

# **Growing in Christ:**

## **Introduction: The Lie & The Fall**

Many Christians today still long for a transformation in their characters. We see the state of our spiritual lives as being less than we thought or hoped they would be. It's easy to look at ourselves and be critical of our progress! We don't think we are the person that Christ would have us be. We see our shortcomings - but see no solutions. Some fear for their very salvation because they still have sin in their lives. We look inside ourselves - to see what we can do differently.

The Christian Church today faces a sad and difficult situation. Many Christians are living under the disillusionment of a false Gospel. Many churches today teach is really a distortion of the Gospel. It is a half Gospel. It is a Gospel that is meaningless and powerless to change people's lives!

Often the Gospel that Christians accept is still rooted in what the "world system" has trained us up to believe. It may be a "Social Gospel", or a "Positive Thinkers Gospel", or a "Prosperity Gospel". But most often – it is a "Legalistic Gospel".

### **The World System Has It's Effects On Us!**

We are raised in our society to think of ourselves in terms of what we do. Our value as people is often described in terms of our profession, or it's based on how much money we make.

When we come into the church we still relate to other people and ourselves the same way we always have. That's the way the world relates to us.

### **We See Ourselves In Light Of Our Achievements.**

If we have had financial success in life we tend to think highly about ourselves. If our job choices have been less than what we had hoped for it can be easy to think down on our selves.

### **Or - We See Ourselves In Light Of Our Past Experiences**

If we have been abused in our past, it is easy to have a victim's mentality. If we have lead sinful lives we can be over come by the guilt and shame of our past.

We see ourselves in terms of those things that we have done. Our self-worth or significance is tied to our actions. Or, we see ourselves in terms of those things that have been done to us! We see ourselves as a victim of circumstance. What we believe will eventually determine how we live our lives!

There is a misconception in the church today that when we accept Jesus Christ into our lives then everything in our lives will be made perfect – right away. When it doesn't happen to us like that, we think that there is something wrong with us. We think that we are the odd man out. We think it happened to everyone else so we begin to doubt what God has done for us. We begin to doubt God's work in our lives.

We think that it just didn't take with us. In many churches, the same people go forward every week to recommit themselves to God and in most cases they continue to fail miserably because we are still living under the pretenses of a false Gospel.

When we came to Christ something did happen to us! We were changed. We were transformed and made new again! But no where in the Bible does it say that – immediately – everything in our lives would be made right. When we come to Christ we have a whole lifetime of wrong thinking to overcome. We have bad habits that have to be dealt with. We have a whole lifetime of people we need to forgive! Everything about us was rooted in what the Bible calls, "The Lie".

We used to be creatures of the night. The Bible says we used to live in the darkness. Now, as Christians, we are called to come into the light! Once we come to Christ – we begin – the process – of taking the ways of darkness out of our lives and replacing it with the light and truth of Jesus Christ. (Matt 4:16-17; 6:22-24; John 3:19-21; John 8:12; 12:46; Acts 26:17-18; Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 5:8-11; Col 1:13-14; 1 Thes 5:4-5; 1 Pet 2:9; 1 John 1:5-7; 2:8-11)

In order for that to happen we have to understand who we are in Christ Jesus. We have to understand the true and life changing nature of the Gospel. And once we grasp it, we have to begin to experience it for ourselves. In practical ways!

First and foremost, we have to understand that Salvation is a free gift! God accepts us just as we are. We are unconditionally loved. We are completely forgiven for our sins: past, present and future! When we come to faith in Christ we have to learn what it means to be “Born Again”. We have to learn what it means to be empowered for change!

Many of us are overcome by guilt that should have been replaced by the peace of God. We still think that we have to do something to earn our salvation! We go from being unsaved to being religious. Religion has no solution for guilt!

Religion is rooted in the shame and guilt of “The Lie”. Satan wants us to doubt God! Legalism keeps us trapped in guilt because we are not perfect! Guilt binds us, cripples us and makes us ineffective as Christians. Religion and legalism is man’s attempts to be good enough, in God’s eyes. The Pharisees thought they were God’s chosen people because of what they did and Jesus called them whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27)

### **There Is Only One Solution For Guilt And Legalism. We Have To Understand The Truth And Put It In To Action!**

In order for us to understand where we are now and where Christ would have us be, we have to look at what has happened to the entire human race as a result of what the Bible calls, “The Fall”.

### **The Fall of Man**

When God created Adam and Eve they were created to live inside the perfect love of God. God intended that they should get their self worth and significance from Him! He was their creator and he knew what was best for them. In a sense, man was created with their “Batteries not included”! We were created to get our value from something or someone outside of ourselves. From God!

God alone had the blue print for who we are! If Adam wanted to know who he was he could go to God to find the answers. God made us that way. There is a place inside of each and every one of us that only God can fill. (See Eccl 3:11)

Adam and Eve chose to believe “The Lie” and sent the human race in a downward spiral that has caused billions of people to live lives separated and detached from God’s love and without hope!

### **“The Lie” Finds Its Roots In Genesis, Chapter 3**

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:1-5 NASB)

“The great deceiver clothed himself as a serpent, one of God’s good creatures. He insinuated a falsehood and portrayed rebellion as clever, but essentially innocent, self-interest. Therefore “the devil, or Satan,” is later referred to as “that ancient serpent” (Rev 12:9; 20:2). Crafty. The Hebrew words for “crafty” and “naked” are almost identical. Though naked, the man and his wife felt no shame (2:25). The craftiness of the serpent led them to sin, and they then became ashamed of their nakedness (see v. 7). Did God really say ... ? The question and the response changed the course of human history. By causing the woman to doubt God’s word, Satan brought evil into the world. Here the deceiver undertook to alienate people from God. Elsewhere he acts as an accuser, to alienate God from people” (see Job 1–2; Zec 3:1). (NIV Study Bible Note)

This is known throughout the Bible as “The Lie”. (Rom 1:25; John 8:44)

Satan led a cosmic rebellion against God who deceived Eve and she began to doubt God’s love for them. Satan told Eve that she could be as God, knowing both good and evil. Adam and Eve fell when they believed “The Lie” and ever since the fall - every human has tried to make “The Satanic Lie” work.

Satan came with an alternative life style or an alternative reality (A life separated from God’s love!) “The Lie” is the driving force behind the entire “World System” we live in today “The Lie” can only produce hopeless misery and self-centeredness for anyone who believes it.

Because we have believed “The Lie” that says, “We are as God”: We now get our value and identity from those around us – We are co-dependant. We either deny our guilt, placing it on others – Or we take everyone else’s guilt upon ourselves – hoping we won’t be rejected. The Lie produces: fear of failure, perfectionism, avoidance of risk, addictions, anger, resentment, hopelessness, pride and all kinds of negative attitudes that have to be dealt with. We are all, by our vary nature, dysfunctional

For thousands of years, billions of people have been trying to make “The Satanic Lie” work for them. Mankind strives to lead independent lives. It is our human nature to try to govern our own destiny and to make the lie work for us!

### **The First Chapter Of The Book Of Romans Is Paul’s Commentary On The Fall And It’s Results!**

Most churches today still major in “The Lie”. Romans 1:25 says, "They exchanged the truth of God for {literally, "the lie"}, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen." (NIV)

Jesus confronted the religious leaders and legalists of his day. Notice what he had to say to the Pharisees in John 8:44. "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks {literally, "the lie"}, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. (NASB)

### **Devil (*slanderer*)**

The name describes Satan as slandering God to man and man to God. The former work is, of course, a part of his great work of temptation to evil and is not only exemplified, but illustrated as to its general nature and tendency by the narrative of Genesis 3. The other work, the slandering or accusing men before God is the imputation of selfish motives, Job 1:9-10, and its refutation is placed in the self-sacrifice of those "who loved not their own lives unto death." (Smith's Bible Dictionary)

How do we overcome “The Satanic Lie”? Our only hope of finding the peace, joy and rest that Jesus spoke about is through the Good News of the Gospel. God himself overcame “The Lie” for us through his son, Jesus Christ. Because of that, we have to come to terms with what it all means for us.

