christian; and then, what are the marks or characteristics of a spiritual man.

In other words, here is a carnal Christian and there is a spiritual man; now how do we get from carnality to spirituality. Well, Lord willing, that is what the Holy Spirit will be revealing to us in the coming weeks.

B. Two kinds of Christians:

Turning now to **1Cor.3**, let's begin by looking at **verses 1 through 3**.

There are 2 kinds of Christians described here and it is very important that each of us knows which one we are. Are we carnal (self-centered) or spiritual (God- centered).

C. Marks or characteristics of a carnal Christian:

Which kind of Christian am I, which kind are you? Carnal or Spiritual? How can we know if we are carnal? Let's look at the marks or characteristics of a carnal Christian (self centered).

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

Rom. 7:22,23; Gal. 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 and peace (**Gal.5:22,23**) However, more often the flesh is dominating the scene and the deeds of the flesh are very evident. **Gal. 5:19,20**; This inward conflict also results in outward conflict. **1 Cor. 3:3,4; 3 Jn.9,10**;

2 - It is a life of repeated defeat. Mark 14:26-38 & 50. In Rom. 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. **Rom. 7:15.** Give some thought to your own life now. How many times have you 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 with a co-worker or friend?

3 - It is a life of prolonged infancy. 1 Cor. 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. **Heb. 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 (me at Reston). I was a spiritual parasite living on predigested food and therefore underfed. Miles - "I'm through answering questions for a while. 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 is a life of fruitlessness - Jn. 15:1,2,16 - The focus here is on fruit bearing. A carnal Christian's life is a life of fruitlessness; no fruit of the Spirit, no fruitful ministry - **John 15:5,6A; Mark 11:12-14 & 20-21.**

5 - It is a life of double mindedness and hypocrisy. The carnal Christian says one thing and does another. **James 1:6-8; Prov.24:21.** The carnal Christian is also a hypocrite. **Matt.23:1-28; I kings 13:1-24**

6 - It's a life of rebellious pride. Turn with me to **Ex. 8:4-10.** It has amazed me for years that Pharaoh didn't tell Moses to remove those frogs immediately...I've often wondered why would he want to spend one more night with those stinking frogs. I know Pharaoh is unsaved here and for that reason this is not a good analogy...but as I look back over my carnal Christian life, I kind of see myself like Pharaoh here. There is the continuous conflict and repeated defeat, fruitlessness and double-mindedness...but more than that there is this rebellious pride (no big deal, take them away tomorrow).

Luke 4:33-35 - Notice that one last rebellion.

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

D. Comment by J. C. Metcalf:

Those are just some of the characteristics of a carnal Christian. It's interesting this comment by J.C.Metcalf; "All through life, God has to show us our utter sinfulness and need before He can lead us into realms of grace. Self revelation precedes divine revelation."

E. Marks or characteristic of a spiritual man:

Let's move on now to look at the marks or characteristics of a spiritual man.

The life of a spiritual Christian, (one who is walking in the spirit...controlled by the spirit... Now remember **Col.2:6** - How did we trust Christ Jesus? By faith. So how are we to walk in Him, or walk in the Spirit? By Faith. So basically what we are saying here is that one who is walking in the Spirit, or controlled by the Spirit, is one who is walking by faith. Notice the last part of **Gal.2:20**.



We could begin by saying that the life of a spiritual Christian, is a life filled with the fruit of the Spirit. **Gal.5:22,23**

1. It is a life of peace. Remember the first mark of the carnal Christian that we looked at; a life of continuous conflict. The spiritual man's life is just the opposite; it is a life of peace.

Phil.4:6,7; Jn.14:27

We're not implying here that there are no problems or trials in the life of a spiritual Christian; quite the contrary...Remember, as we discussed before, one of the basic ingredients for spiritual growth is need, but in the midst of these trials and problems, there is peace knowing that we have victory through Christ. **2Cor.4:7-9; Rom.8:28; Acts 16:22-25**

Regarding this life of peace, it might be helpful to mention an area that appears to be a problem for most of us.....**SIN....**

A spiritual Christian is no longer dominated by sin, (**Rom.6:14**) therefore he is free from self condemnation and a guilty conscience; so he enjoys peace and joy and rest in the Lord.

Rom. 8:1,6; Is. 26:3

2. It is a life of victory. Again, remember the repeated defeat of the carnal Christian.

1Cor.15:57; Rom.8:37; 2Cor.2:14 (Notice the word always)

In a book entitled "Life on the Highest Plane" by Ruth Paxson, she uses the term "Habitual Victory", which really means that victory is the habit of a spiritual Christian. **1Jn.3:9**

Keep in mind that the real meaning of victory in the Christian's life is not merely an outward control. {Such as controlling our anger/concealing our impatience, etc.) Real victory never forces us to conceal what is on the inside.

I heard a story of a little boy named Johnny who was standing in the class room when all students were to be sitting. The teacher said, "Johnny, please sit down" To which Johnny responded "no". The teacher repeated the command in a much stronger tone of voice; "Johnny, I said sit down". Again Johnny responded "No". The teacher came closer and bent down until she was face to face with little Johnny and said, "either you sit down Johnny, or I take you to the principal". As Johnny sat down, he looked up at the teacher and said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside".

