

Our Oneness With Christ
Abridged Version

A Study in Living by Grace Through Faith

David Kuykendall

All Scriptures are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

Verses marked TLB are taken from The Living Bible, copyright 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois. Used by permission.

This work is published by
David Kuykendall Ministries
Dallas, Texas

Table of Contents

PART ONE—SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS / 4

1. Jesus Is “The Last Adam” / 5
2. Sin With a Face / 8
3. In Christ Crucified—Now / 13
4. In Christ Buried and Resurrected—Now / 17
5. Christ in You—Now / 21

PART TWO—BASIC APPROACHES / 23

6. The Approach of Faith / 24
7. The Approach of Choice / 28

PART THREE—LIFE TRANSFORMATIONS / 32

8. At Last—Spirit-Filled Living / 33
9. What a Difference the Spirit Makes / 36
10. Freedom From Sin / 41
11. Freedom From the World / 45
12. Freedom From Law / 48

CONCLUSION / 54

Part One

Scriptural Teachings

If life is going well for you now, it is possible that you will think of this as just another book or, at best, an “interesting” book. If, however, you have come to the “end of self,” you may be only hours away from entrance into the abundant life.

“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

We believe that Jesus loves us because the Bible tells us He does—whether we *feel* lovable or not. The Bible alone is our authority in spiritual matters, and as a result, we accept its teachings over our own ideas or feelings about a matter.

With that quality of faith in the Scriptures, Part One sets forth the foundational biblical truths of our oneness with Christ. It is possible that these truths are new to you. Yet they are truths that must be understood if we are to have the quality of life the Lord has made possible. With the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we can understand them.

By faith, simply open your heart to the Lord and indicate to Him that you are trusting Him to explain to you the biblical teachings of your oneness with Jesus Christ.

The testimony of many who have understood and experienced their union with Christ is, “I now see it everywhere I read in the Bible.”

Chapter 1

Jesus Is “The Last Adam”

If life is going well for you now, it is possible that you will think of this as just another book or, at best, an “interesting” book. If, however, you have come to the “end of self,” you may be only hours away from entrance into the abundant life.

Our Lord’s greatness is revealed in His many titles. A few of those are “The Way,” “The Truth,” “The Life,” “The Bread of Life,” “The Light of the World” and “The Lamb of God.”

Few of His titles are more meaningful than Paul’s designation of Him as “The Last Adam” in 1 Corinthians 15:45. Tragically, evangelical Christianity has left this rich vein of truth largely untouched and unexplored. We will never experience life in abundance until we experience Jesus as “The Last Adam.” This is so because we will not fully experience our oneness with Him if we do not experience Him as “The Last Adam.”

This is one of the book’s shortest chapters, but it is the most important chapter in the entire book. It would be profitable to read it closely and prayerfully. When we understand the truths of this chapter, we have the necessary foundation for understanding and experiencing our oneness with Christ.

Pictured in the First Adam

Romans 5:14 describes Adam as “the figure of Christ.” A

figure is a likeness. Adam, then, is like Jesus. Adam is so much like Jesus that Jesus is “The Last Adam.” Believers have for years, understood the differences between Adam and Jesus. Adam brought sin and death into the world; Jesus brought into the world righteousness and life. In what way, then, are Adam and Jesus alike? Each is the head of a race.

Adam is the head of the natural race. Jesus is the head of the spiritual race.

The following discussion reveals how Adam, as the head of the natural race, affected all who are born into his race. This is a picture of Jesus and His effect on all those who enter His race. What we learn here of Adam is important, but what the headship of Adam reveals about Jesus is even more important.

From Adam We Received Our Type of Sin Problem

Romans 5:12 says, “As by one man sin entered into the world. . . .” In the same chapter, Paul declares, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners . . .” (verse 19).

When Adam ate from the wrong tree, he infected himself with a sin problem that he passed down to each person born into his race—with the exception of Jesus, of course.

From Adam We Received Our Type of Death Problem

Romans 5:12–14 shows that Adam infected us all with a death problem. When Adam ate from the wrong tree, God removed him and Eve from the Garden of Eden that they might not eat from the tree of life and live forever on this earth. With that judgment on Adam and Eve, there came a judgment of physical death on the entire human race. If Jesus does not return in the next 150 years, everyone we know will die. When we were born into Adam’s race, we were born with the seeds of death in our bodies.