# **Growing in Christ:**

## **Part 1: Consequences Of The Fall**

What happened to Adam and Eve because of the fall? “In Genesis 3:7 they realized they were naked. No longer innocent like children, they had a new awareness of themselves and of each other in their nakedness, which now produced in them a sense of shame. They ... made coverings. Their own feeble and futile attempt to hide their shame, which only God could cover!” (NIV Study Bible Note)

The Fall came by the disobedience of Adam (Gen 3:6; Gen 3:11; Gen 3:12; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:15; Rom 5:19)

The Fall came through the temptation of the devil (Gen 3:1-5; 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14)

The Fall brought a consciousness of guilt, shame and fear (Gen 3:7; Gen 3:8; Gen 3:10)

### **The Results Of The Fall:**

Mankind is now made in the image of Adam (Gen 5:3; 1Co 15:45-49)

We are all born dead in sin (Psa 51:5; Isa 48:8; John 3:6; Eph 2:1-3; Col 2:13)

We are now children of wrath (Eph 2:3)

We are all evil in heart and blind (Gen 6:5; Gen 8:21; Matt 15:19; Eph 4:17-19)

We are all depraved in mind, defiled, corrupt and we are no longer able to receive the things of God (Rom 3:13-14; Rom 8:5-7; Eph 4:17; Tit 1:15; 1Co 2:14)

We are all in bondage to sin and constantly evil (Rom 6:19; Rom 7:5-23; Gal 5:17; Titus 3:3; 2Pe 2:14)

We are all in bondage to the devil (2Ti 2:26; Heb 2:14-15)

We are all unrighteous and love the darkness (Eccl 7:20; John 3:19; Rom 3:10)

### **Mankind’s Punishment Is A Result Of The Fall:**

Mankind suffered banishment from Paradise (Gen 3:24)

Mankind suffered condemnation to labor and sorrow (Gen 3:16-19; Job 5:6-7)

Mankind was condemned to suffer temporal & eternal death (Gen 3:19; Job 21:30; Rom 5:12, 18-21; Rom 6:23; 1Co 15:22)

### **Remedy For The Fall Is Provided By God Through The Gospel! (Gen 3:15; John 3:16)**

The gospel is good news! Salvation is offered freely to everyone who believes – Romans 1:16-17 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." (NASB)

## **The Gospel (Accepting the Truth)**

One gospel illustration often used is called the Roman Road. It goes as follows:

- Romans 3:23 – For all have sinned
- Romans 6:23 – The wages of sin is death
- Romans 5:8 – Jesus paid the penalty for our sins
- Romans 10:9-10 – We must confess Jesus as Lord and Savior
- Romans 10:13 – We must Ask God to Save us!

Most churches stop there! Coming to terms with the Gospel is a crisis! The word crisis means, “a crucial or decisive point or situation; it’s a turning point” Accepting the Gospel is a crisis – that initiates us – into the process of being changed.

## **The Bible Describes Salvation In Terms Of: Past - Present - Future**

- Ephesians 2:5 – “You have been saved” (Past tense)
- 1 Corinthians 1:18 – “You are being saved” (Present tense)
- Romans 5:9 – “You shall be saved” (Future tense)

The Bible spends more time on the “process” than it does the “crisis” itself.

Growth Comes In Stages: We need to grow in maturity or we will continue to live as children live never experiencing the fullness of the Christian life. (1 Cor. 3:1-3) Perfection is unattainable in this life – But we serve a perfect Savior, who offered a perfect sacrifice, who wants us to experience perfect peace, joy and rest, in him! It’s not based on our works! It’s all about what he has already done for us!

Over the next few lessons we will look at the process of ‘Being saved’!

# Growing in Christ:

## Part 2: The Born Again Christian

The Bible tells us that there are three kinds of people in this world.

1. Natural Man (one who has not received Christ) 1 Corinthians 2:14
2. Carnal Man (One who has received Christ, but who lives in defeat because he is trying to live the Christian life in his own strength) 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
3. Spiritual Man (One who is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit) 1 Corinthians 2:15

### **When We Become Christians, We Are All Made Part Of God's Family Through The Holy Spirit!**

**Holy Spirit: Regenerates Us!** (Titus 3:5-7; John 6:63; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 8:16)

Regeneration is only found in Matt 19:28 and Titus 3:5. This word literally means a "new birth." The Greek word so rendered (*palingenesia*) is used by classical writers with reference to the changes produced by the return of spring. In Matt 19:28 the word is equivalent to the "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). In Titus 3:5 it denotes that change of heart elsewhere spoken of as a passing from death to life (1 John 3:14); becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17); being born again (John 3:5); a renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2); a resurrection from the dead (Eph 2:6); a being quickened (Eph 2:1, Eph 2:5)

Every person who receives Jesus Christ as savior is immediately regenerated and born again and his or her dead spirit becomes a new living spirit.

**Holy Spirit: Seals Us!** (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; Rom 8:16; 2 Cor 1:22; 2 Tim 2:19)

An important work of the Spirit clearly is to protect God's people. The metaphor of a seal meant that the contents of the document under it were protected by the power of the official who placed the seal and identified as belonging to the official. Christians are protected by the power of the God and identified as His because He put His Spirit on them as a seal. This security is a great source of assurance for Christians. Those who live with such security and assurance, quite understandably, experience boldness, joy, and peace as a result. The Spirit is also a deposit or down payment. A deposit is simply the first payment. The remainder will come later. The gift of the Spirit is God's first payment to His people. The remainder of His blessings will be given later, in the life to come. The Spirit's presence with us is a foretaste of the life to come. See Rom 8:23 (Disciple's Study Bible Note)

**Holy Spirit: Anoints Us!** (1 John 2:20, 27; 2 Cor 1:21)

Anointing (Gk. *chrisma*) (1 John 2:20; 2 Cor 1:21) The Greek term *chrisma* is related to the title Christ, which means "Anointed One," and is used in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) for the anointing of a high priest (see Ex 29:17). The anointing here depicts the impartation of the Holy Spirit to a person (see also Isa 61:1). As Christians, now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are joined to the Anointed One and share in His anointing (2 Cor 1:21, 22). Therefore we can know all things with respect to truth and falsehood. Because the Spirit lives within us, we know all that we need to know in order to resist the temptations of false teachers and to live godly lives in this world. (The Nelson Study Bible: Word Focus)

Every believer is anointed by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of assimilating the truth of God's Word. God has given us human teachers that are important for our learning but it is the Holy Spirit that Actually teaches us spiritual truths that reach our inner person. The Holy Spirit infuses the truth into our lives.