A life of habitual victory...Again, let's look at the area of sin; is there such a thing, here on earth, as habitual victory over sin. God says there is; Remember **Rom.6:14; 1Jn.3:9** Please turn to **Rom.8:2**. The carnal man is under the power of the law of sin, while the spiritual man is delivered from the law of sin by a higher power, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

3. It is a life of growth into Christ likeness.

Remember a while back in the Purpose chapter, we looked at God's ultimate purpose in all of our lives, and determined that it is to mold us into the image of Christ. And we asked the question; what is the image of Christ? It is one of death; death to self. **Phil.2:5-8; Phil.3:10; Luke 9:23 John 12:24; 1Cor.15:36; 2Cor.7:3**

Why is it so important that we die to self; **2Cor.4:10,11**

How is this growth into Christ likeness accomplished. It seems that God has a natural law in effect, that we become like what we focus our attention on. **2Cor.3:18**

With a growing knowledge of Him and a growing dependence on Him, there will just naturally be a growing likeness to Him. **2 Pet. 1:3,4**

4. It is a life of supernatural power.

John 14:12 These words were spoken by Christ to a group of uneducated men. One of them was Peter, a weather-beaten, rough, old fisherman. He probably wouldn't be very comfortable, or do well in a present day Bible School or Seminary, but he was part of the group of believers to whom this promise was given; and one day it came true in his life when through one sermon, he won more souls to the Lord than Jesus did in the entire 3 years of His public ministry. **Acts 2:38-41**

Where did Peter's power come from, and is it available for us today? **Acts 1:8; Eph.3:20**
Another rather interesting verse; **Acts 4:13**

5. It is a life of separateness;

Heb.7:26 - Christ lived a separated life...He was in the world, but not of it...He had close contact with it, but without conforming to it... Interesting scripture; **Luke 21:37,38; John 8:1,2**

The spiritual Christian has the same relationship to the world as Christ had. **John 17:16**
The world will have the same attitude toward the spiritual Christian that it had toward Jesus.
John 15:19,20; Gal.6:14

6. It is a life of holiness - 1Pet.1:15,16; 1Thes.4:7 and 5:24; Rom.6:22; Heb.12:10

These are the marks of a spiritual Christian; **1. Peace 2. Victory 3. Christ likeness 4. Power 5. Separated life 6. Holiness**

F. Elijah – A spiritual man:

One of the greatest Old Testament examples of a spiritual man is Elijah in **1Kings 18:17-40**. Notice the peace in Elijah; victory; Christ likeness; power; and even separateness and holiness.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #21

“Carnality to Spirituality/The Value of the Blood”

A. Introduction:

Let's begin our study by turning to.....**Rom. 15:13**

B. Some history behind The Book of Romans:

There is something about the book of Romans which makes it different from all other epistles that Paul wrote... The folks that Paul was writing to, were gentile converts that he had never seen, and having to write a letter of commendation for Phoebe, who was about to visit Rome, (**Rom. 16:1-2**) he took the opportunity of unfolding to them the whole Gospel of God.

Romans chapter 1 seems to indicate that Paul had never been to Rome, nor had he met with the Christians there, (**Rom.1:9-11**) and from **verses 7 & 8** it appears that he knew little of their Spiritual condition; therefore he took nothing for granted and began this epistle at the very foundation of the Christian faith....He refused to build on another man's foundation....

Rom.15:20....He preferred to lay that foundation himself.....

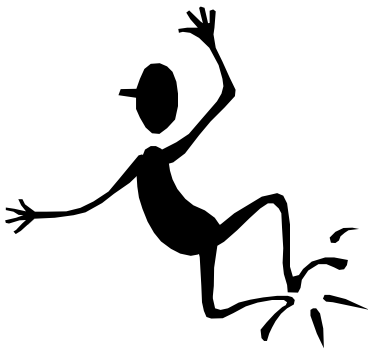
His goal was to see the believers in Rome established according to that which he calls “My Gospel”....**Rom.2:16; Rom.16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8**

C. Filled with joy and peace, and abounding in hope:

With all this as an introduction, let's go back now to **Rom. 15:13**. Notice that this verse comes at the end of the doctrinal and practical part of the epistle. Paul concludes with some personal remarks, but his actual teaching ends at this verse and it appears that this is the goal of his teaching in Romans.

In the last chapter, we took a brief look at the marks or characteristics of a carnal Christian.

Then we even looked closer look at the marks or characteristics of a spiritual man, and we asked the question, how do we get from carnality to spirituality?



Our answer is right here in the book of Romans and our goal is the same as Paul's. **Rom. 15:13** is a word picture of a **believing spiritual man** who is **filled with all joy and peace**, and is **abounding in hope** through the power of the Holy Spirit.

D. So how do we get here?

What course do we take? Where do we start? It would seem to make sense that we go back and follow Paul's course. To begin, let's suppose that a hurting unbeliever comes to us who is totally frustrated with life and desires to end it all. So we show him **Rom. 15:13** and tell him that this can be his life. "He responds with, I want that, tell me more." So what are we going to do? How do we bring him from an unbeliever to a spiritual man? Well obviously, our first step is seeing him come to Christ, and basically, that is Paul's message in the first five chapters of Romans. (We'll not spend a lot of time on this, but...)

The first step to salvation is knowing that we are sinners and Paul does a good job of exposing man's sinfulness in **Rom. 3:10-23**. In **vs. 24** it is clearly revealed that salvation is strictly by grace through Jesus Christ. In **vs. 25** that word propitiation means substitute. (Jesus Christ is our substitute through faith in His blood).

