

# God Don't Make Junk!

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# Chapter 1

## *A Brief Statement of Faith*

### **The Bible**

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16-17)*

*"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: <sup>20</sup> Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:19-21)*

### **The Godhead**

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> The same was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3)*

*"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7)*

*"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:" (Col. 2:8-10)*

### **Sin**

*"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:" (Rom. 3:10)*

*"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom. 3:23)*

*“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:” (Rom. 5:12)*

## **Salvation**

*“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. 4:5)*

*“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (Gal. 2:21)*

*“And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. <sup>13</sup> Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:” (Gal. 3:12-13)*

*“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (1 Tim. 1:15)*

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9)*

*“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. 5:21)*

*“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; <sup>2</sup> By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; <sup>4</sup> And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” (1 Cor. 15:1-4)*

*“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise...” (Eph. 1:13)*

## **Eternal Security**

*“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Tim. 1:12)*

*“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:” (Phil. 1:6)*

*“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10)*

*“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: <sup>12</sup> If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: <sup>13</sup> If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” (2 Tim. 2:11-13)*

*“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:31-32)*

### **Eternal Judgment**

*“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, <sup>8</sup> In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>9</sup> Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; <sup>10</sup> When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” (2 Thess. 1:7-10)*

*“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. <sup>11</sup> And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: <sup>12</sup> That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2:10-12)*

### **The Unique Apostleship of Paul**

*“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, <sup>2</sup> If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: <sup>3</sup> How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, <sup>4</sup> Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) <sup>5</sup>*

*Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; <sup>6</sup> That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: <sup>7</sup> Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.” (Eph. 3:1-7)*

*“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.” (Rom. 11:13)*

*“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; <sup>8</sup> (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)<sup>9</sup> And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” (Gal. 2:7-9)*

*“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” (Rom. 11:25)*

*“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. <sup>38</sup> But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” (1 Cor. 14:37-38)*

### **The Church, The Body of Christ**

*“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> One Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph. 4:4-6)*

*“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (1 Cor. 12:27)*

*“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. 1:22-23)*

*“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. <sup>19</sup> For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” (Col. 1:18-19)*



## The Rapture

*“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. <sup>15</sup> For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: <sup>17</sup> Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thess. 4:13-18)*

*“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. <sup>55</sup> O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15:51-57)*





## Chapter 2

# God Don't Make Junk!

### **We are New Creatures.**

*"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17)*

In his epistle to the church at Corinth we encounter one of the most fantastic statements made by the Apostle Paul in all his writings regarding believers in Christ. In considering the imagery of a new creature here we can sense a truth about ourselves that often gets lost while living in this present evil world. In the clutter of our daily circumstances and relationships, we can easily become confused about our identity in Christ and even after much introspection, we can fail to discover a true sense of self. It is certain that each of us shares a common ancestry in our progenitor Adam. It is this Adamic heritage that weighs us down and corrupts our feelings and thinking concerning who we really are.

Most people hide their true self behind a mask of their own making. A mask that projects the self that they wish others to see. This mask represents an image of wishful thinking; one they convince themselves truly represents who they really are, or who they want to be. However, deep inside they perceive the fictional nature of this self-portrait despite their great attempt to convince themselves that this mask represents their own true self.

Many Christians suffer from a sense of inadequacy if they will honestly admit it. And furthermore, they continually beat themselves up for feeling this way because they know they shouldn't. The resolution of all this negative thinking about ourselves is discovered in the realization of what happened to us when we believed the Gospel and became a child of God by faith. In that moment we ceased to be fully identified with Adam and joined the household of God.

### **God Don't Make Junk!**

*“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10)*

This new creature that we have become is a work of God. As significant as the creation of heaven and earth this new man is a witness to the greatness of God and the glory that He reserves to Himself. It is essential to right thinking as a believer to understand who we have been made to be *“In Christ”* and how important is this knowledge in bringing glory to God.

### **We are Accepted.**

*“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. <sup>13</sup> In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Eph. 1:12-14)*

When we trusted the Gospel and placed our faith in our savior Jesus Christ, we took the significant step that brings us into a position of acceptance with God the Father. The Father Himself tells us that this was His purpose to be accomplished through His beloved Son Jesus Christ and in our identification with Him.

In the first chapter of Ephesians, He declared that *“the good pleasure of His will”* is that we should be *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved”* (Eph 1:6). Our identification with Christ is a creative work of the God of all grace and is the seal and testament of the greatness of His glory. It is this divine work that makes us acceptable to God and is not something that we could ever achieve on our own. This is the knowledge revealed by Paul, the apostle of grace. It is a truth this apostle was especially committed to. In the revelation of this truth, we discover the core reality that enables us to please God. That God is pleased when our walk, our testimony in word and deed, is in alignment with who He has made us to be, and declared us to be, in Christ.

*“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup> That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with*

*joyfulness; <sup>12</sup> Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:” (Col. 1:9-12)*

## **We are Complete.**

By realizing our new identity in Christ – and understanding it’s source and nature we are brought to a point that we can rest in the sufficiency of this knowledge. We can trust that God has accomplished everything necessary for our fruitful and pleasing walk before Him.

As important as it is to trust by faith the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life, equally we are to trust in the same manner, that God has equipped us to *“live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:11-12). This is stated without ambiguity in Colossians 2:6-10 – *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: <sup>7</sup> Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. <sup>8</sup> Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”*

We are to live on the same basis that we are saved. The means of our justification is also the impetus to a pleasing walk before God and this is *“by grace through faith.”* This truth is realized as we are *“rooted and built up”* in Christ. As our faith is *“established”* in the fact of our identification with Christ and we should be grateful that God has accomplished something for us that we could never do on our own. Philosophically and religiously the world system we live in will seek to deprive us of this truth. The world advances self-promotion and a performance-based acceptance paradigm where each person can take pride in their own accomplishment. The established believer in Christ finds ability and validation in God’s work *“in Christ”* where we are to live according to the fulness of everything that God has made us to be.

“He’s Still Working on Me”, a popular Christian song in the seventies advanced the idea that as believers we are an imperfect and ongoing project. We are encouraged to view ourselves as incomplete and lacking.

“He's still working on me  
To make me what I need to be  
It took him just a week to make the moon and stars  
The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars

How loving and patient He must be  
'Cause He's still workin' on me

There really ought to be a sign upon my heart  
Don't judge him yet, there's an unfinished part  
But I'll be better just according to His plan  
Fashioned by the Master's loving hands."

The Hemphills

Nothing could be further from the truth concerning who God has made us to be "*in Christ.*" Colossians 2 is definitive in the declaration that "*we are complete in Him.*" This is true because of the "*faith of the operation of God.*" It is a completed creative act by God Himself. Who are we to argue with God by suggesting that His work is incomplete or lacking quality? God don't make junk!

### **We are Equipped.**

Everything that God requires of us He has provided. The crux of the matter concerning our lives as Christians is not about acquisition but about appropriation. What is required of us is faith and trust. Faith in God's work and trust in His provision.

The believer is to rely on the sufficiency of God's Word.

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* (2Ti 3:16-17)

The believer is "*thoroughly*" (sufficiently and completely) furnished unto all the good works that "*God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" Either this is true, or it is false. We must choose – do we believe this truth or do we call God a liar and doubt the quality of His work.