### **Holy Spirit: Baptizes Us!** (1 Cor 12:13; Romans 6:3-4)

Christ pointed forward to the coming of the Spirit in power: Matt 3:11; John 1:33; The baptism was promised to saints: Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 2:38-39; 11:16; There is a necessity of receiving the Holy Spirit's baptism: John 3:5; Acts 19:2-6; All true believers partake of the baptism: 1Cor 12:13; Romans 6:3-4; Ephesians 4:4-6; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:26-28; The Holy Spirit renews and cleanses our soul: Titus 3:5,6; (Note the past tense nature of the baptism with the Holy Spirit in the Epistles)

When we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are baptized into the body of Christ, his church. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a one time historical event that is not repeated over and over again. All true believers receive the baptism when they become Christians. Christ pointed forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit in power for the church universal. After the Spirit descended upon the church in the Book of Acts, Chapter Two the baptism is always spoken of in the past tense. The baptism of the Spirit is not a second Acts of grace or an experience that we feel but rather a position we gain through our faith in Jesus Christ. The sphere of the baptism grows numerically as more people accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. (See: Rom 6:3-4; 1Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26-28; Eph 4:4-6; Col 2:12)

### **Holy Spirit: Indwells Us!** (John 14:17; Romans 8:9-11)

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a permanent experience that all Christians have when they come to Christ.

#### **The Indwelling Is The Means Of:**

Quickening (Rom 8:11)

Guiding (John 16:13; Gal 5:18)

Fruit bearing (Gal 5:22)

A proof of being in Christ (Rom 8:9; 1 John 4:13)

A proof of adoption (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5)

Is abiding (1 John 2:27)

#### **Those Who Don' Have The Indwelling:**

Are sensual (Jude 1:19)

Are without Christ (Rom 8:9)

Opposed by the carnal nature (Gal 5:17)

# Growing in Christ:

## Part 3: The Spirit-Filled Life!

### God Has Provided For Us An Abundant And Fruitful Christian Life:

(John 10:10; John 15:5; Galatians 5:22-26)

The degree to which these traits are manifested in the life depends upon the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of his life, and upon his maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if he is not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.

### Carnal Christians Cannot Experience The Abundant And Fruitful Christian Life

Carnal: This word occurs only in the NT, although “*carnally*” is found three times in the OT (KJV). “*Carnal*” appears in the NT 11 times, “*carnally*” once. “Carnal” means “pertaining to the flesh.” The noun *sarx* basically means the flesh of an animal or person, or the meat of an animal. However, in the NT, “*carnal*” has sometimes to do with literal flesh, and sometimes with the old Adamic fallen human nature to be found in all men alike. For the literal use, see Rom 15:27; I Cor 9:11; II Cor 10:4; Heb 7:16; 9:10; for the metaphorical, Rom 7:14; 8:7; I Cor 3:1, 3,4 where reference is to the old nature, or “old man.”

The carnal man trusts in his own efforts to live the Christian life:

1. He is either uninformed about, or has forgotten, God's love, forgiveness, and power Romans 7:8-10, 18-23; 2 Peter 1:9; Hebrews 10:26-39; 1 John 2:1-3).
2. He has an up-and-down spiritual experience.
3. He cannot understand himself - he wants to do what is right, but cannot.
4. He fails to draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 5:16-18)

Paul admits to being carnal, that is, still having a fallen nature. He says the carnal mind is enmity against God, and brands the Corinthian Christians as carnal, which he defines as behaving like natural, unregenerated men. When he says “to be carnally minded is death” (Rom 8:6), he is talking of those who have only a fallen nature and have not the new nature, those who are unsaved. (Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia)

The individual who professes to be a Christian but who continues to practice sin should realize that he may not be a Christian at all, according to 1 John 2:3; 3:6, 9; Eph 5:5; Matt 10:22-28; Matt 13:1-23

### Jesus Promised The Abundant And Fruitful Life As The Result Of Being Filled (Directed And Empowered) By The Holy Spirit

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15).

- One becomes a Christian through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, according to John 3:1-8. From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at all times (John 1:12; Colossians 2:9, 10; John 14:16, 17). Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is the source of the overflowing life (John 7:37-39).

- The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ (John 16:1-15). When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is a true disciple of Christ.
- In His last command before His ascension, Christ promised the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:1-9).

**When We Are Filled By The Holy Spirit Through Faith, We Can Experience The Abundant And Fruitful Life Which Christ Promised To Each Christian.**

**You Can Experience The Filling Of The Holy Spirit Right Now If You:**

- Sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:6; John 7:37-39).
- Confess your sins. By faith thank God that He has forgiven all of your sins - past, present and future - because Christ died for you (Colossians 2:13-15; 1 John 1; 2:1-3; Hebrews 10:1-17).
- Present every area of your life to God (Romans 12:1, 2).
- By faith claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit, according to:
  - 1) His Command - Be filled with the Spirit (Romans 6:6; 8:1-11; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-17, 24-25; 6:14; Ephesians 1:13-17; 3:16; 4:23-24, 30-32; 5:18; Colossians 3:3-8).
  - 2) His Promise - He will always answer when we pray according to His will. (1 John 5:14, 15).
  - 3) His Power – We are given power to overcome all the powers of darkness (2 Cor 10:3-5)

The “Strongholds” or “Fortresses” mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 are the ways of thinking from our past. Or, they are habits and lifestyles that are rooted in “The Lie” that we believed so much to be true from the past. They are the ways of dealing with hurt, anger, abuse and bitterness that we learned from a lifestyle separated and apart from the love of God. Or they are any thoughts that we let take control of us. When we overcome the lies of guilt and shame (Hebrews 10:22-23) we will find rest and peace for our souls and we will have a clear conscience before God. We will become the people that Christ created us to be – Spirit Filled! (See: Beth Moore: Breaking Free)

**You Can Know That You Are Filled With The Holy Spirit Right Now!**

Trust in God and His Word (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:22, 23) and do not depend upon your feelings. The promise of God's Word, not our feelings, is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word.

# Growing in Christ:

## Part 4: When We Fall!

### By Faith You Can Continue To Experience God's Love And Forgiveness.

If you become aware of an area of your life (an attitude or an action) that is displeasing to the Lord, even though you are walking with Him and sincerely desiring to serve Him, simply thank God that He has forgiven your sins - past, present and future - on the basis of Christ's death on the cross. Claim His love and forgiveness by faith and continue to have fellowship with Him.

### If You Fall Back Into Sinful Behavior By Acts Of Disobedience:

- 1) Confess your sin - agree with God concerning your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness of it, according to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:1-25. Confession involves repentance - a change in attitude and Action.
- 2) Surrender the control of your life to Christ, and again receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. Trust that He now directs and empowers you; according to the command of Ephesians 5:18, and the promise of 1 John 5:14, 15.

There are reasons that we often fall into the same sins and fail repeatedly. The lie of "The Fall" has corrupted our lives in ways we don't often recognize and we carry many things with us into our Christian lives that Christ has already dealt with for us through the cross.

### Some Of The Things That Can Still Affect Us In Our Lives (Past & Present) Include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shame</li><li>• Guilt</li><li>• Blame</li><li>• Substance Addiction</li><li>• Abuse (of all kinds)</li><li>• Abandonment</li><li>• Fear</li><li>• Rejection</li> <li>• Betrayal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self Denigration</li><li>• Worthlessness</li><li>• Self Pity</li><li>• Unlovable</li><li>• Victimized</li><li>• Performance Trap</li><li>• Approval Addiction</li> <li>• Legalism (The God Syndrome)</li></ul>
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We can begin to deal with the problems we bring into our Christian lives from our past by understanding some of the key terms that the Bible uses to describe our relationship in Christ.

### Christ Has Overcome All Of Our Problems!

#### The Gospel (Rom 1:16)

The Gospel is the good news that we have forgiveness of sins through Jesus. Specifically, the gospel is defined by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1-4: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

The gospel comes from God (Gal. 1:10-12), is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16), is a mystery (Eph. 6:19), and is a source of hope (Col. 1:23), faith (Acts 15:7), life (1 Cor. 4:15), and peace (Eph. 6:15).