*A number of years ago, I heard a story of a non-Christian young man who was in a rather difficult situation in life, and prayed the following prayer; "If there is really a God up there, then get me out of this mess". Within two weeks, he was out of the situation and as he thought about all of this, he came to the conclusion that there must be a God. So he got a Bible and began to read from page one. It took him about a year to get to the Book of Romans, and in chapter 3 he saw the word propitiation, and he wasn't quite sure the meaning, so he looked it up in a dictionary. Propitiation has numerous meanings, but when he saw the word substitute, he knew that Jesus Christ was his substitute and he trusted Christ as his Savior. **Rom. 3:28**.*

Lord willing our unbeliever is now a believer; hopefully a growing believer that is well on his way to becoming a spiritual man.

E. Understanding the value of the blood:

Therefore, one of the first things that we should share with him is something that is of the utmost importance to every growing Christian, and that is an understanding of the importance/value of the blood of Christ.

If we were to ask here today how many of us are struggling with guilt in our lives, I would guess that if we were honest, most everyone would have to raise their hand. The reason being that few of us understand the importance and value of the blood.

F. Blood cleanses us from sins; the cross frees us from the power of sin:

The first eight chapters of Romans is rather interesting...from **1:1 to 5:11** forms the first half of these 8 chapters, and from **5:12 to 8:31** the second half. A careful study will show us that the subject matter of the two halves is not the same. For example, in the first section we find the plural word "sins" being used. **Rom. 4:7; 3:25**. In the second section, there is a change and the singular word "sin" is used again and again. **Rom. 5:12-13; 20,21; 6:1-2 & 6**.

In the first section it is a question of the sins we have committed, but in the last half the focus is on sin as a power, or law, working in us. **Rom. 7:18 & 20.**

For sure we need forgiveness for our sins, but we also desperately need deliverance from the power of sin.

In the first half of **Rom. 1 to 8**, twice we see the reference to the blood of Christ. **Rom. 3:25 & 5:9**, but in the second half, a new idea is introduced, and that is the cross on which we are said to have been crucified with Christ. **Rom. 6:6.**

As we look further, we see that the blood deals with what we have done, (our sins), whereas the cross deals with what we are, (sinners by nature).

G. The blood and its value in dealing with our sins:

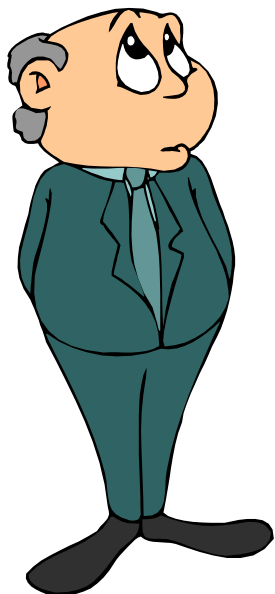
The blood is primarily for God. When sins occur, it causes death (separation) **Rom. 6:23; Is. 59:1,2.** God has given us a remedy for this death (separation) and that is the blood. The blood is for atonement (payment, satisfaction, or reconciliation) **Lev. 17:11.**

We need forgiveness for the sins we have committed, and they are forgiven, not because God overlooks what we have done but because He sees the blood. The blood then is primarily for God. If we want to understand the value of the blood, then we must see the value God puts on it. **1 Jn. 1:7; Heb. 9:22.** All throughout the Old Testament the word "blood" is used in connection with the idea of atonement, and it is used in this way over 100 times.



H. The day of Atonement:

In the Old Testament there was a special day that had great bearing on the people's sins, and that day was the day of atonement. On that day no one could enter the tabernacle except the high priest. It was he alone who took the blood and going into the "most holy place", sprinkled it there to make atonement for the people. It's interesting to consider that the high priest was a type of Christ. **Heb. 9:11-12.**



I. God is totally satisfied with the blood:

We must remember that God is the one who demands that the blood be presented in order to satisfy His own righteousness, and it is He who says, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you". **Ex. 12:23.** THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WHOLLY SATISFIES GOD.

J. The blood must also satisfy us:

The blood also has a second value, and that is toward man. When sin

occurs it brings with it a sense of guilt, and the blood cleanses our consciences. **Heb. 10:22**
- ***It doesn't matter what we've done; no matter how terrible; the blood of Christ satisfies God.***

K. Confession doesn't take away the guilty feelings:

Let's think this through a moment. we've just sinned and we're convicted of it and feel terrible...so we confess it, but still feel guilty. Even though God is satisfied with the blood and has forgiven us, we are unable to forgive ourselves. So we live at **1 Jn. 1:9**, confessing our sins, being forgiven by God, but still feeling guilty, so we confess again and again and again.

L. Faith in the blood:

John 8:32 tells us, ***"if we know the truth, the truth will set us free"*** - The truth is that **God is totally satisfied with the blood** and as we rest in that truth, the Holy Spirit will set us free.

M. Guilt weakens our faith, but the walk of faith produces a good conscience:

A scripture that has been a big help for many is **1 Tim 1:17-19**. The Phillips's translation of the Bible translates these verses this way. *"Sending Timothy out to battle armed only with faith and a good conscience"*. Faith and a good conscience are interdependent of each other. As soon as we find our conscience is uneasy, our faith leaks away and immediately we can no longer face God. Guilt weakens our faith, but the walk of faith produces a good conscience.

N. Conclusion

In order for us to keep walking with the Lord and growing spiritually, we must have a clear conscience; and that means knowing the value of the blood. ***Our basis of approach to God must always be the blood of Christ.*** God's acceptance of that blood is the ground upon which we may enter; and there is no other. **Heb. 10:19.**

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #22

Carnality to Spirituality/The Value of the Cross

A. Introduction:

Again in this lesson, let's begin by looking at **Rom.15:13** which we determined in the last lesson was a word picture of a spiritual man.