This is why we are exhorted by the apostle Paul to study the scriptures. In them we discover who we are in Christ and comprehend that the approval bequeathed to us positionally in Christ should be demonstrated in our testimony and life. "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15). As we read, study, and make God's Holy Word resident in our heart and mind, we will experience a transformation that truly reflects the glory

of God and His work of grace in our life. We can then truly express gratitude as Paul did as we see it working in our circumstances and in others. *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1Thess. 2:13).

The believer is to rely upon the sufficiency of God’s grace.

*“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”* (2 Tim. 2:1)

We are to acknowledge our own inability and weakness and elect to be the person God has enabled us to be. Surely, we must agree with Paul’s conclusion – *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God”* (2 Cor. 3:5). Surely, we should rejoice as our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed to our apostle – *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong”* (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

### **Christ is the secret.**

Much of the apostle Paul’s contribution to the New Testament canon concerns a body of truth he called *“the mystery”* meaning literally “the secret.” It is multifaceted and addresses vital elements of positional and practical truths relevant to we who live in this Age that God has called the dispensation of the grace of God. This mystery concerns secrets that had never been revealed to man before the apostle Paul was ordained by God to proclaim a message concerning His Son Jesus Christ. It is called *“the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was **kept secret since the world began** but now is made manifest...”* (Romans 16:25-26a). This secret of Jesus Christ stands in sharp contrast to all prophesy and revelation in the scriptures. NOTE the message concerning Christ preached by Peter and the Twelve - Acts 3:20-21 – *“And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: <sup>21</sup> Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath **spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.**”*

Our apostle said in this message he *“laboured”* and that this revelation was the focus of his preaching and teaching. Why? Because in proclaiming this Mystery about Christ he might *“present every man perfect in Jesus Christ.”* Perfect in the sense of having a

Christian walk that aligns with our identity in Christ and one that reflects the new creature that God has made us to be in Him.

Paul declared it was he <sup>24</sup> *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: <sup>25</sup> Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; <sup>26</sup> Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: <sup>27</sup> To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: <sup>28</sup> Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”* (Col. 1:24-28).

It is in *“the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery”* that we are established as believers in all things necessary unto our justification and sanctification. We are saved by grace through faith, and we have an eternal hope. We are delivered from the power of this *“present evil world”* as we walk *“by grace through faith”* and rejoice in the fact that God don't make junk.

*“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Eph. 2:10)





## Chapter 3

# *A New Creature*

“God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again to newness of life.”

A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)

“This new life impedes us in our natural outlook and ways . . . until the Son of God is formed in us and both the natural and the holy are the same.”

Oswald Chambers (1874–1917)

For centuries it appeared to human beings that the earth was stationary and that the sun moved around it. Then a man named Copernicus came along and proved that what seemed obvious on the surface was not, in fact, true. It was the earth that was moving around the sun, not the sun around the earth; and that discovery has changed our understanding of our physical reality ever since. What Copernicus did to our perceptions of the earth and the sun, the risen Christ can do to our understanding of our lives.

Those early conclusions we come to as children, that all of life revolves around us, may appear to be true from our perspective, but they are false. It is not just children who hold to this theory of “self” being the center of the Universe. We are faced with the dilemma everyday of who will call the shots for our life. Will we allow the laws of God to lead us through life and shape our decisions or will we determine the direction of our life and come up with our own answers to the questions that confront us? These truly are the only two paths that we can follow. We will either submit our wills and lives to living according to God's will or we will write our own rules.

London businessman Lindsay Clegg told the story of a warehouse property he was selling. The building had been empty for months and needed repairs. Vandals had damaged the doors, smashed the windows, and strewn trash around the interior.

As he showed a prospective buyer the property, Clegg took pains to say that he would replace the broken windows, bring in a crew to correct any structural damage, and clean out the garbage.

“Forget about the repairs,” the buyer said. “When I buy this place, I'm going to build something completely different. I don't want the building; I want the site.”

Compared with the renovation God has in mind, our efforts to improve our own lives are as trivial as sweeping a warehouse slated for the wrecking ball. When we become God's, the old life is over (2 Cor. 5:17). He makes all things new. All he wants is the site and the permission to build.



## Chapter 4

# Affirming Positive Truth

### What Truth?

*“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” (Gal. 3:1)*

Paul asked this question of the Galatians and there is a lesson for us, as well, in considering the answer. Of course, equally significant with the fact that these believers had been bewitched (enchanted with or by someone or something) is the point that they were no longer living on the basis of the truth. The definite article is employed to indicate that there is a specific truth that Paul had in mind rather than a broad spectrum of truthfulness in general.

The Galatian epistle makes it clear about the source of bewitching. There were teachers that were troubling them with a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-7). This gospel was false, not because it was foreign but for the reason it had been corrupted from grace by legalism. It sounded good to some but with Paul it was off the mark. It was like Paul's gospel of Grace but it added works. Paul then *“certifies”* his gospel by affirming its origin and authority, asserting the uniqueness of his message which is distinct in its content of grace apart from works.

### Not Contradicting but Different

Paul was required to return to Jerusalem to settle things with Israel's Kingdom apostles because of the distinctive nature of his gospel (Gal 2:1-2). This meeting, particularly with James, Peter, and John resulted in some conclusions and an agreement.

The record says it this way; *“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; <sup>8</sup> (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) <sup>9</sup> And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me*

*and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” (Gal. 2:7-9)*

Notice the differences. Different apostleships; one Hebrew and one Gentile. Different gospels – the Gospel of the Kingdom (circumcision) and the Gospel of the Grace of God (uncircumcision). Different mission fields – Peter and the eleven to Israel’s little flock and Paul to all other heathen.

The Galatian problem was about more than legalism. It involved the confusion of Law and grace but the root problem is dispensational in nature. God has employed different agencies in His purposes on earth and at different times. In times past He worked in, and through, the nation Israel and to be estranged from that nation was alienation from God Himself (Eph. 2:11-12). The present age is called the Dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph. 3:1-2) and the agency of this age is the Church, the Body of Christ. This is one of the reasons that the Church is called the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

### **Identity Crisis – Know Who You Are**

Much misunderstanding has resulted from the fact that religion has blurred the lines between Israel and the Church, the Body of Christ. Both involve different instructions, promises and structure. One is a nation the other a spiritual body. One operated on the basis of Mosaic Law and the other according to Grace (incompatible programs - see Rom. 6:13-14; 8:1-3). This mingling of Law and Grace has been catastrophic to many because it involves a false sense of identity with believers attempting to occupy Israel’s place and standing instead of the identity as a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

### **Ignorant Law Teachers**

Those that teach that Israel’s Law is contemporarily applicable do tremendous damage and inflict great discouragement. Note Paul’s declaration to Timothy concerning Law teachers: <sup>3</sup> *“As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, <sup>4</sup> Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. <sup>5</sup> Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: <sup>6</sup> From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; <sup>7</sup> Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. <sup>8</sup> But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; <sup>9</sup> Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for*

*unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, <sup>10</sup> For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; <sup>11</sup> According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” (1 Tim. 1:3-11)*

The Law is not made for the righteous because its purpose is condemnation. Law keeping, for the lost soul, will not result in the righteousness necessary for salvation, nor will it generate practical righteousness in we who are saved.