### **Grace** (Eph 2:8-9)

Grace is unmerited favor. It is God's free Action for the benefit of His people. It is different than Justice and Mercy. Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we do not deserve. In grace we get eternal life, something that, quite obviously, we do not deserve. But because of God's love and kindness manifested in Jesus on the Cross, we receive the great blessing of redemption.

Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace rules out all human merit. It is the product of God that is given by God, because of who He is not because of who we are. It is the means of our salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). We are no longer under the Law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14). (See 1 Cor. 15:11; Rom. 5:2, 15-20; 2 Cor. 12:9; and 2 Cor. 9:8).

### **Faith** (Heb 11:1)

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). It is synonymous with trust. It is a divine gift (Rom. 12:3) and comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). It is the means by which the grace of God is accounted to the believer who trusts in the work of Jesus on the cross (Eph. 2:8). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). It is by faith that we live our lives, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17). (See also: Matt 13:1-17,18-23)

### **Regeneration / New Birth** (Titus 3:5; Rom 8:16)

Washing of regeneration The Greek word for washing can signify the receptacle of washing (the basin) or the Acts of washing itself. In Eph. 5:26, the only other New Testament occurrence of this word, the natural meaning is washing. Here also the action of washing is presented. Quite simply, the text says that regeneration is characterized by or accompanied by the action of washing. The regenerative activity of the Holy Spirit is characterized elsewhere in Scripture as cleansing and purifying (see Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5). The Greek term for regeneration literally means "being born again"—indicating a new birth effected by the Holy Spirit (see John 3:6; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6). Thus God saved us through one process with two aspects: the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. (Gk. *loutron palingenesias*) (Titus 3:5) (The Nelson Study Bible: Word Focus)

### **Justification** (Rom 5:9)

To be justified is to be made righteous. It is a divine Acts where God declares the sinner to be innocent of his sins. It is not that the sinner is now sinless, but that he is "declared" sinless. This justification is based on the shed blood of Jesus, "...having now been justified by His blood..." (Rom. 5:9). When God sees the Christian, He sees him through the sacrifice of Jesus and "sees" him without sin. This declaration of innocence is not without cost for it required the satisfaction of God's Law, "...without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). By the sacrifice of Jesus, in the "one Acts of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men" (Rom. 5:18, NASB). In justification, the justice of God fell upon Himself--Jesus. We receive mercy--we are not judged according to our sins. And grace is shed upon us--we receive eternal life. This justification is a gift of grace (Rom. 3:24), by faith (Rom. 3:28) because Jesus bore our guilt (Isaiah 53:12).

### **Sanctification** (1 Thess 4:3,7)

To sanctify means to be set apart for a holy use. God has set us apart for the purpose of sanctification not impurity (1 Thess. 4:3, 7) and being such we are called to do good works (Eph. 2:10).

Christians are to sanctify Christ as Lord in their hearts (1 Pet. 3:15). God sanctified Israel as His own special nation (Ezek. 27:28). People can be sanctified (Exodus 19:10,14) and so can a mountain (Exodus 19:23), as can the Sabbath day (Gen. 2:3), and every created thing is sanctified through the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4).

Sanctification follows justification. In justification our sins are completely forgiven in Christ. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit makes us more like Christ in all that we do, think, and desire. True sanctification is impossible apart from the atoning work of Christ on the cross because only after our sins are forgiven can we begin to lead a holy life. See also: Rom 6:19, 22; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 12:14.

### **Reconciliation** (Rom 5:10)

Reconciliation is changing for the better a relationship between two or more persons. Theologically it refers to the change of relationship between God and man. We are naturally children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), and are at enmity with God (Eph. 2:11-15); but, "...we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." (Rom. 5:10). Because of the death of Jesus, the Christian's relationship with God is changed for the better. We are now able to have fellowship with Him (1 John 1:3) whereas before we could not. So, we are reconciled to Him (Rom. 5:10-11). The problem of sin that separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2) has been addressed and removed in the cross. It was accomplished by God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:18).

### **Adoption** (Rom 8:15)

The Greek word for adoption is derived from the word *huioi*, meaning "son," and the word *thesis*, meaning "placement." It is a legal term that in this context indicates that believers have been given the full privileges of sonship in God's family. Concurrent with this placement into sonship, God places the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so that we become, in effect, His natural-born children. As such, we are not just "adopted" (in the sense the word now conveys) but genuinely "begotten" by God. God makes children of men into children of God, just the reverse of what happened to Christ when the Son of God became the Son of Man. (See: Romans 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5)

### **Propitiation** ( 1 John 2:2)

This term is derived from the Greek verb *hilaskomai*, a word which has three meanings: (1) "to placate" or "to appease"; (2) "to be propitious and merciful"; or (3) "to make propitiation for someone." The New Testament never describes people appeasing God. Instead, as Luke 18:13 and 1 John 2:2 make clear, the New Testament describes God as being merciful to, or making propitiation, for us. God provides a merciful expiation, or atonement, of the sins of believers through the death of Christ. But since Paul also speaks of God's wrath, it must also speak of the conciliation of God's anger by means of a sacrifice—namely, the sacrifice of His Son. John states that God demonstrated His love to us by sending His Son to become "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Just as in the Old Testament God met His people when the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on the altar, so Christ's death brings us into fellowship with God. (Gk. *hilasterion*) (Romans 3:25; Heb. 9:5) (The Nelson Study Bible: Word Focus)

### **Atonement** ( 1 John 2:26)

To atone means to make amends, to repair a wrong done. Biblically, it means to remove sin. The Old Testament atonements offered by the high priest were temporary and a foreshadow of the real and final atonement made by Jesus. Jesus atoned for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). This atonement is received by faith (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8-9).

Man is a sinner (Rom. 5:8) and cannot atone for himself. Therefore, it was the love of the Father that sent Jesus (1 John 4:10) to die in our place (1 Pet. 3:18) for our sins (1 Pet. 2:24). Because of the atonement, our fellowship with God is restored (Rom. 5:10).

# Growing in Christ:

## Part 5: Christ's Suffering and Atoning Death

In Christ's death we see the ultimate love of God expressed in ways that can hardly be described. What Jesus suffered during his trial and crucifixion was for you and me and the whole human race. He came to die on a cross so that we could be transformed into the people God intended us to be before "The Fall". Normal functioning human beings!

### Notice How Isaiah Prophesied What Christ Would Endure For You And Me.

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand." (Isaiah 53:3-10 NIV)

Jesus was abused and suffered greatly at the hands of hateful people in order to redeem us from our present lives and ways of thinking brought about by "The Lie" and now delivers us from our bondage to sin and all its power over us.