This is the goal of Paul's teaching in Romans, and also should be the goal of every Christian.

B. Review:

Last week we asked the questions; how do we get to this point in our lives? What course do we take? Together, we decided that it would make sense to go back and follow Paul's course as laid out in Romans, so we went back and looked at his first step; becoming a believer in Christ. **Rom. 3:24,25, &28**

Now once we've become a believer, we have gotten past the first great barrier and have a good start toward the goal of becoming a spiritual Christian.

Many new Christians have the idea that when we finally come to Christ, and get past that first barrier, we've really arrived at the goal. For a while we seem happy and think everything will be joy, and there will never be another cloud in life. **HOW WRONG WE ARE!**

We soon discover that the Christian life is not problem free. However, God has given us everything that we need to remedy the problems of life. **2Pet.1:3**

And so in our last lesson, we discussed problem #1.... **GUILT**....Do you remember what God has given us to overcome guilt? **THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. HEB.10:19,22**

C. Evil is present within:

But now we come to another difficulty, which seems to be even more insurmountable than the first; We begin to discover that evil is present within us, even when we have the strongest desire to do good. We want to be holy and devoted to Christ, but so often we find ourselves wallowing in the muck and mire of sin. We make a great effort to get out of this by more Bible reading, or more prayer, or more determined commitment and dedication; but all is vain.

There is, inside of each one of us, a terrible evil that harasses and hinders and throws us down into that mire in spite of all efforts to go on to the goal of becoming a spiritual Christian.

Rom.7:15-24

How can I/we be filled with joy and peace, while being tormented and held in bondage by an evil power that is obviously too strong for us?

From **Rom. 5:12** to the end of **chapter 8**, Paul lays out the solution for this seemingly insurmountable problem. It's not sins which are in question, but rather sin. It's not the sins that we have committed, but rather sin as a power working in us.

D. There is a war going on:



Back in **Rom. 5:1**, Paul speaks of "peace with God", and this comes at salvation. However, **Phil. 4:7** Paul mentions something totally different, "the peace of God". Not long after salvation, we discover that although we may have "peace with God", we clearly do not have the "peace of God". There is a war going on inside. **Gal. 5:17; Rom.7:23**

Inside of each of us is a wretched tyrant, a self centered sin nature, the flesh, an inward desire to do wrong; and we come into this world in bondage to this thing. It's interesting to

consider that our bondage to sin and self came by birth; therefore deliverance from sin and self comes only by death.

E. God's way of victory is not man's way:

The Lord's way of victory over sin and self is not through suppressing self centered desires, nor through making us stronger to overcome sin, nor through confessing our sins. God's way of victory is through crucifixion...deliverance is only through death. **Rom. 6:6**

F. Two things happened at the cross:

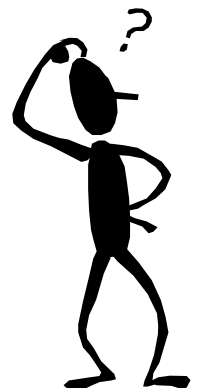
1. We were saved from sin's penalty...Christ died for us. (Salvation)
 2. We were saved from sin's power. **Rom. 6:14**...Our sin nature was crucified with Him.
- Rom. 6:6**

G. In spite of all this, I continue living in the wilderness under the control of the flesh:

Now if my old sin nature/flesh (taskmaster) that used to control my behavior has been crucified, then why do I continue to live under it's control. **Rom.**

6:2; Rom.6:7;

An interesting Scripture to consider is **Rom. 6:3-4** Why do so many Christians fail to "walk in newness of life" and instead live in a wilderness?



Keep in mind that the wilderness is a picture of a Carnal Christian. He/she is saved, we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us; however, in spite of all this, we live in a self inflicted poverty under the controlling influence of a defeated foe (the flesh) which Christ took to the cross and down into the grave with Him. Again - **Rom.6:6**

H. We are just like the children of Israel who lived for 40 years controlled by an enemy whom God had buried in the depths of the Red Sea:

The unbelief of the children of Israel cheated them out of a God blessed life that the Lord had prepared for them in Canaan. In the same way, there is nothing quite so pathetic as a Christian who has been given everything pertaining to life and Godliness, and yet, through ignorance or unbelief, continues to wander in a wilderness with no direction or purpose because he will not, by faith, appropriate God's Grace.

Forty weary years it took before God, through Joshua, was able to teach His people that to get in the promised land, takes the same faith that it took to get out of Egypt. **Col. 2:6**

I. God's way to overcome sin is not through making us stronger:

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 Cor. 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 saw that we died with Christ, and then reckon it so.



J. A very brief commentary on Romans chapter 6:

Notice the repeated statements in **Romans Chapter 6** of our actual identification with the death of Christ. **Verses 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11,13** also **Col. 2:20; Col. 3:1-3**.

It is obvious from Paul's Epistles that his whole life hung on the fact that he was crucified with Christ. Gal. 2:20

K. And now a brief commentary on Romans chapter 7:

Romans 7 is a chapter that many think to be almost unnecessary....

Some have said that the chapter is in the wrong place; they would have put it between the **5th and 6th chapters**, because after **chapter 6**, all should be perfect. Their thinking is that

if **chapter 6** is the basis for the life of holiness, then why is Paul struggling so in **chapter 7 verses 15-24**.