Law teachers ignorantly promote the truth of another age. The Mosaic Law was a way of life for Israel but in the age of Grace its precepts produce spiritual death (Rom. 7:5-6). The Law was a system of don'ts and its ultimate purpose was to declare us as guilty (Rom. 3:19-20). Grace is positive truth that promotes life and is centered in the believers identity in Christ (Gal. 2:20). Law completely frustrates the power of grace (Gal. 2:21) condemning the believer to a life of self-righteousness and resulting in alienation from the life of God.

### **Grace Versus Works**

The Bible tells us that we are God's creation and thus, according to His grace, we are His workmanship unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10). In this world system there are basically two approaches to pleasing God; grace and works. Works say do and is driven by man's self-righteousness. Grace operates on the basis of Christ's life in the believer, powered by grace, and is rooted in the fountain of joy and thanksgiving. Law is negative; a short account system which can never be satisfied (Col. 2:20-23). Grace is positive, and living under grace is founded upon the affirmation of positive truth.

### **Positive Or Negative**

*“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” (Titus 3:8)*

Some have taken this verse from Titus to mean that good works are the product careful maintenance. This is interpreted, by some, as busy-ness in a religious sense and is polar opposite to the intended application.



Titus 3:8 does not say we are to constantly affirm the need to maintain good works. It says that there are “*things*” which need to be constantly affirmed and that “*these things*” are “*good and profitable.*” Many of these positive truths are identified in the passage. Titus 3:4 declares God’s kindness and love toward us. Verse five asserts that it isn’t on the basis of our righteousness (we don’t have any) but centered on God’s mercy and regenerating work. The next verse speaks of the abundance that we receive through our Savior Jesus Christ. Paul then finishes this blessed plethora with the justifying power of grace and our standing as God’s heirs because of our new identity in Christ.

The constant affirmation of these positive truths goes a lot further in motivating the believer to good works than any legalistic performance system ever will. The effectualness of grace trumps law any day. Good works are not the result of a daily, careful, attention to the details doing well. Good works are the fruit of God’s grace in the believer and they flow from a well of joy and thanksgiving.

*“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” (1 Cor. 15:10)*

*“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:” (2 Cor. 9:8)*





## Chapter 5

# All Things Work Together for Good

### Questioning God

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28)*

Often believers think themselves to be at odds with God because of difficult circumstances in their lives. They experience feelings of abandonment and question God’s purpose for their life as they imagine God’s disapproval and adopt an almost superstitious attitude regarding the events of their life. When things are going smoothly it must be because God approves of us, but if times are tough, obviously, God disapproves of us, He is punishing us, or He is trying to teach us something.

As doubt intensifies it begins to have effect in different areas of the believer’s spiritual life. It can damage relationships as we live our lives differently because we sense God’s apparent disapproval. This can produce anger as we struggle under the assumption that God is the author of our suffering. Our prayer life becomes frustrating because the more we ask, even beg, God to change our circumstances the more it seems He has turned a deaf ear. Many believers become trapped in a vicious circle of self-debasement and self-incrimination derived from false notions about Romans 8:28 thinking that the *“all things”* are their circumstances when they are, really, God’s gifts.

### God is For Us

*“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31-32)*

What many of us miss in this passage is the true regard, even genuine love, which God has for us. He is not some distant deity, looking down from above, who delights in frustrating us, or is indifferent to our struggles. This regard and love, stems from many sources but, in the context, it is something we share because God, the Father, identifies us with His Son.

This is a marvelous truth that many of us miss. This truth is an element of doctrine in which some of us remain shallow, either because we have not been taught, or have not applied ourselves to learning. Doctrine is often perceived as dry and tedious without much practical value but, in actuality, it is the exact opposite. Few things can be more exciting than discovering fine points of doctrine and finding that there is great practical benefit in our daily lives.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: <sup>4</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: <sup>5</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* (Eph. 1:3-6)

When we believe the Gospel of Grace, trusting in Christ and His Cross work for us, there are a number of things that happen to us as believers. One of the things is an operation of God where He identifies us with His Son, our Savior, and from that point on we share Christ's identity. This is true because the believer is placed into Christ by God, the Holy Spirit, (1 Cor. 12:12-13) and then is sealed by the same Spirit in this new identity (Eph. 1:12-14; 4:30). Because we are now *“accepted in the beloved”* we no longer need fear God's disapproval, nor do we worry that God will become angry with us. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom. 5:1). God deals with us now on the basis of His love, and His grace, but never in anger.

### **We Are Complete**

*“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: <sup>11</sup> In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: <sup>12</sup> Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;”* (Col. 2:9-13)

Recognizing our new identity in Christ is a liberating event and it produces freedom for the believer as we realize the work that God has done in each of us. To be complete means to *“have nothing lacking”*. When Romans 8:28 declares *“all things work together for good”* it isn't a reference to all circumstances but, rather, to all that God has done for us. It is a statement to the effectiveness of God's gifts to us, a fact to which we are often

ignorant, or have forgotten in troubling times. God has given us many things that work to our good because of our identity as a new creature *"in Christ"*. All we need to do is to study out the details of our approved status (2 Tim. 2:15).

*"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."* (1 Cor. 2:10-12)

### **Three Facts**

1. God doesn't need to fix my circumstances because He fixed me.  
(Eph. 2:8-10; Col. 2:10-13)
2. God doesn't use circumstances to create character in me, He uses the life of His Son. (Gal. 2:20-21; Rom. 8:10-11)
3. My circumstances are not a reflection of God's love and regard for me (Rom. 8:37-39)



## Chapter 6

# Approved of God

It is tragic that many believers are driven by the same mindset of the unconverted – they think they can earn God’s acceptance through their works. While many understand that it is “not through works we have done” in regards to positional righteousness, they still believe that their works will impress God in place of practical righteousness. The scripture says that there is no respect of persons with God – but the believer finds His respect by the virtue of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and our identification with Him.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: <sup>4</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: <sup>5</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* (Eph. 1:3-6)

It is a fact that no man could ever earn God’s acceptance. However, it is essential that believers carefully study the scriptures in order to understand what life choices, and avenues of service, would be pleasing to God. *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim 2:15). The scriptures must be *“rightly divided”* in order to discover the means and ways a believer can acceptably demonstrate his *“approved”* status before God.

For example, we live in the Dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph. 3) and not under the Mosaic Law (Rom. 6:14). There is nothing found in the law, applied in this dispensation, that God would ever approve of. The Law is not made for a righteous man (1 Tim. 1:9) and any message that would imply otherwise is an “accursed” gospel (Gal. 1). We are to live our lives rooted in the indwelling life of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20). It is not our life but His. This truth is found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. He revealed the preaching of Jesus Christ according to *“the revelation of the mystery”* as opposed to the Hebrew, prophesied Gospel of the Kingdom. Two messages and two programs, both vastly different in content and application, and when they are intermingled produce confusion and defeat.



Let's purpose to live according to our new identity "*in Christ*" and demonstrate our "*acceptance in the beloved*" as we study, and apply, the Word of truth "*rightly divided.*"



## Chapter 7

# Are you Being Saved?

*“Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, {4} Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:” (Gal 1:3-4)*

Believers often are myopic in their view of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeing it from a positional standpoint only. Galatians speaks of a deliverance that is both positional and practical. In the same vein, when Paul addresses the subject of salvation he is doing so in the sense that it relates to the practical aspects of how we experience life in this world, and how we handle the details of our lives.