First Peter 1:18-19 says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (NIV)

1. The Blood of Jesus Was Shed For Us ( Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:24-26; Rom. 5:8-9; Eph. 1:5, 7; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:12, 14, 22; Heb. 10:19-20; Heb. 12:24; Heb. 13:12; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 5:6; Rev. 1:5; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 7:14; Rev. 12:11; Rev. 13:8)
2. Jesus Died for Our Sins (John 1:29; Rom. 6:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:14, 21; Gal. 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:18)
3. Jesus Freely Gave His Life (John 3:16; John 6:51; John 10:11, 15, 17-18; Acts 2:23; Rom. 5:8; Rom. 8:32; Gal. 1:3; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:13-14; 1 John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10; 1 John 5:11)
4. Jesus' Death Delivers, Redeems, and Rescues Us (Job 19:25; Ps. 111:9; Isa. 59:20; Luke 2:38; Luke 4:18; Rom. 3:23-24; Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 1:3-4; Gal. 3:13-14; Gal. 4:4-5; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:13-14; Heb. 9:11-12; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 14:3)
5. Jesus' Death Was a Means of Reconciliation For Us (Rom. 5:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 1:10; Eph. 2:13-16; Col. 1:19-22)

6. Jesus' Death Was an Offering (Isa. 53:7, 10, 12; Rom. 8:3; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 8:1, 3; Heb. 9:14; Heb. 13:11)
7. Jesus' Death Was a Passover Sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7)
8. Jesus' Death Was a Payment or Purchase (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Cor. 7:23; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 14:4)
9. Jesus' Death Was a Propitiation, an Atonement (Isa. 53:5; Rom. 3:25; Rom. 5:1; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10)
10. Jesus' Death Was a Ransom (Job 33:24; Isa. 35:10; Hos. 13:14; Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; Heb. 9:15)
11. Jesus' Death Was a Sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 7:24, 27; Heb. 9:26–28; Heb. 10:5–14; 1 John 2:1–2; 1 John 4:10)
12. Jesus' Death Was Substitutionary (Isa. 53:3–12; Matt. 20:28; Matt. 26:28; Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:6, 8; Rom. 14:15; 2 Cor. 5:14–15; 1 Thess. 5:9–10; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 2:21, 24; 1 Pet. 3:18)

What Jesus suffered on the cross was for our redemption! Jesus experienced all of the hurt, heartache, pain, abuse, betrayal, abandonment, torture and rejection so that he would be totally “acquainted with our grief”. There is nothing that Christ underwent that was against his own permissive will in that he laid down his own life willingly for all of us. (John 10:14-18; Phil 2:5-11)

Jesus took not only our sins but our iniquities as well. Iniquity is sin that is twisted and bent from one generation to another. As an example, a father may abuse his child who then abuses his own child. Generation after generation it goes on and on. Each individual in the line has his own spin on the abuse itself.

### **Iniquity:**

Sixteen Hebrew and Greek words are translated “iniquity” in the KJV. The more important are as follows: Hebrew . . . “perversity, perverseness”; . . . , “that which is crooked, perversity (most common), depravity, sin. . . “unrighteousness”; . . . “lawlessness.” The Hebrew refers primarily to the character of an Action, as seen in (Isa 64:6) where iniquities are paralleled to self-righteous deeds that are like filthy rags. From this it expands to express the idea of guilt (Gen 15:16; Num 15:31; II Sam 14:32; Ps 32:5; Jer 2:22; 30:14–15 RSV), followed by punishment for guilt . . . (Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, Moody Press 1975)

No matter what has hurt you in the past you can know that God understands what you have been through and is able to rescue you from your pain and sorrow. He wants to give you rest in his son, Jesus Christ who has saved us from our rebellion and dark past. Matthew 11:28-30 says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (NIV)

### **Faith in Christ**

What constitutes believing in Christ? And why has God made believing in Christ the sole condition for salvation? The Old Testament Scripture is full of prophetic declarations regarding the Great Deliverer and the work he was to accomplish. Jesus the Christ is Jesus the Great Deliverer, the Anointed One, the Savior of men. This name denotes that Jesus was divinely appointed, commissioned, and accredited as the Savior of men (Heb. 5:4; Isa. 11:2–4; 49:6; John 5:37; Acts 2:22).

"To believe that "Jesus is the Christ" is to believe that he is the Anointed, the Messiah of the prophets, the Savior sent of God, that he was, in a word, what he claimed to be. This is to believe the gospel, by the faith of which alone men can be brought unto God. That Jesus is the Christ is the testimony of God, and the faith of this constitutes a Christian (1 Cor. 12:3; 1 John 5:1)." (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

### Look At Some Of The Old Testament Prophecies About Christ

New Testament quote about Jesus	Taken from the Old Testament
<p>Hebrews 1:10 He also says (about Jesus), <i>"In the beginning, O LORD, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands."</i></p>	<p>Psalm 102:25 <i>"In the beginning, O LORD, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands"</i></p>
<p>Romans 14:9-11 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: <i>"As surely as I live," says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'</i> (NIV)</p>	<p>Isaiah 45:21b-23 There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.</p>
<p>Acts 2:21 <i>"In the last days', God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people ... And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.'</i></p> <p>Acts 2:25 David said about him (Jesus): <i>"I saw the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."</i></p> <p>Acts 2:36 Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both LORD and Christ.</p> <p>Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is LORD," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.</p>	<p>Joel 2:27-32 Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed. 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people ... And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.</p>
<p>Acts 2:25 David said about him (Jesus): <i>"I saw the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."</i></p>	<p>Psalm 16:1-2,8 Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the LORD, "You are my LORD; apart from you I have no good thing." ... I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.</p>
<p>John 12:40,41 <i>"He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn--and I would heal them."</i>(Isaiah 6:10) Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.</p>	<p>Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." (NIV)</p>

# **Growing in Christ:**

## **Part 6: From Condemnation to Forgiveness**

### **Guilt**

Guilt is defined as: Being responsible for and accountable for an offense. Biblically, it is the state of being under a present or pending consequence due to a sin against God's Law. It is also an emotional state as well as legal condition. Guilt feelings are used by the Holy Spirit to inform the sinner of broken fellowship with God (Isaiah 59:2; John 16:8). Because of our guilt before God, we need reconciliation (Rom. 5:6-9).

### **Conviction**

The work of the Holy Spirit where a person is able to see himself as God sees him: guilty, defiled, and totally unable to save himself (John 16:8). Conviction of the Holy Spirit of an unbeliever reveals sinfulness and guilt and brings fear. Conviction of the Holy Spirit of the believer brings an awareness of sin and results in confession and cleansing. This conviction is produced by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), the Gospel (Acts 2:37), the conscience (Rom. 2:15), and the Law (James 2:9). Conviction of our sins brings us to the cross. It shows us our need for forgiveness.

Second Corinthians 7:10 says, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (NIV)

### **Forgiveness**

Forgiveness, a term denoted in the O.T. by words that mean 'send away,' 'cover,' 'remove,' and 'wipe away.' In the N.T. 'send away' is used most often; forgiveness is also communicated by words which mean 'loose' (Luke 6:37), 'be gracious to' (Luke 7:43; 2 Cor. 2:7), and 'pass over' (Rom. 3:25). The Bible records human sinfulness, God's eagerness to forgive, and frequent calls by the prophets, Jesus, and Jesus' followers for repentance from sin and return to God.

The O.T. system of worship provides sacrifices for expiating the guilt of those who have sinned unwittingly or repented of their sins (Lev. 4-5), but sacrifice must always be accompanied by a proper disposition (1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6). The prophets testify repeatedly that God desires to forgive human sins and asks for repentance (Isa. 1:18-19; Hos. 12:2-3; Joel 2:13) as a prerequisite for a renewed relationship between God and Israel.

The N.T. continues the tradition of God's mercy shown in forgiveness of sins. God initiates contact with humans (Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 9:23-26) and forgives sins through the death of Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:25; Mark 10:45; Gal. 1:4; Acts 13:38). God's forgiveness is variously described as justification, salvation, and reconciliation. It is associated with the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:28) and in some passages Jesus himself forgives sins (Mark 2:5-6; Acts 5:31). Members of the Christian community also have a role in the forgiveness of each other's sins (John 20:23; James 5:13-16). Community relations depend on members forgiving one another (Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 17:3; Eph 4:30-32; Col 3:8-10). The Lord's Prayer makes divine forgiveness dependent on forgiveness of others (Matt. 6:12, 14-15; Luke 11:4) and another Gospel saying instructs early Christians to be reconciled before offering sacrifice to God (Matt. 5:23-24; Mark 11:25). (Harper's Bible Dictionary)

### **Forgiveness Is The Key To Living God's Love!**

Ephesians 4:30-32 says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form

of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (NIV)

This is a command, not something we consider doing when the time is right. Paul says, do it!