L. Some have tried to explain away chapter 7:

They teach that Paul is speaking of his life before salvation and his frustration as a Jew trying to keep the law. Some of what he describes in **verses 15-24** does not sound like it should be a Christian experience, however, many Christians do experience it. **Read Rom.7:15-24**

It appears where many of us make our mistake in understanding **chapter 7** is the failure to see that **Chapter 6** is dealing with freedom from sin, whereas **chapter 7** deals with something totally different; freedom from the law. (Notice all the references to sin in **Rom. 6:1,2**, and the references to the law in **Rom. 7:1,2**)

M. Romans 7 is a picture of a believer who is extremely self-centered and operating in the power of the flesh:

Notice that from **verse 7 to the end of the chapter**, the personal pronouns I, me, my, myself are used 47 times; a perfect picture of a self-centered, defeated Christian, who eventually will find himself launched into the experience of **Rom.7:15-24** and will not know why.

Here is something for us to think about. Our death with Christ in **Rom.6** is adequate to cover all of our need, however, the big problem is that we don't fully understand **Rom. 6:14b**; "you are not under the law, but under grace". It would almost appear that **Romans 7** was written to explain Paul's statement in **6:14**.

N. Defining "law" and 'grace':

Grace is God doing something for man. Law on the other hand demands that we do something for God. But what does Paul say? "We're not under the law", which means that we don't have to work for God, and he goes on to say, "but we are under grace" meaning that we should be running on God's power, not our own.

O. Clarifying the problem:

The problem in **chapter 7** is that man, in the flesh, (remember the number of times I, me, my, myself is used) is trying to do something for God. As soon as we try to please or work for God through our own effort, we place ourselves under the law and the experience of **Rom. 7:15-24** is ours.

P. When commands are given, our sinfulness surfaces:

Here is something for us to give some thought to: If we are left alone, we seem to be pretty nice people. However, it is when commands are given to us that our sinfulness comes to

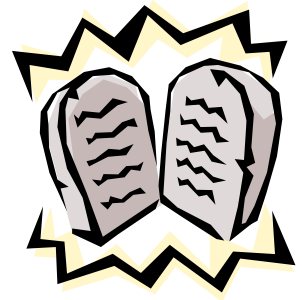
light. The commands are all right, but we are not. We have this flesh in us, this evil power, this inward desire to do wrong; give it a command and immediately it wants to break it. When a holy law is applied to a sinful man, his sinfulness comes out in full display. Again **Rom.7:5**. This is the reason for the law; had it not been for the law, we would have never known how sinful and weak we really are. **Rom.7:7**

Q. God never gave us the law to keep:

It is interesting that the more we try to keep the law, the more we fail, and the deeper we get into **Rom.7** until we see our hopelessness.

Rom.7:24

We could probably say that God never gave us the law to keep; He gave us the law to break, so we could see our sinfulness. **Rom.5:20**



R. Comparing Chapters 6 and 7:

Let's go back to **Rom.6** – Remember, God delivered us from sin. **Rom.6:14**

Now in **Rom. 7** - He must deliver us from the law. **Rom.7:6a**

If we were to compare the **first 6 verses in chapter 6** with the **first 6 verses of chapter 7**, we would see that **Chapter 6** teaches that we died with Christ and we are dead to sin, whereas **chapter 7** teaches that we died with Christ and we are now dead to the law.

S. Concluding remarks:

The same principle operates in our deliverance from the law as our deliverance from sin....If I am trusting in myself, then I must meet the demands of the law, but if I die, the law has lost its claim on me.

Remember **Gal.2:20** - "We are crucified with Christ." **Rom.7:4A** - "We are made dead to the law."

The last phrase in **verse 4** tells us God's purpose in all this; "that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #23

“Carnality to Spirituality/Filled with the Spirit”

A. Introduction:

A few lessons ago, we looked at the marks, or characteristics of a Carnal Christian; 1. Continuous conflict 2. Repeated defeat 3. Prolonged infancy 4. Fruitlessness 5. Double-mindedness and hypocrisy 6. Rebellious pride

We also went on to look at the marks or characteristics of a Spiritual Man;

1. Life of peace 2. Habitual victory 3. Growth into Christlikeness 4. Supernatural power 5. A life of separateness 6. Life of holiness

The following week, we turned to **Rom.15** and determined that Paul was giving us a word picture of a Spiritual Man in **Rom.15:13**.

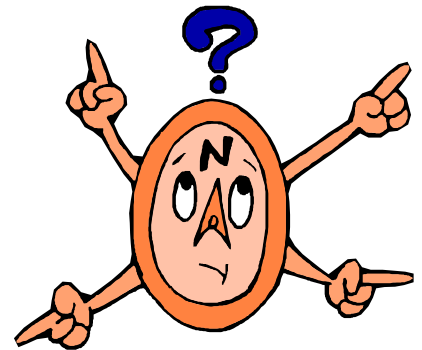
We asked the question; "how does one get to this point in life? What course would we take?" We actually came to the conclusion that it would make sense to follow the course laid out by Paul in the book of Romans; so that we did.

Step 1 - Paul brings us to Christ in the first 5 chapters.

Step 2 - Immediately after salvation, we find that we may have PEACE WITH GOD, but we clearly don't have the PEACE OF GOD. So we spent a good deal of time looking at the value of the blood to remove guilt in our daily lives and produce a clear conscience. **Heb. 10:19, 22**

Step 3 - Last week we discovered that inside of every human being/every Christian, is a terrible evil that harasses and hinders and throws us down into the muck and mire of sin in spite of our efforts to go on to the goal of becoming a Spiritual Christian. We asked the question; how can we be filled with joy and peace while being tormented and held in bondage by an evil power that is obviously too strong for us. **Rom. 6:6, 11 & 14** gave us our answer.