By way of example let's examine the following: *“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)” (2 Cor. 6:1-2).*

Many an altar call has been prefaced with verse 2 of this passage and the thought is fine, however, the passage is not addressing justification but sanctification. We sometimes forget that we have no epistle, authored by the apostle Paul, which is addressed to lost people telling them how to be saved. We do have numerous instances where the apostle reminds saints of their justification and of the Gospel of Grace they trusted.

Our text from 2 Corinthians is deeply rooted in justification but deals with appropriating its benefits in life and service to God. The question at hand isn't about receiving the grace of God but having received it without enjoying its benefits. To possess the grace of God *“in vain”* is a sad state of affairs. It is to have the fullness of everything God has given us *“in Christ”* without appropriating the power and peace that comes with it.

For this reason, Paul uses the illustration from Isaiah 49. Israel, as God's chosen people in time past, often found themselves in need of deliverance having departed from the place of God's blessing. Living under the if/then program of the Law they only received blessing when they were obedient and they, conversely, received cursing from God when



they were wayward. The quote in Isaiah directly refers to the nation being restored to the full enjoyment of their Covenant relation with God and all its benefits.

Under grace we need not fear God's curse upon the details of our circumstances, but we should be wary of making choices that isolate us from the benefits of grace. Paul addresses this in different ways in his letters. He notes that *"whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."* He warns of the danger of living in *"ignorance"* (virtually with the same mindset as a lost person) and as a consequence becoming *"alienated from the life of God."* He prayed that believers would be *"filled with all the fullness of God"* based upon *"wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (God)."*

In Christ, God the Father has equipped us to be who He intends us to be. We spend far too much time worrying about our insufficiency when we should be focused upon, and resting in, the sufficiency of Christ. God has addressed our need to be *"delivered from this present evil world"*, saving us from its power and influence. It's all about our living as He has created us to be: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Eph. 2:8-10). **God don't make junk!**

Paul's testimony was this; *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."* (1 Cor 15:10) This should be our testimony, too!

Our service to God, and the choices we make regarding the details of our lives, should be founded upon God's grace and not our own agenda and strength. This is the embodiment of our life as a *"new creature in Christ"* and exactly what it means to *"walk in newness of life."*



## Chapter 8

# Character and the Believer

People often imagine that God is manipulating circumstances in their life to mature or direct them. God doesn't use circumstances to create character in the life of believers - He uses the life of His Son in the believer to accomplish this (see Gal. 2:20; Rom. 5:1-5; Rom. 8:6-11).

Notice in Romans 5 it says *"tribulation worketh patience."* It doesn't necessarily follow that tribulation "produces" patience. Circumstances serve as the catalyst to provoke the character inherent in each of us because of our new identity in Christ, and by His life in us. Patience is an attribute of the believer who is standing in the provision and power of grace and there is no circumstance, however trying, that could produce this element of character.

It could be said, by way of illustration, that circumstantial difficulties are the canvas upon which the glorious palette of grace can be painted. God doesn't extract the believer from hard times; He has equipped him to conquer them.

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. <sup>37</sup> Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Rom. 8:35-37)



## Chapter 9

# What Part of Complete Do We Not Understand?

*“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: <sup>7</sup> Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. <sup>8</sup> Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:” (Col. 2:6-10)*

When a person trusts Christ as Savior many wonderful things happen. Too many believers see conversion as a change in destination only when, perhaps, they should discover that they now have a destiny (an inner realizable purpose in life). And when we read Paul’s epistles, we discover that with our destiny comes a plethora of attributes and directions to realize God’s purpose in our life.

*“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:12-13)*

Ephesians one tells us that the Holy Spirit is our “*seal*” and our “*earnest*”. However, He also performs an essential operation of God; He baptizes us into the Body of Christ. This accomplishes our eternal identification with our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our identity and life are now intrinsically linked with Him. This perspective should change our view of a life agenda. It’s not about what we think is right, it’s about Christ’s life and purpose in us.

*“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (Gal. 2:20-21)*

The truth is, many of us “*frustrate*” God’s purpose in our life because we refuse the power of His grace, preferring to draw on our own energy and ideology. There is nothing

ambiguous about the statement “...ye are complete in Him.” There is nothing we can add philosophically or ideologically to God’s plan and provision. There is nothing that our creativity, or energy, can bring to the equation. It’s all about, in, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. But, man continually attempts to add to this completeness.

*"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: <sup>11</sup> In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: <sup>12</sup> Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" (Col. 2:8-13)*

Man brings his own ideas and agenda and inserts it into the place of Christ’s life in us, replacing that which is ideal with frustration. Man brings religion (manmade attempts to please God) into the equation, replacing the life of Christ with rites, ceremonies, regulations and false authority. For instance, Paul in Ephesians 4:5 says there is “*one baptism*”. I Corinthians 12 and Colossians 2 make it abundantly clear that this “*one baptism*” is an “*operation of God.*” Why then does man insist on a second, unnecessary Hebrew water rite? Yes, I know all about the so-called symbolism and alleged outward testimony ascribed to this practice. But, our testimony for, and identification with the Lord Jesus Christ is not expressed with a ceremony – it is His very life manifested in us.

God’s design is that we be identified completely with His Son, the Lord Jesus, Christ. His design is that we also find our sufficiency in the same identity. We are complete because we are “*in Christ*”. It’s God’s purpose that we be complete.

To that end, He has given us a completed written authority in the Scriptures to direct and equip us. <sup>16</sup> “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17) Yet, man isn’t satisfied with this. He even wants to change, challenge, or correct these written instructions.

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in*



Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:8-10)

Man's view is that God's work is incomplete and that it must be improved, corrected, or added to. Man's arrogance is an affront to God and defies the simplicity that is found in the statement "...ye are complete in Him." Just what part of complete is it that we do not understand?



## Chapter 10

# Complete in Christ Follow Up

Paul, in his prayers for the saints expressed this desire, *“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; <sup>17</sup> That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; <sup>19</sup> And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”* (Eph. 3:16-19)

*“That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God”* is a phrase that is difficult to wrap one’s brain around, but it is something that can be a reality in our life. It’s so sad that many believers have settled for the busy-ness of religion or self-established agenda rather than yielding to the life of Christ and the completeness that brings to our weakness. It was this realization that enabled Paul to say that he would *“rather glory in his infirmities.”* He discovered that nothing else matters much when *“the power of Christ rests upon me.”*

*“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup> For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; <sup>18</sup> While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”* (2 Cor. 4:15-18)

As we live in light of our identity in Christ, we are motivated to see things from His perspective and to rely on the resource of His righteousness and grace. How much better, simpler, and logical it would be to do this than trying to impress God with our feeble attempts to please Him in our own strength.

In Christ we find everything that is pleasing to God the Father. Perhaps, after we’ve fallen down enough we will acknowledge the truth.

*“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and*



things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: <sup>29</sup> That no flesh should glory in his presence. <sup>30</sup> But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: <sup>31</sup> That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:27-31)



## Chapter 11

# Conformed or Transformed?

This item was written by my dear friend Doug Dodd (now in glory). It speaks to the effect of our new life in Christ as opposed to religion and human effort.

*“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; <sup>23</sup> And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; <sup>24</sup> And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”*  
(Eph. 4:22)

Are you being conformed or transformed? Conformation takes place from the outside, it is caused by external pressures. For example a person gets “saved” and joins a local church. Most of the time this person begins to take on the characteristics of that assembly, whatever that may be. They in effect become “conformed” to the personality of that church.

This is exactly the wrong way to become what God has made us in Christ. Conformation makes one ACT like a Christian rather than being transformed into one.