### **We Must Allow The Lord To Help Us To Forgive And Forget!**

Some may argue and say "It is impossible to forget!" Let's first define the word "forget".

- a. To be unable to remember (something)
- b. To treat with thoughtless inattention; neglect: forget one's family
- c. To leave behind unintentionally
- d. To fail to mention -- The American Heritage Dictionary

When we talk of forgiving and forgetting, it is the last three definitions we need to remember. Technically, we may be able to recall the offense to our minds but for all practical purposes, we so disregard the offense that it is "out of mind"

### **Is This Possible To Really Forgive And Forget? The Bible Says Yes!**

- a. The example of Joseph - Gen 50:15-21
- b. The attitude of Paul - Phil 3:13; Eph 4:32

Both these men had plenty of things done to them that could have made them resentful, but God helped them to "forget" those things.

### **Jesus Is Our Greatest Example Of Loving Forgiveness. He Died For Us So We Could Be Healed Of Our Sinfulness And Shortcomings.** (Luke 23:33-34; 1 Peter 2:21- 25)

Can a person who says "I will forgive but not forget", truly have forgiven?

"If I say, 'Yes, I forgive, but I cannot forget,' as though the God, who twice a day washes all the sands on all shores of all the world, could not wash such memories from my mind, then I know nothing of Calvary love." (Amy Carmichael)

When we truly contemplate the love, mercy, and forgiveness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus it is indeed possible to forgive and forget, at least in the sense of removing it from the attention of our minds. The citizens of the kingdom of heaven are to be characterized by the attitudes of mercy and forgiveness towards others.

"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. "But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."  
( Matthew 6:14-15 NASB)

We must remember who we are in Christ! It is because of what he has done for us that makes forgiving and forgetting possible.

Christ gave us an example of forgiveness and love. First Peter 2:21-25 says, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (NIV)

## **We Must Remember To:**

Put on the New Self: (The Battle is in our Minds)

Ephesians 4:22-24 says, "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (NIV) (See also: 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; 1 Peter 1:3; Colossians 3:1-17)

Be Transformed by the Renewing of our Minds: (This is a metamorphosis and renovation)

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be *transformed* by the *renewing* of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." (NIV) (See also: 2 Corinthians 3:18)

The word used for *transformed* is the same word used in Matthew 17:2 for the transfiguration.

The word used for *renewing* was used in Greek to renovate a home. This *renovation*— comes by God's Word – Phil 4:8; Col 1:28; 3:1-4, 5-10, 16.

## **Jesus Wants To Transform Our Minds & Set Us Free From Our Painful Past Experiences.**

When we come into the Church we bring with us all kinds of ways and habits of dealing with those things that have hurt us so badly. We deal with them in the ways that the world has taught us to deal with them. In Christ we are commanded to forgive as he forgives. Not carrying our hurts with us and bearing anger and resentment towards others. This requires a life change, a transformation in our minds that only Christ can produce.

You may find it helpful to write down a list of all the people who have hurt you in the past. As you go through the list, let Jesus take those hurts and set you free from their bonds over you. This may be a difficult task at first but as you give these past hurts to Christ, you can find peace and freedom through his love.

"Anyone who has ever been victimized—and that includes victims of crime, accident victims, adult survivors of childhood abuse, political prisoners, and so on—must decide whether or not to forgive the perpetrator. There can be no middle ground to this decision: either you decide to forgive the person who hurt you, or you hold on to bitterness and anger.

Holding on to bitterness and anger can cause problems of their own, so if you have ever been victimized, being able to forgive your victimizer is a crucial part of your healing. "  
(<http://www.guidetopsychology.com/forgive.htm>)

When we come into the church of Jesus Christ, we often forget where we have been and where God would have us be. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (NIV) It is easy to accept the forgiveness God has for us but extending that forgiveness to those who have hurt us is a different matter. Forgiveness is not letting the person who hurt you get away with their abuse. Forgiveness is turning the one who hurt you over to the only one who can rightly judge, God himself. It is a releasing of the bitterness, rage and anger that so easily binds us and resting in the love of God expressed through his Son, Jesus Christ. Only when we forgive those who have hurt or wronged us can we begin to experience the full expression of God's love in our lives and find peace and freedom in him. (See Mt. 22:36-40)

# Growing in Christ:

## Part 7: The Love of God

### Love

"Love to both God and man is fundamental to true religion, whether as expressed in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Jesus Himself declared that all the law and the prophets hang upon love (Mt 22:40; Mk 12:28-34). Paul, in his matchless ode on love (1 Cor 13), makes it the greatest of the graces of the Christian life - greater than speaking with tongues, or the gift of prophecy, or the possession of a faith of superior excellence; for without love all these gifts and graces, desirable and useful as they are in themselves, are as nothing, certainly of no permanent value in the sight of God. Not that either Jesus or Paul underestimates the faith from which all the graces proceed, for this grace is recognized as fundamental in all God's dealings with man and man's dealings with God (John 6:28 f; Heb 11:6); but both alike count that faith as but idle and worthless belief that does not manifest itself in love to both God and man. As love is the highest expression of God and His relation to mankind, so it must be the highest expression of man's relation to his Maker and to his fellow-man." (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

One common word for love in the Greek language was *eros*, which suggested physical sexual desire and not much else. Another word, *philos* suggested the esteem and affection found in a casual friendship. Because neither of these words came close to describing the kind of love he wanted to communicate, Paul chose a relatively rare Greek word for his definitive passage on love. This word, *agape*, describes a love that is based on the deliberate choice of the one who loves rather than the worthiness of the one who is loved. This kind of love goes against natural human inclination. It is a giving, selfless, expect-nothing-in-return kind of love. . . . (The Nelson Study Bible - 1 Corinthians 13 - In Depth - Love)

### **As Christians, We Are Commanded To Love Just As We Are Commanded To Forgive!**

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:7-10 NIV)

**The Power To Love Comes From God Himself Through The Indwelling Holy Spirit.** (Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22; Col 1:8)

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NIV)

### **We Show Our Love For God By Loving Others.**

Hebrews 6:10 says, "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." (NIV) (See also: Luke 15:31; 1Cor 13:13; 2Cor 5:14; 1Thes 1:4; 2Thes 2:13; 2Thes 3:5; Titus 3:4; 1John 2:7-8; 1 John 3:17; 1John 4:12, 20)

### **Jesus Christ Gave Up Every Privilege And Became A Servant To Show Us How Much God Loves Us.**

Philippians 2:5-11 says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted

him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (NIV)

### **The Bible Commands Christians to:**

- Put on Love - Col 3:14
- Abound in Love - Phil 1:9; 1Thes 3:12
- Continue in Love - 1Tim 2:15; Heb 13:1
- Be fervent in Love - 1Pet 1:22; 1Pet 4:8

### **The Love Of God Has To Grow Inside Us. We Will Experience More And More Of God’s Love As We Grow Closer To Christ In Our Daily Walk.**

“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.” (1 Thessalonians 3:12 NIV)

Have you allowed the love and mercy of God to transform your heart? Have you accepted God’s forgiveness into your life by believing in his son, Jesus Christ? He wants you to grow in him and become the person he intended you to be. Give yourself time and trust that he will finish a good work in you.