Step 4 - We went on last week and briefly looked at Romans 7. We discovered that Rom.7 is a picture of a believer who is extremely self centered and operating in the power of the flesh. We mentioned that from verse 7 to the end of the chapter, the personal pronouns, I, me, my, myself are used some 47 times; a good picture of a self-centered, defeated Christian who eventually will find himself launched into the experience of **Rom. 7:15-24**. We also saw that, whereas chapter 6 is dealing with freedom from sin, chapter 7 is dealing with something totally different; freedom from the law. (References to sin **Rom. 6:1,2** - References to the law **Rom. 7:1,2**) If we were to compare the first 6 verses in chapter 6 with the first 6 verses in chapter 7, we would discover that chapter 6 teaches that WE DIED WITH



CHRIST AND WE ARE DEAD TO SIN, whereas chapter 7 teaches that WE DIED WITH CHRIST AND WE ARE NOW DEAD TO THE LAW. The same principle operates in our deliverance from the law as our deliverance from sin. **Rom.7:4A**

B. Finally, the victory chapter:

We have now come to that great **Chapter 8 in Romans** which has often been referred to as the "**Victory Chapter**". **Romans 8** is all about the work of the Holy Spirit; up until the end of **chapter 7**, the Holy Spirit has only been mentioned one time in **Rom. 5:5**, but here in **chapter 8** He is mentioned 19 times.

(Notice the number of verses which mention the Spirit – **1,2,4,5,6,9,10,11,13, 14,15,16,23,26,27**)

C. The ministry of the Holy Spirit seems unclear to many:

Often it seems that the Holy Spirit's ministry is one of the most confused, excused, abused, misused and refused in all of Christianity.

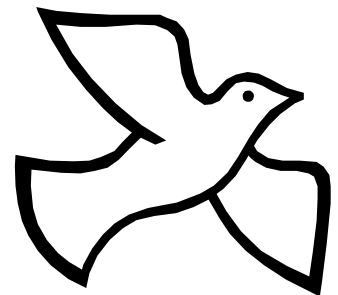
The Holy Spirit is not some mystical character. **2 Cor.13:14; Jn.14:16; 1Cor.3:16 & 6:19**

D. If we were to ask, are you Spirit filled; what would that conjure up in your mind?

Or better yet, what if we asked, are you baptized by the Spirit; what would you be thinking? How about, are you walking in the Spirit; that is probably a bit more acceptable. What if we were to change the terminology ever so slightly and say, are you controlled by the Spirit? Possibly even more acceptable.

E. Romans 8 is all about the Holy Spirit:

As we mentioned before, **Romans 8** is all about the the Holy Spirit/the Spirit filled life; it is actually God's remedy for man's dilemma - ***It is life in Christ, lived by the Spirit - It is ruled by grace, and lived by faith.*** The answer to living a victorious Christian life rests with the Holy Spirit. It is not a question of our ability or effort, but of the absolute faithfulness of the Spirit of God.



F. Be filled by the Spirit:

In this lesson, we don't have time to do an in-depth study of **Rom. 8**. However, it would be helpful to take a good look at the ministry of the Holy Spirit, a good look at the SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE. **Eph. 5:18 - BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**

G. God's plan for man to live a Spirit-filled life is absolutely perfect:

However, we must admit that the majority of Christians are living a Carnal Christian Life. So the question comes to mind, is God's plan practical for this life in this world?....Is God's plan possible in a world like this?....Can anyone live the Spirit-Filled Life?....
God's word makes it very clear that it is not only possible, but also practical for every single Christian. **Jn. 10:10; 2Pet. 1:3**

H. Two great statements by John the Baptist:

John the Baptist, in two great statements, declared the entire ministry of Jesus Christ when he said in **Jn.1:29**; "behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." And in **Jn.1:33** when he stated; "He that sent me to baptize in water, the same is He that baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Christ's ministry was **to take away sin**, and to **give the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe**. **Jn.7:38,39** - Notice that in **verse 39**, Jesus tells us three things:

1. What the gift was - "The Spirit"
2. To whom given - "They that believed on Him"
3. When given - "When Jesus was glorified"

Further light is given on this special gift in Christ's last conversation with the disciples before going to the cross. **Jn.16:7**

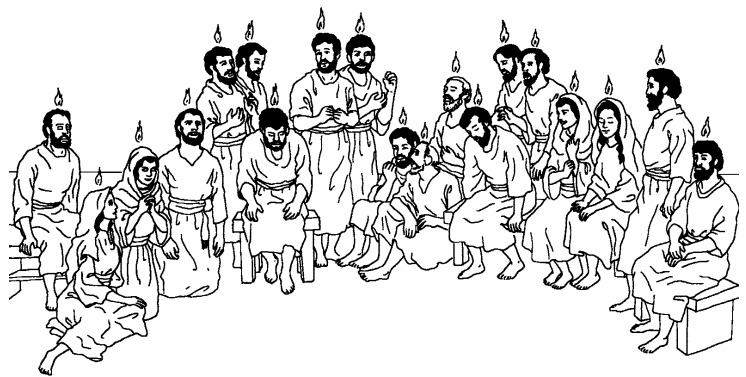
I. When Jesus returned to glory, He fulfilled His promise and sent the Spirit

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples in the upper room were baptized by the Spirit.