Transformation takes place from the inside. It is the work of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in the believer.

The problem is that this transformation CANNOT take place without the application of the Word of God “rightly divided”. You will not be transformed by a steady diet of Matthew-John. It is within the Pauline epistles alone that you will find the doctrine, duty and destiny of the Church the body of Christ.

## Chapter 12

# Frustrating Grace

*“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, <sup>21</sup> (Touch not; taste not; handle not; <sup>22</sup> Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? <sup>23</sup> Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.” (Col. 2:20-23)*

One of the greatest tragedies in this world is the believer that has returned to the trough of religion to satisfy his old sinful flesh rather than living in our new identity in Christ. Many, mistakenly, think of the worldly as those who are given to fleshly pursuits, but fail to realize that the greatest efforts to appease the flesh lie in the realm of religion and human good.

Religion, and human good, takes mankind down a path of denial, having as a goal the controlling of the impulses of the flesh. It is an exercise in futility as it is impossible to quit sinning. In Christ, the believer is equipped to replace the deeds of the flesh with the works of righteousness. This replacement principle is basic to the intrinsic nature of the life of Christ in the believer (Gal. 2:20-21). Religion does bring a sense of order to many people’s lives, but it does so at the price of stepping onto an ever-turning treadmill of religious activity. It is constantly striving to attain the unattainable which, on the one hand, pleases us for our self-effort but, on the other hand, leaves us dissatisfied for our lack of ever having done enough. The apostle Paul describes this as *“frustrating the grace of God.”*

Indeed, the only satisfaction that is derived from religion is that which is gained by comparison. Those who are somewhat more successful in controlling the impulses of the flesh look at others, who are less successful, and feel superior. Within they are unfulfilled and, consequently, must look to external evidence to define their worth and success.

This formula of self-worth is that which is basic to this evil world we live in. It is the mechanism the ungodly employ in their efforts toward self-righteousness. It is sad that saints often fall back into the same program because of their feelings of inadequacy and failure. The truth is, the Christian walk is not one of denial, but one of affirmation. There is a verse in Titus that reads; *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou*

*affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” (Titus 3:8)*

Titus 3:8 does not teach that “*good works are the product of careful maintenance.*” It does teach that there are “*things*” which when “*constantly affirmed*” enable the believer to “*maintain good works.*” There is a big difference between the two. One relies on our diligence and willful intent to perform, while the other is the result of affirming Biblical truth. The first seven verses in Titus 3 speak to this. Verses two and three highlight the need for us to remember who we were before our conversion. Verses four through seven speak of:

- (1) God’s kindness and love toward us.
- (2) Our inability to save ourselves.
- (3) God’s mercy, regeneration and renewing are abundant to us through Jesus Christ.
- (4) We are justified on the basis of grace and we are the heirs of eternal life.

When we affirm these positive truths we are motivated, and energized, toward living in light of our identity in Christ. Paul told the Thessalonians this; “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*” (1 Thess. 2:13) The Word of God works in the believer in a powerful way. So much so, that its’ profit to us is that we are “*perfect*” and “*thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17) A religious agenda will never replace the power of the Living Word in the life of a believer. Religion is the path to spiritual death, but the affirmation of God’s grace is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

We can never satisfy our flesh with any amount of regimentation. No matter how much religion we throw at our flesh, it will always demand more effort. The grace of God is sufficient. It empowers us to mortify the flesh and to live unto God. Happiness and success for the saint, living in this present evil world, is in realizing that it is only in human weakness that we find the strength of grace. The delusion of religion is one of human ability and only leads to frustration.

*“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Cor. 12:9)*

## Chapter 13

# Brief Commentary on Philippians 3:2

*“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” (Phil 3:2)*

Dogs are used in a negative context consistently throughout Scripture. Interestingly, they are in the context of Psalm 22 – a messianic psalm concerning the betrayal, and crucifixion, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Examples:

*“And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.” (Exo. 22:31)*

*“Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken it.” (1 Kin. 14:11)*

*“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. <sup>17</sup> I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. <sup>18</sup> They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. <sup>19</sup> But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. <sup>20</sup> Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.” (Psa. 22:16-20)*

I believe the “*dogs*” could be a reference to almost any group – Jews, Gentiles, whatever. In scripture dogs are symbolic of opportunistic, greedy people bent on destruction, or feeding on destruction. In the context it could be a reference to false brethren/prophets/etc.

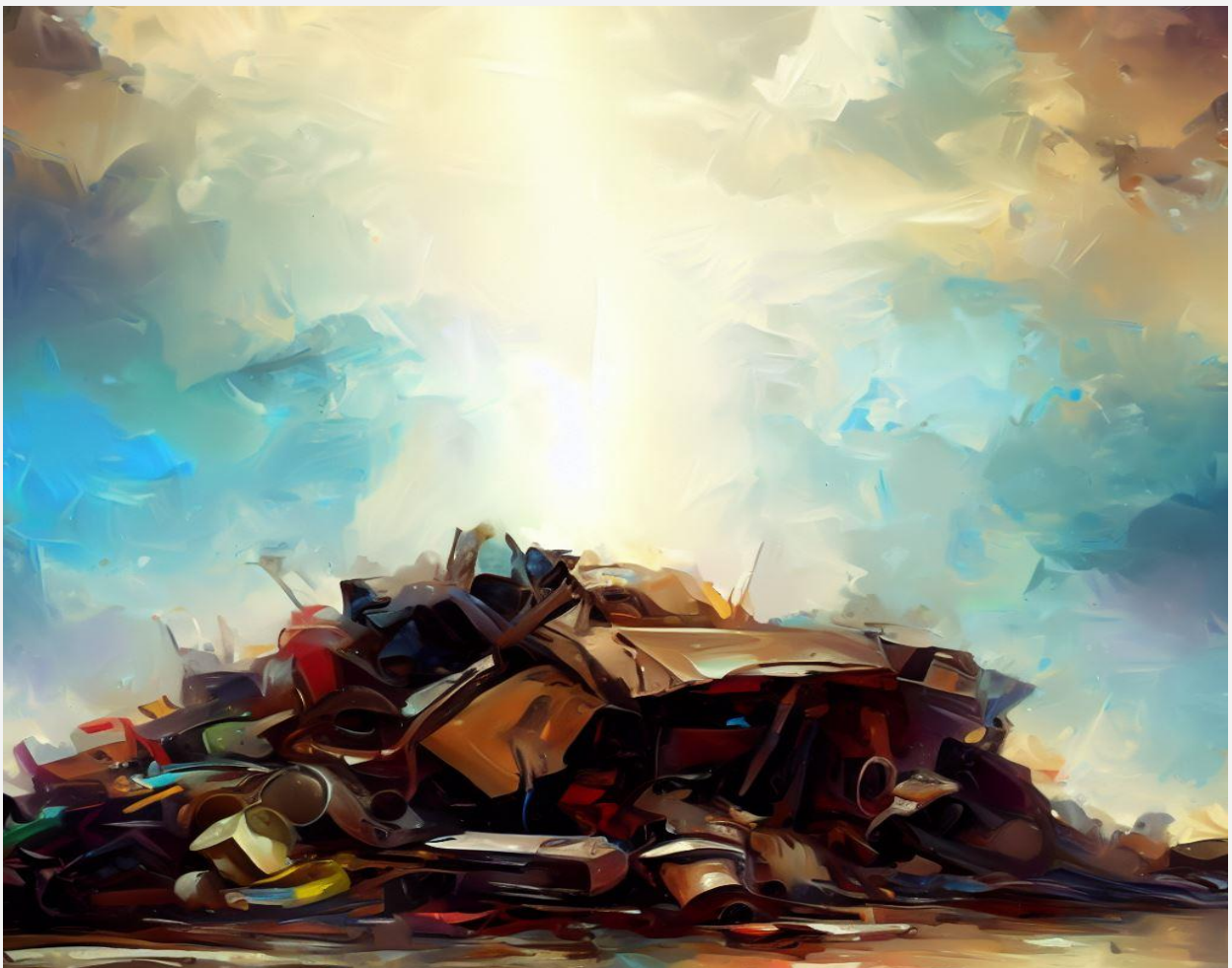
See also Titus 1:10-16, which doesn't specifically mention the dog, but certainly uses animalistic characteristics to describe false teachers. <sup>10</sup> *“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: <sup>11</sup> Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. <sup>12</sup> One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. <sup>13</sup> This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; <sup>14</sup> Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and*