### **How To Walk By The Spirit In Love!**

Faith, trust in God and in His promises, is the only means by which a Christian can live the Spirit-directed life. As you continue to trust Christ moment by moment:

1. Put on the New Self - The Battle is in our Minds (Ephesians 4:22-24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; 1 Peter 1:3; Colossians 3:1-17)
2. Your life will demonstrate more and more of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) and will be more and more conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
3. Your prayer life and study of God's Word will become more meaningful. (James 5:16)
4. You will experience His power in witnessing (Acts 1:8).
5. You will be prepared for spiritual conflict against the world (1 John 2:15-17); against the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17); and against Satan (1 Peter 5:7-9; Ephesians 6:10-13).
6. You will experience His power to resist temptation and sin (1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 1:19-23; 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 6:1-16; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
7. You will grow in your ability to forgive as God has forgiven you ( Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:30-32)
8. You will grow in your love for God and those around you. (1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 John 2:7-8; 4:7-12; 5:3; 2 John 6)

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14 NIV)

# Growing in Christ:

## Part 8: Overcoming the Lie!

We can only ever hope to be victorious in this life through the power of God living in us through the Holy Spirit! As New Creations, God has already empowered us to be transformed into His image but we can not just sit back and expect God to do every thing for us. We have to be engaged in this battle for our minds and hearts and we do that through believing and living the Word of God. When we believe what God has told us to do and we Acts on it, we become the people he meant us to be. We have an enemy that desires our souls. And if he can't take our souls, he will use what ever power is at his disposal to make us powerless and ineffective as Christians. He will keep us bound up in failure and discouragement and guilt and shame - when we could be overcoming through the power of the Word of God. We need to understand what it means to be a "New Creation"!

### A New Creation:

According to 2 Cor 5:17, a great change takes place in the life of one who is a Christian: Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (NIV)

But what does this change mean? What position does this "new creation" hold in the eyes of God? What type of life is he or she to lead and how does this change affect his or her relationship to things pertaining to one's old way of life?

In Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, we find the answers to such questions. Note first of all that a Christian is described as sitting with Christ in heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:4-7 says; "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (NASB)

### Out Of Love, Mercy And Grace, We Who Were Dead Are Now Alive! (Eph 2:4-5; Rom 5:6-8)

Now we are:

- Raised with Christ - Eph 2:6; Col 2:12; 3:1
- Seated with Him in "heavenly places" - Eph 2:6

Definition of "heavenly places"

1. Lit., "the heavenlies", found only in Ephesians - Eph 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12
2. Various explanations often given: the church, heaven itself or the spiritual realm.
  - 1) The church is ruled out by - Eph 3:10
  - 2) Heaven proper is ruled out by - Eph 6:12
  - 3) It most likely refers to the "spiritual realm" as contrasted to the physical realm

In the spiritual realm, we enjoy blessings in Christ - Eph 1:3

In the spiritual realm, Christ rules at God's right hand - Eph 1:20

In the spiritual realm, we sit with Christ - Eph 2:6

In the spiritual realm, principalities and powers learn of God's wisdom by the church - Eph 3:10

In the spiritual realm, we wrestle against spiritual wickedness - Eph 6:12

## **We Must Compare Our Position With Christ In The "Heavenly Places"**

- Christ is seated at God's right hand - Eph 1:20
- We are seated together with Christ! - Eph 2:6

Our position with Christ warrants a proper frame of mind - Col 3:1-2

- We are to seek those things above
- We are to set our minds on the things above

As "A New Creation," sitting with Christ in heavenly places should affect the way we think. Notice how the Bible says we are to behave as a "New Creation"!

## **We Are To Walk In A Manner Worthy Of Our Calling - Eph 4:1**

- To be holy and without blame - Eph 1:3-4
- To be His beloved children through adoption - Eph 1:5
- Is one in which we "walk in love" - Eph 5:1-2
- Is one in which we "walk as light" - Eph 5:3-14
- Is one in which we "walk as wise" - Eph 5:15-17

When we walk in "love", as "light" and as the "wise", our walk will be controversial in the midst of a dark and perverted world (See: 2 Tim 3:12).

## **We Must Stand Firm In Our Battle - Eph 6:10-19**

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:10-19 NIV)

### **The Nature Of Our Battle:**

- We are engaged in a spiritual warfare - Eph 6:12
- The battle is taking place in "heavenly places" (the spiritual realm)
- Our enemy: the very things we had previously followed - Eph 2:2-3

### **The Need To Be Strong - Eph 6:10**

- To be strong in the Lord
- To be strong in the power of His might

### **The Nature Of Our Armor:**

We are given the armor of God, which we must put on - Eph 6:11, 13

This armor is for the strong offensive battle we must all fight - Eph 6:14-18

In understanding Ephesians 6: 10-19, we must understand that the Apostle Paul made earlier allusions to powerful beings in the unseen world and implies that human effort is inadequate in our spiritual fight against them but that God's power is invincible. Our fight is not against flesh and blood. We must be careful not to lash out against human opponents as though they were the real enemy and also against assuming that the battle can be fought using merely human resources. God supplies the power and victory! (See also: 2 Cor 10:3-5)

### **Compare Our Position To The Wicked Person Who Is Not Blessed By God (Psalms 1:1-2)**

- The wicked are walking in the counsel of the wicked
- The wicked are standing in the path of sinners
- The wicked are sitting in the seat of scoffers

### **The Armor Of God:**

#### **The belt of truth buckled around your waist – Eph 6:14**

(Character, not brute force, wins the battle, just as in the case of the Messiah)

#### **Breastplate of righteousness – Eph 6:14**

(Here again, the warriors' character is their defense. God himself is symbolically described as putting on a breastplate of righteousness when he goes forth to bring about justice. See Isa 59:17)

#### **Feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace – Eph 6:15**

(Typical of the protective and supportive footgear of the Roman soldier)

#### **Shield of faith that can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one– Eph 6:16**

(Describes the large Roman shield covered with leather, which could be soaked in water and used to put out flame-tipped arrows)

#### **Helmet of salvation – Eph 6:17**

(Notice how Isaiah 59:17 has similar language, along with the breastplate. The helmet protected the soldier and under certain circumstances helmets provided a striking symbol of military victory)

#### **The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God – Eph 6:17**

(Here is a reminder that the battle is spiritual and must be fought in God's strength. We must depend on the Word of God and on God himself through prayer)

#### **Praying in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests – Eph 6:18 - 19**

(We should always pray with the help of the Spirit. See Rom 8:26)

(Note that there is no protection for behind; this implies that we must be committed to standing firm against the enemy. To retreat insures defeat!) (See also: Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 6:7; 2 Cor 10:4; 1 Thes 5:8)

### **Conclusion:**

When a person becomes "A New Creation", it affects every thing about them. How we sit, stand and walk! Now we have a choice! We can live as new creations, as carnal Christians, wavering back and forth, or follow after the wicked ways of the world. Which do you choose?

# Growing in Christ:

## Appendix 1: Understanding the Trinity!

**God is a Trinity of persons:** the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is not the same person as the Son; the Son is not the same person as the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is not the same person as Father. They are not three gods and not three beings. They are three distinct persons; yet, they are all the one God. Each has a will, can speak, can love, etc., and these are demonstrations of personhood. They are in absolute perfect harmony consisting of one substance. They are coeternal, coequal, and copowerful. If any one of the three were removed, there would be no God.

Jesus, the Son, is one person with two natures: Divine and Human. This is called the Hypostatic Union. The Holy Spirit is also divine in nature and is self aware, the third person of the Trinity.

There is, though, an apparent separation of some functions among the members of the Godhead. For example, the Father chooses who will be saved (Eph. 1:4); the Son redeems them (Eph. 1:7); and the Holy Spirit seals them, (Eph. 1:13).