Acts.2:1-4 From that day on, everyone who has been united by faith with the Living Lord has received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

J. A caution:

1Cor.1:22 - Signs and miracles were always connected with Israel. The Jewish people had been told in the Old Testament to look for signs to mark this as a genuine work of God, and the sign was that untrained men communicated



the message of God in languages they did not know. **Acts 2:4, 6** (**Notice they were speaking a known language, but not their own**)

There are 3 separate instances where different groups spoke in tongues in the book of Acts; they are found in **Acts 2, 10 and 19**. In each case, it was always when a new group of people came to the Savior.

In **Acts 2**, it was the Jews; In **Acts 10** it was the Gentiles; and in **Acts 19**, it was a group of Old Testament Saints. (*Disciples of John the Baptist*) Now think this through for a moment; what would have happened if the first group of Jews had trusted Christ and it was marked by their speaking in tongues, and then a new group of Gentiles did likewise, and they didn't? The Jews would have said they were never saved. So - **Acts 10:44-46**
Notice in **Acts 11** that Peter is telling the story of the Gentiles coming to Christ and in verse **11**, he makes this comment; "and as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us **IN THE BEGINNING**."

K. The moment one trusts Christ as his Savior he is in the Spirit and the Spirit is in him.

It's impossible to accept the Son and refuse the Spirit. **Rom. 8:9**

L. In God's plan there is a definite purpose for the gift of the Spirit, just as there is a definite purpose for the gift of the Son.

Through the Son, the sinner has life; through the Spirit, the believer has life more abundant.
Through the Son, the sinner enters the Spiritual realm; before, he was Spiritually dead.
Through the Spirit, the believer is lifted to life on the highest plane.

M. One great statement:

In one statement, God shows us the highest point any believer can reach in relationship to the Holy Spirit. **Eph. 5:18 BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.....**

At salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us, but that is not enough.....

At salvation, we get all the Holy Spirit that we are ever going to get, but the question now becomes, how much of us will the Holy Spirit get? (*How much influence, control, fellowship, etc.*)

N. BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT:

This is every Christian's birthright. **Rom.8:17** At salvation, our inheritance gives us the right to be filled with the Spirit. It is not the privilege of a few, but the God given right of all; however, many of us Christians despise our birthright as Esau did. Remember that he sold it for a mess of pottage; we, like him, care more for pleasure or money or position than we do for the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT - This is every Christian's need. We ,will never grow into Spiritual maturity or live a Spiritual life without the Spirit. 120 were filled at Pentecost, only 11 of them were apostles. The rest were all ordinary individuals whose names are not even

recorded in scripture. There is no doubt that they went back to their homes and were used by the Lord in a great way as the Holy Spirit empowered them. **Acts 1:8**

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT - This should be every Christian's desire. Remember **Eph.5:18**; "be not drunk with wine". Do we obey this command? Yes! "Be filled with the Spirit". Do we obey this command? Well, no...not really. Why not? Isn't it just as important?

Suppose/just suppose our Pastor was, habitually drunk. Would the church tolerate such behavior? No.

Well, suppose he is not filled with the Spirit. Would we tolerate that? Probably so..... But isn't one just as important as the other?

Just as refusal to trust Christ as savior is the greatest sin of an unbeliever, even so refusal to acknowledge and trust the spirit is equally as sinful to the believer.

O. Clarifying the term "Filled with the Spirit":

TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT is to be filled with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our life. Col.3:4A; Phil.1:21

TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT is to have His life manifested in our mortal flesh.

2Cor.4:10, 11

P. The Spirit's ministry is to draw our attention to Christ:

Remember earlier we mentioned that the Holy Spirit is a gift from Jesus, and everything by the Holy Spirit, is from the risen Lord Jesus and leads to Him. The Holy Spirit doesn't merely come down to us from Christ, but He leads us up to Him. **Jn. 16:13, 14** The Holy Spirit is the living link between us and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Jn.15:26**

Q. Another caution:

WE MUST NOT MAKE THE HOLY SPIRIT THE BEGINNING AND THE END. He is not what we should be focusing on. His work is to fill all things with the Lord Jesus Christ. He causes us to gaze upon Him, and then changes us into His image. **2Cor.3:18**

True Spiritual growth is the Holy Spirit engraving the Lord Jesus Christ on our hearts, to the point that our thoughts are really His thoughts, and our ways are His ways. **1Cor.1:30, 31**

R. The term FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT is only mentioned once as a command for believers and that is in Eph.5:18:

However, it is mentioned 14 other times in the New Testament, all in the books of Luke and Acts. If we were to examine the Greek, we would see that the term used in both Luke and Acts has a different meaning than in Eph.5:18. In all usages of the term in other than

Eph.5:18, seems to describe either the Spirit coming upon an individual for special empowerment such as Acts 1:8, or it refers to a quality of life roughly equivalent to the term Spiritual as we use it today. (Example Acts 6:3)

S. Keep on getting filled by the Holy Spirit:

If we are to get a proper interpretation of the command in **Eph.5:18**, we must look at the term in light of the context. It appears from the Greek and the context that the literal interpretation is; "filled **by** the Spirit". Thus, the Holy Spirit is the one doing the filling; in fact in the Greek, the tense and voice of the verb places the emphasis on a continuing process to be received by the believer....."**Keep on getting filled by the Holy Spirit**" would be a more accurate translation of the verse.