*commandments of men, that turn from the truth. <sup>15</sup> Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. <sup>16</sup> They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."*

The "concision" is an interesting term and relates to mutilation. Paul's view by this time is that the rite of circumcision is a physical mutilation. That is why Paul was teaching the Jews who lived among the Gentiles that they should no longer practice it. *"And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."* (Acts 21:21)

Paul teaches us that we have been circumcised with an operation "*not made with hands*" and which is an "*operation*" of God (Col. 2:10-12). We can conclude that any self-effort, or religious practice, that we would employ in an attempt to deal with our flesh would in essence be a mutilation (an unsuccessful operation). It violates what Christ accomplished for us at Calvary, and is a denial of the completeness believers find in Christ Jesus.



## Chapter 14

# No Words Stand Alone

“No man is an island,” says the song, and much the same can be said of any word in any language.

One of the arguments set forth against the reliability of the King James Bible deals with the issue of the vernacular of the original languages. It is suggested that, since many of the original words have meanings peculiar to the Greek or Hebrew languages, no translation could ever demonstrate the total depth of the intended meaning.

Despite the fact that I am a proponent of the KJV, I must admit that this particular charge is true. It is not possible to translate from one language to another and capture the full depth of meaning of every word in every place. To fail to acknowledge this truth would be vainly impractical.

In this light, however, would it be true to say that a translation is “errant” because it does not possess the “fullest depth” in every instance? This is where the rub comes, and it is here that I would have to disagree with the conclusions of the “original language only” brethren.

The truth of the matter is that “inerrancy” has to do with the accuracy of the words on the page and not some attributed depth of meaning. When we say that the KJV is inerrant we do not even pretend to suggest that its language is not subject to expansion and explanation of word and thought. The suggestion is ridiculous.

No word in any language (including Greek and Hebrew) can be said to “stand alone.” In the English language we employ the dictionary to discover the full range of definition in a word. This is also true concerning the “original” Biblical languages. In order to discover the “fullest” meaning of any word we would utilize a lexicon. The word is rare that can portray its fullest depth in and of itself. This truth can be easily demonstrated from the Word of God.

Nehemiah successfully completed the task that God had put before him. He pleaded his cause to Artaxerxes, the king, and obtained permission to rebuild Jerusalem. He

marshalled the materials and the laborers to achieve this monumental task. Finally, he personally supervised the work despite tremendous political and military opposition. The result of all this was the return of “the people” within the walls of Jerusalem.

This remnant of God's “chosen” gathered themselves together “as one man” in the street before the water gate. They called for Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the law before them, and he did so. Ezra caused God's Word to be read to the people and this is the manner in which it was done:

*“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. 9 And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law” (Neh. 8:8-9).*

Each word was read “*distinctly*” to demonstrate accuracy. We can see that the reading, in and of itself, was insufficient, however, for afterwards the “*sense*” (the depth of meaning) was also given. The priests were among the people teaching them the full meaning of the Word of God.

Even when reading strictly from the Hebrew it was necessary to carefully demonstrate the meaning. Rare is the word, though perfectly chosen, that can be said to reflect the total “depth of meaning” by itself.

The issue of “accuracy” is distinct from the issue of “depth of meaning.” A word can be completely accurate and yet at the same time have its “total depth” incompletely realized. This is why preachers (good ones) define and expand the thought and meaning of every word. This was true when the Word was available only in the “original”, and it is true today.

The KJV is God's Word for English speaking people. It is accurate and totally reliable in every way. But there is more that is needed. It needs to be preached. It needs to be understood. It needs to be believed. Most of all, it needs to be incorporated into the lives of those who read it.

## Chapter 15

# Quench Not the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a vital element in our relationship to God, not only as a member of the Godhead but as the performer of Divine operations that shape this relationship. The Holy Spirit is the one that baptizes us into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and seals us there (Eph. 1:13) and is the earnest of our redemption (Eph. 1:14). The Spirit is also an intercessor and a helper of our infirmities (Rom. 8:26). We also discover that the Spirit enables us to mortify our flesh (Rom. 8:13) and is the means of quickening our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11) as it indwells us. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is the witness to our identity as the children of God (Rom. 8:16) and whose witness reassures us of our new identity in Christ.

Paul addresses several issues regarding our bond with the Holy Spirit. He exhorts believers to not grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) which is the result of our living in a manner inconsistent with our identity. The Ephesian epistle is unambiguous in the directive to *“walk worthy of the vocation”* wherewith we are called. In Christ we are said to be *“light”* and we are expected *“walk as the children of light.”* The Holy Spirit is grieved when we fail to do so.

Paul also cautions that the Spirit can be quenched (1 Thess. 5:19). This is an interesting notion in that quenching the Spirit would seem to suggest that God can be extinguished. Of course, this is impossible so we must look beyond the literal to discern the figurative meaning. Obviously, you cannot quench God – BUT you can extinguish the work He would accomplish in, and through, your life.

In looking at this subject we should note that man has a spiritual component that serves as one of the mechanisms by which we perceive and know one another. *“As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.”* (Prov 27:19) Just as man’s spirit is a point of contact between men it is also a point of contact with God *“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”* (Prov 20:27) However, the spirit of man alone does not equip us to know God as He intended – we must respond by God’s Spirit within us. *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”* <sup>13</sup> *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom*

*teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* <sup>14</sup>  
*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1  
Corinthians 2:12-14)

Perhaps one key in understanding how the Spirit might be quenched is found in the intrinsic link of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God. The mechanism of Inspiration is explained in 2 Peter 1:21; *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* The Word of God is also identified as the *“sword of the Spirit”* (Eph. 6:17) which explains its ability to cut us so penetratingly at the heart. The Bible is the one book that reads us as we read it, discerning all of our thoughts and intentions. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* <sup>13</sup> *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”* (Heb. 4:12-13)

As the Word of God is crucial in generating faith (Rom. 10:17) it is primary in the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. When we reject scriptural truth and refuse to be directed by it we are, in essence, quenching the Spirit. As we heed the instruction and principles of God’s Word we are being led by the Spirit. It isn’t by an indefinable force, or in the Divine manipulation of our circumstances, that we discover the substance of the Spirit’s leading; it is with the voice of God inked on the pages of our Bible. To walk in the Spirit is to make life choices based upon God’s Word. To quench the Spirit is to handle the details of our lives with our own agenda, in our own strength, and by our own wisdom.