A further point of clarification is that God is not one person, the Father, with Jesus as a creation and the Holy Spirit is a force (Jehovah's Witnesses). Neither is He one person who took three consecutive forms, i.e., the Father, became the Son, who became the Holy Spirit (Oneness Pentecostals). Nor is God the divine nature of the Son (where Jesus had a human nature perceived as the Son and a divine nature perceived as the Father (Oneness theology). Nor is the Trinity an office held by three separate Gods (Mormonism).

The word "person" is used to describe the three members of the Godhead because the word "person" is appropriate. A person is self aware, can speak, love, hate, say "you," "yours," "me," "mine," etc. Each of the three persons in the Trinity demonstrates these qualities.

The list below should help you to see how the doctrine of the Trinity is systematically derived from Scripture. The list is not exhaustive, only illustrative. The first step is to establish the biblical doctrine that there is only one God. Then, you find that each of the persons is called God, each creates, each was involved in Jesus' resurrection, each indwells, etc. Therefore, God is one, but the one God is in three simultaneous persons. Please note that the idea of a composite unity is not a foreign concept to the Bible; after all, man and wife are said to be one flesh. The idea of a composite unity of persons is spoken of by God in Genesis (Gen. 2:24).

### **There is only one God**

Isaiah 43:10; 44:6,8; 45:5,14,18,21,22; 46:9; 47:8; 55:5; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:5-6; Gal. 4:8-9

### **God Exists In Three Separate And Distinct Persons**

Doctrine Of The Trinity Is Proved From Scripture - Matt 3:16; Matt 3:17; Matt 28:19; Rom 8:9; 1Co 12:3-6; 2Co 13:14; Eph 4:4-6; 1Pe 1:2; Jud 1:20; Jud 1:21; Rev 1:4; Rev 1:5;

Divine Titles Applied To The Three Persons In The Trinity - Ex 20:2; John 20:28; Acts 5:3; Acts 5:4;

### **Each Person In the Trinity Is Described As:**

Eternal - Rom 16:26; Rev 22:13; Heb 9:14;

Holy - Rev 4:8; Rev 15:4; Acts 3:14; 1Jo 2:20;

True - John 7:28; Rev 3:7;

Omnipresent - Jer 23:24; Eph 1:23; Psa 139:7;

Omnipotent - Gen 17:1; Rev 1:8; Rom 15:19; Jer 32:17; Heb 1:3; Luk 1:35;

Omniscient - Acts 15:18; John 21:17; 1Co 2:10; 1Co 2:11;

Creator - Gen 1:1; Col 1:16; Job 33:4; Psa 148:5; John 1:3; Job 26:13;

Sanctifier - Jud 1:1; Heb 2:11; 1Pe 1:2;

Author of All Spiritual Operations - Heb 13:21; Col 1:29; 1Co 12:11;

Source of Eternal Life - Rom 6:23; John 10:28; Gal 6:8;

Teacher - Isa 54:13; Luk 21:15; John 14:26; Isa 48:17; Gal 1:12; 1Jo 2:20;

Raising Christ From The Dead - 1Co 6:14; John 2:19; 1Pe 3:18;

Inspiring the Prophets - Heb 1:1; 2Co 13:3; Mar 13:11;

Supplying Ministers To The Church - Jer 3:15; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28; Jer 26:5; Matt 10:5; Acts 13:2;

Salvation the Work of - 2Th 2:13; 2Th 2:14; Tit 3:4-6; 1Pe 1:2;

Baptism Administered In Name of - Matt 28:19;

Benediction Given In Name of - 2Co 13:14

Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is arrived at by looking at the whole of scripture, not in a single verse. It is the doctrine that there is only one God, not three, and that the one God exists in three persons: Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

# Growing in Christ:

## Appendix 2: Faith Is the Victory

### Faith

“Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true (Phi 1:27; 2Th 2:13). Its primary idea is trust. A thing is true, and therefore worthy of trust. It admits of many degrees up to full assurance of faith, in accordance with the evidence on which it rests.

Faith is the result of teaching (Rom 10:14-17). Knowledge is an essential element in all faith, and is sometimes spoken of as an equivalent to faith (Joh 10:38; 1Jo 2:3). Yet the two are distinguished in this respect, that faith includes in it assent, which is an act of the will in addition to the act of the understanding. Assent to the truth is of the essence of faith, and the ultimate ground on which our assent to any revealed truth rests is the veracity of God.

Historical faith is the apprehension of and assent to certain statements which are regarded as mere facts of history.

Temporary faith is that state of mind which is awakened in men (e.g., Felix) by the exhibition of the truth and by the influence of religious sympathy, or by what is sometimes styled the common operation of the Holy Spirit.

Saving faith is so called because it has eternal life inseparably connected with it. It cannot be better defined than in the words of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism: “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.”

The object of saving faith is the whole revealed Word of God. Faith accepts and believes it as the very truth most sure. But the special act of faith which unites to Christ has as its object the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Joh 7:38; Act 16:31). This is the specific act of faith by which a sinner is justified before God (Rom 3:22, Rom 3:25; Gal 2:16; Phi 3:9; John 3:16-36; Act 10:43; Act 16:31). In this act of faith the believer appropriates and rests on Christ alone as Mediator in all his offices.

This assent to or belief in the truth received upon the divine testimony has always associated with it a deep sense of sin, a distinct view of Christ, a consenting will, and a loving heart, together with a reliance on, a trusting in, or resting in Christ. It is that state of mind in which a poor sinner, conscious of his sin, flees from his guilty self to Christ his Saviour, and rolls over the burden of all his sins on him. It consists chiefly, not in the assent given to the testimony of God in his Word, but in embracing with fiducial reliance and trust the one and only Saviour whom God reveals. This trust and reliance is of the essence of faith. By faith the believer directly and immediately appropriates Christ as his own. Faith in its direct act makes Christ ours. It is not a work which God graciously accepts instead of perfect obedience, but is only the hand by which we take hold of the person and work of our Redeemer as the only ground of our salvation.

Saving faith is a moral act, as it proceeds from a renewed will, and a renewed will is necessary to believing assent to the truth of God (1Co 2:14; 2Co 4:4). Faith, therefore, has its seat in the moral part of our nature fully as much as in the intellectual. The mind must first be enlightened by divine teaching (Joh 6:44; Act 13:48; 2Co 4:6; Eph 1:17, Eph 1:18) before it can discern the things of the Spirit.

Faith is necessary to our salvation (Mar 16:16), not because there is any merit in it, but simply because it is the sinner's taking the place assigned him by God, his falling in with what God is doing.

The warrant or ground of faith is the divine testimony, not the reasonableness of what God says, but the simple fact that he says it. Faith rests immediately on, “Thus saith the Lord.” But in order to this faith the veracity, sincerity, and truth of God must be owned and appreciated, together with his unchangeableness.

God's word encourages and emboldens the sinner personally to transact with Christ as God's gift, to close with him, embrace him, give himself to Christ, and take Christ as his. That word comes with power, for it is the word of God who has revealed himself in his works, and especially in the cross. God is to be believed for his word's sake, but also for his name's sake.

Faith in Christ secures for the believer freedom from condemnation, or justification before God; a participation in the life that is in Christ, the divine life (Joh 14:19; Rom 6:4-10; Eph 4:15, Eph 4:16, etc.); "peace with God" (Rom 5:1); and sanctification (Act 26:18; Gal 5:6; Act 15:9).

All who thus believe in Christ will certainly be saved (Joh 6:37, Joh 6:40; Joh 10:27, Joh 10:28; Rom 8:1). The faith = the gospel (Act 6:7; Rom 1:5; Gal 1:23; 1Ti 3:9; Jud 1:3). "

(Easton's Bible Dictionary)