T. Looking at the context in Ephesians:

To begin, in **Eph.1** Paul refers to the summing up of all things in Christ. **Eph1:10** The idea expressed is that Jesus Christ is the center and focus of all that God is doing to work out His sovereign purpose. **Col.1:18**

In **Eph.1:22, 23**, Paul states that the church is 'CHRIST'S BODY', the fullness of Him that fills all in all. Thus the church is something which is filled with Christ, who fills all things.

In **Eph.3:18, 19**, Paul prays that we may be able to know the "love of Christ" with the result that we may be filled with "all the fullness of God". (Godliness/God-likeness which is equivalent to Christ-likeness - to be filled with God is to be filled with Christ)

In **Eph.4:10**, Jesus is said to have descended (become incarnate) for the purpose " that He might **fill all things**".

In **Eph.4:11-13** the goal of giving gifted men to the Church is to equip the Saints that we all might become mature which can be seen by the "Fullness of Christ". In other words, as we are filled with Christ, we are to become like Him in every respect of His character.

U. Conclusion:

The meaning of "**BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**" in **Eph.5:18** is that Christ Himself is the content of the filling, and it is produced by the Holy Spirit.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT is not an event like salvation, but rather a process that takes place over a period of time.

The word maturity seems to hold the key to being **FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**.

A man's Spirituality is measured by this; when there is nothing else but the Lord Jesus Christ, we are **FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**.

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH #24

"Carnality to Spirituality/In Christ"

A. Introduction:

The last few weeks we have been discussing how one gets from carnality to spirituality, and last week we looked at **Eph. 5:18**. We concluded that "being filled with the Spirit" is actually a process of being filled with the Lord Jesus Christ and this is accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Lord Jesus Christ...It might be helpful to again look at several scriptures that we briefly touched on last week - **Eph. 1:10, 22, 23; 4:10; 11-13; Col. 3:4**.

1. Gather together all things in Christ
2. He is head over all things.
3. He fills all things.
4. Jesus Christ is our life.

B. At salvation, it's out of Adam and in Christ:

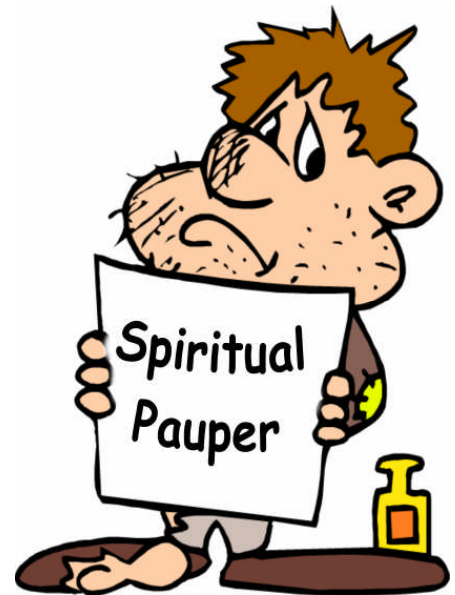
The moment we trust Christ as our savior, we step out of life in Adam, and enter into life in Christ. **1 Cor. 1:30**. The term **"in Christ"** is the key to the whole New Testament. It, or its equivalent is used 130 times. These two words are probably the most important ever written to describe the relationship between Christians and Christ.

C. To be "in Christ" determines our position, privileges, and possessions.

To be "in Christ" is to be **1)** where He is, **2)** what He is and to possess **3)** what He has.

1. Where is He? He's in the heavenlies. Where are we? In the heavenlies. **Phil. 3:20** - It is God's desire for us to begin to live in heaven, now **Col. 3:1,2**.
2. To be in Christ is to be what He is **1 Jn. 4:17**.
3. To be in Christ is to possess what He has. **Rom. 8:17 & 32**.

We should be living like spiritual millionaires (love, joy, peace) so that others will desire our spiritual wealth, but instead we live like spiritual paupers (anger, depression, frustration, etc.).



D. Christ in you:

We've looked at "in Christ", now let's turn our focus to "Christ in you, Christ in us". **Gal. 2:20**. Notice the progression here; first I have been crucified, and then Christ lives in me. The death of self must precede the Christ life. **Luke 9:23**.

E. For me to live is Christ:

The real Christian life is to possess the life of Christ in such a way that we can say with Paul, "to me to live is Christ". **Phil. 1:21**. The real Christian life is to have Jesus Christ filling our mind, will and emotions in such a way that my thoughts are really His thoughts, my will is His will and my emotions are coming from Him. ***It is Jesus Christ filling my life until I have no life apart from Him.***

F. The heart of Paul's message:

"Christ in you" was the heart of Paul's message to the churches, and he made it very clear in all his teaching and preaching. **Col. 1:27**. Paul had one goal and that was to see Christ formed in every believer. **Gal. 4:19**.

G. Defining the Christian life:

The Christian life (the Christ life) can be defined in these two simple phrases...

1) in Christ, and

2) Christ in you. What God has really done through all this is to bring Christ and the Christian into oneness in such a way that Christ is both in the heavenlies and on earth, and the Christian is both on earth and in the heavenlies.

Christ in the heavenlies is the invisible part of the Christian, while the Christian on earth is the visible part of Christ.

H. Conclusion:



Rom. 11:36- Of the Father--through the Father--to the Father.

That was the life of Christ on earth from Bethlehem all the way to the Mount of Olives. As the Father sent the Son, so is He sending us. Our relationship to Jesus Christ must be what His relationship to the Father was.

God's will for our lives can only be fulfilled in the energy and power of Jesus Christ who indwells us, as He once walked in the energy and power of the Father who indwelt Him.

It's of Him, through Him, and to Him...that's what Paul meant in **Phil. 1:21**.