The sad result of quenching the Spirit is to alienate ourselves from the life of God. It is to live in futility and it is a contradiction to our identity in Christ.

*“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* <sup>6</sup> *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* (Rom. 8:5-6)



## Chapter 16

# Raised with Christ

*“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” (Col. 3:1)*

It is interesting that this verse begins with “*if*”. *If* is a word that speaks to conditionality; it is not a word that only deals with a question. Here in Colossians, there is no question of the believer being “*risen*” with the Lord Jesus Christ. This question has already been addressed by the apostle in the previous chapter where he tells believers that being “*risen*” is part of our identification “*in Christ*”; it is an “*operation of God*” and helps to make us “*complete in Him*.”

*“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: <sup>11</sup> In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: <sup>12</sup> Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” (Col. 2:10-12)*

In this sense “*if*” is used as ‘since’ we are risen with Christ. The question then becomes one of appropriation of benefit rather than just our identification with Christ. Some would express this as a correlation between our standing and our state. Being identified with the risen Lord Jesus Christ should affect those things that we seek.

*“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3:2)*

Where have we set our affection? Are our goals and priorities established on the horizontal basis of this temporal world, or are we looking at the heavenly agenda?

*“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:3)*

As believers we are dead to this world. However, we are not so much dead to this world itself, but to the agenda, philosophy, and priorities of this world. Our life is not centered here; our life is centered in the person of Jesus Christ. His life is our life (Gal. 2:20) and our life is not our own (1 Cor. 6:19).

Often, believers live with a temporal mindset having a concept that worldly issues are what matters. The truth is this; we live in a temporal construct but we don't have to be confined by it. Our lives can be defined by a much larger scheme that is substantive and eternal. We can live a life that is much larger than ourselves but one that is only perceived as we look into ourselves rather than at the world around us. *"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; <sup>18</sup> While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."* (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

*"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."*  
(Col. 3:4)

Too many are concerned with the glory that belongs in this world. Whether it is wealth, fame, position, affection, security, health or any other worldly element, they are all fleeting and temporary. The lot of the believer is to suffer in this life, and afterward comes the glory; the only glory worth having, being identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."* (Rom. 8:18-19)

As saints, what questions are we asking ourselves? Hopefully, they center around the truths of Colossians Three. What are we seeking? Where have we placed our affection? Whose glory is it that we seek? May we all realize that our heavenly citizenship is much more vital to our happiness in this world than our common heritage in the Adamic race.



## Chapter 17

# Saying No to Militancy

*“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, <sup>25</sup> In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; <sup>26</sup> And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” (2 Tim. 2:24-26)*

In my younger years I often fell into a rhythm of militancy when expressing my doctrinal understanding and convictions. It required a great deal of time for the truth of *“the servant of the Lord MUST NOT strive”* (emphasis mine) to sink in. After years of ministry, it has been my observation that a militant presentation of truth is a fruitless endeavor. At times it has appeared that one has been successful in making converts to one’s point of view only to discover that a new militant has been created. This suggests that the person influenced was not persuaded of truth but was, in reality, a militant looking for a cause.

Strife only breeds more strife as indicated in Proverbs 15:18 when Solomon writes; *“A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.”* Our apostle of grace, Paul, exhorted believers to *“let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.”* I can with honesty attest that I have never witnessed one spiritual victory gained through militancy. Militancy is not about gentleness but conquering. Militancy is not about teaching but replication and rigidity. Militancy is not about patience or meekness but the properly timed strike, and triumph, and the pride of a vanquished foe.

Someone once said that Christians, in the spiritual battle, are often guilty of shooting their own wounded. Perhaps not, but it does often appear that believers are quick to throw another believer under the bus, so to speak, rather than to extend themselves in sincere ministry and edification. Paul makes it clear that the battleground of the Lord’s servant is the mind. To win the mind requires gentle, patient, and meek instruction which enables the errant to recover themselves. The result of a campaign of this nature is capitulation to truth, not the conquest of one will over another. Truth becomes the victor, not the Lord’s servant.



*“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. <sup>15</sup> But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” (Galatians 5:14-15)*

*“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. <sup>18</sup> For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. <sup>19</sup> Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” (Romans 14:17-19)*



## Chapter 18

# The Essence of Grace

*“Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

What a marvelous declaration from God that echoes through this age, as penned by the Apostle Paul! However, it is so sad that many people are ignorant of the fact that we live in a time designated by God as one in which He is dispensing grace alone. When we read a passage in the scripture as Ephesians 3:1 & 2; *“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:”* we encounter this proclamation of God’s beneficence and wonder truly why so many have not heard.

On the other hand, there are many that proclaim God’s grace without actually comprehending its scope and nature. They see grace as “unmerited favor” in salvation but fail to recognize that grace is a life force that extends right to the details and circumstances of everyday living. In the view of many, we receive salvation as a gift from God apart from any merit-based acceptance system but from that point on we all must earn God’s approval through meritorious service. This skewed view suggests that while we can’t earn God’s acceptance before conversion, but we can do so afterward.

*“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” (Eph. 1:2-7)*

The crux of the matter is this – our status as being accepted of God is a positional issue, not a practical one. God accepts, and has chosen, each believer by virtue of our position in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and this acceptance is not conditioned by our ability in any way. There is an old saying, “Saved by grace; kept by grace.” I am unaware of the



origin of this gem but I believe it to be true. However, in acknowledging its truth I must also confess that it is incomplete in its scope as it does not address the application of grace to the details of our lives.

*“Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:” (Gal. 1:3-4)*

A foundational principle of grace is that it is part of the provision from God that delivers us from this “present” evil world. This speaks of more than being delivered from the penalty of sin and addresses the problem of the ownership, influence and power of this evil world upon the believer. God has empowered each believer to exist and, yes, even to flourish in the sinful environment of our time. It is possible for the believer to suffer evil circumstances with hope and confidence knowing that these situations are not a reflection of God’s regard for us but just the natural state of affairs on this planet.

*“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. <sup>16</sup> Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, <sup>17</sup> Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” (2 Thess. 2:15-17)*

In our previous lost condition, we had no choice but to walk according to the “course of this world.” Our life was characterized by disobedience and governed by the plan and power of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-2). But, gloriously, our Savior changed all of that! When we trusted the gospel of grace we became “new creatures in Christ” bringing us into a new relationship with God Himself, and also, consequently, to the world we live in. Paul addresses this later in Ephesians 2 when he states, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

Not only have we been delivered from the penalty of sin by grace, we have, through the grace of God’s workmanship, been made new creatures, delivered from the power and influence of this evil world and have become testaments to the riches of His grace.

## Chapter 19

# Unsatisfied

Our flesh is in a continual state of dissatisfaction. It relishes all the religion and self-effort that we can throw at it and then screams for MORE.

*“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, <sup>21</sup> (Touch not; taste not; handle not; <sup>22</sup> Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? <sup>23</sup> Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.” (Colossians 2:20-23)*

Our only remedy is found "in Christ" and the completeness that is intrinsic to the new creature we have been created to be in our Savior.

*“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: <sup>7</sup> Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. <sup>8</sup> Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: <sup>11</sup> In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: <sup>12</sup> Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;” (Colossians 2:6-13)*

## Chapter 20

# We are One: A Study in Organic Dynamics

### The Organic Union

We live in an age when individual rights, self-reliance and independence is greatly valued (at least in word if not always in substance). People everywhere are “doing their own thing.”

This attitude is also pervasive in the Church, the Body of Christ and manifests itself in many forms. One form that many of us might recognize goes something like this; “I have the Word of God and the Holy Spirit and I don’t need anyone else.” As you read this you might even think “I don’t feel this way” and this might be true in some sense, but in another sense many of us practice this autonomous philosophy in a reverse sort of way. In words we may deny this attitude yet subscribing to it by practicing it in reverse.

To explain, we might recognize our dependence and need of other believers, but we fail to acknowledge that others are equally dependent on us.

*“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:12-13)*

There is a truth in the Scriptures that concerns the organic unity of the Body of Christ. In organic, by definition, we mean “being made of parts that exist together in a seemingly natural relationship that makes for organized efficiency.” The text above lends itself to this definition as it employs the illustration of the human body; a marvelously intricate and coordinated organism. One might ask the question concerning the human form; “is it a single organism, or is it a composite?” The answer is “yes”.

To deny the practical implications of this doctrine damages our relationships with other believers and deprives us of the true joy, and privilege, of enhancing joy in others. Our denial also serves to blind us to our true identity “*in Christ*” and the significance of being “*members*” of His body. The truth of the matter is that not only do we become members

of Christ through the “*operation of God*” (Colossians 2) we also become members “*one of another*” (Romans 12).

*“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; <sup>26</sup> That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. <sup>29</sup> For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: <sup>30</sup> For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. <sup>31</sup> For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* (Eph. 5:25-32)

Ephesians five is often cited as one of the greatest texts concerning marriage, and this is, indeed, true. However, to view this as a marriage passage only is to miss the intended duality of the author. Paul writes of the marriage union, and of all the mystery associated with it, but pointedly says “*I speak of Christ and the church.*” What we discover here is that our union with Christ is like the union of man and wife. Two becoming “*one flesh*” is a joining that results in a shared identity that speaks to mutual esteem, provision and protection. This is true of marriage or our union in Christ. There is much to be learned of spiritual union with God by examining our physical union in marriage.

### **The Organic Design**

*“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; <sup>22</sup> And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. <sup>23</sup> And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”* (Gen. 2:21-23)

In the first marriage we see God’s design for this union. When God created Adam He did so with a purpose. “*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*” (Gen. 2:15) Adam was to serve as an adornment testifying of God’s creative power and he was to “*keep*” (protect or preserve) that portion of Eden relegated to him. It is in this context that God said of Adam, “*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*” (Gen. 2:18) God purposed that Adam should not serve alone in his responsibility and made provision in the form of Eve, his wife. This first family unit was a

key element in God's design to fill the earth and "subdue" (take back) the earth; reclaiming that which had suffered from the rebellion of Lucifer, and they were to do it together.

*"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. <sup>10</sup> For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. <sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? <sup>12</sup> And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."* (Ecc. 4:9-12)

It is true that the first family failed miserably in their duty, but this was not because of a flaw in God's design. Mankind was not created as a solitary being. Ecclesiastes four speaks to the fruitfulness, assistance, comfort, and defense that are the product of the combined efforts of two people, and that the addition of a third party is better still. The principle of community is established on a sound Biblical base.

The same principle is a component in God's design, and purpose, for the Body of Christ. Please note the following scriptures;

*"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: <sup>16</sup> From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."* (Eph. 4:15-16)

*"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. <sup>19</sup> And if they were all one member, where were the body? <sup>20</sup> But now are they many members, yet but one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. <sup>22</sup> Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: <sup>23</sup> And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. <sup>24</sup> For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: <sup>25</sup> That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. <sup>26</sup> And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup> Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."* (1 Cor. 12:18-27)

It is said that the world's largest single organism is a stand of Aspen trees. Each tree appears to stand alone and yet each is a member in an intricate symbiotic web of life organically bound at the roots. So, similarly, is the Body of Christ. Each believer is one member of a complex organism with a corporate life that emanates from its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. In our union in Christ we find nourishment, fruitfulness, aide, comfort and safety.

### **The Organic Effect**

There are consequences when we live in light of our shared identity in Christ and in accordance with God's design for the Body of Christ.

There is balance and unity. Ephesians Four speaks of our being "*fitly joined together*" and this founded in the seven unities (the ingredients of balance) found early in the chapter. Our union should be manifested as a unity in purpose, attitude and truth (Phil. 1:27; 2:1-2). The apostle Paul was intensely interested in the organic effect as demonstrated when he said, "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" (1 Cor. 1:10)

There is edification. Our text in Ephesians Four also notes that the Body of Christ is "*compacted together by that which every joint supplieth*", which refers to the mutual support and fruitfulness that results from the participation of each member. Throughout the Pauline Epistles we find exhortations to edification.

- We are to seek to excel at edification – 1 Corinthians 14:12
- We are to pursue the things that edify – Romans 14:19
- We are to recognize that edification is more important than personal agendas – Romans 15:1-2
- We are to comprehend that edification is more vital than our personal liberty – 1 Corinthians 10:23
- We are to follow God's design for edification – Ephesians 4:11-16

### **The Application**

On the basis of Romans 12:9-10, we should come to the place where we live in the context of "it's not me that counts, but we." This means that we never reject others because of our differences, or their shortcomings, but we are accepting. Paul writes;



*“Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.”* (Rom. 15:7) This doesn’t imply that we approve of bad behavior but it does signify that we value people in the same way God receives us. How does God receive us? He receives us just as we are and on the basis of the gift of His Son for us.

It is a valuable exercise to become familiar with the *“one another”* citations in the Pauline Epistles. There are many, and they come in both positive and negative connotations. Paul exhorts believers to be kindly affectioned one toward another, to prefer one another, to love one another, to edify one another, to be like-minded as God in patience and consolation toward one another, to receive one another, to admonish one another, to tarry for one another, to have the same care one for another, to serve one another, to forgive one another, to submit to one another, to teach one another, to comfort one another, to forbear (be patient) for one another, and to restore one another. Unquestioningly, Paul stresses the need for us to be mindful of one another, and how vital this is in our life together in Christ Jesus.

Interestingly, our apostle also creates panoply *“do not”* admonitions as well. He says do not judge one another anymore, do not be puffed up for one against another (to take up someone else’s offence), do not go to law with one another, do not bite and devour one another (to backbite), do not lie to one another, and do not show partiality one toward another. These admonitions and exhortations are all founded in our shared identity in Christ and in the fact that we are members *“one of another”*. He makes these warnings that our relationships, and our lives, would not be consumed in petty self-interests and constant turmoil.

## **The Conclusion**

*“So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup> Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. <sup>17</sup> If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”* (John 13:12-17)

The apostle Paul often described himself as a servant to God and men. In this he followed the example of the Savior, who taught that true happiness is only discovered when we esteem the needs of others above our own. The thought of the Creator kneeling on a floor to wash feet is a humbling one, and it boggles the mind that in doing

so,He finds happiness. If believers would follow these examples of service one to another they might find the joy that seems to elude so many.





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he invested many hours reading, and wrestling with the Scriptures. Studying the Gospels and the eschatological books of scripture was especially painful and frustrating because of many imagined contradictions and inconsistencies. It was only as he encountered a dispensational hermeneutic that he was finally able to embrace the bible in its entirety and to embark on a journey of faith and service from that time until this day.