From this study of Adam and his race, we have established the following truth: When we were born into the race of Adam, things true of Adam became true of us.

Because Jesus is “The Last Adam,” *when we entered the race of Jesus, things true of Him became true of us.*

Explained in Scripture

Those things that become true of a believer when he enters the race of Jesus by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior are clearly set forth in Romans 6:3-5. The passage reads:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

When we entered the race of Jesus, we were spiritually crucified, buried and resurrected. The following chapters will guide us through precise explanations both of the meaning of our crucifixion, burial and resurrection, how to experience them and the blessings that come through experiencing them.

This chapter of essential truth can be summed up in the following statements. It would be helpful to memorize them.

Adam is the head of the natural race. Therefore, when we entered the race of Adam, things true of him became true of us.

Jesus is the head of the spiritual race. Therefore, when we entered the race of Jesus, things true of Him became true of us.

Chapter 2

Sin With a Face

“I had always known I had a sin problem and had heard it defined with such general terms as ‘pride’ and ‘self.’ Now it has a face.” The speaker had recently heard and embraced the definition of his sin nature which this chapter discusses. The knowledge he had gained from the new definition was a factor in the victory over sin he was experiencing at the time of the testimony. Understanding the nature of our sin problem is essential to having victory through our oneness with Christ.

The Identification of Our Sin Problem

The New Testament uses two terms to describe our sin problem: “sin” and “flesh.” The Old Testament provides a third term, “the knowledge of good and evil.” We begin our search for a definition of these three terms in Genesis 2:9.

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight . . . and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9).

Seven more times the tree is called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Adam infected us all with the knowledge of good and evil. Notice especially the reason Adam and Eve were sent from the garden. They were now as God, “to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22). Just what does it mean for Adam to be infected with the knowledge of good and evil? What does it mean for us to be infected with the knowledge of good and evil?

Part of the answer is found in a study of the words “good”

and “evil.” The Hebrew word translated “good” is the same as the one translated “good” in the first chapter of Genesis where it describes such things as light and grass. The word “good,” then, does not refer only to that which is morally good. It refers to that which is to advantage—whether it is morally good or not. The Hebrew word translated “evil” is the same as that used in Psalm 23:4—“I will fear no evil.” It refers to that which is to disadvantage—whether it is something looked upon as immoral or not.

So then, the sin problem with which Adam infected us when he ate the forbidden fruit is “the knowledge of that which is to advantage or disadvantage.”

Before jumping to some sudden, and perhaps unhealthy, conclusion about what that means, think about this: Have you ever called something “a blessing in disguise?”

By that statement we mean we now call something “good” that we formerly called “bad.” That is, at first we called the experience a disadvantage but now we call it an advantage. God was calling the experience “good,” however, even at the time we were calling it “bad.” So our own experiences prove that we are not equal with God in knowing that which is to advantage or disadvantage. What, then, is the knowledge of good and evil?

The answer is found in the first chapter of Romans. Verses 18–32 record the tragic story of mankind’s rejection of God and the progressive moral and spiritual deterioration that followed. One reason is given for this universal rejection and the resulting deterioration: “professing themselves to be wise . . .” (Romans 1:22).

This underlying, deadly attitude that we are wise, then, is Paul’s interpretive term for “the knowledge of good and evil.” We profess that we know what is to advantage and disadvan-

tage. This attitude reigns in us like a stubborn and loathed dictator. Whether the term “the knowledge of good and evil,” “know-it-all attitude” or “an attitude of omniscience” is used in this writing, the reference is to this deadly sin nature.

The Arrogance of Our Sin Problem

Our know-it-all attitude is not content to function quietly and only for the individual in whom it abides. It roams far and wide. It knows no limitations. It moves in all directions, whether horizontal or vertical. It passes judgment on and makes decisions for anybody and everybody—even the Lord God. For example, more than one serious problem of fellowship has developed in one of the Lord’s churches because one or more members insisted that their point of view was the correct one.

The Confirmation of Our Sin Problem

The explanation of our sin problem as a *thought* problem is confirmed by other Scriptures. In Ephesians 4:17, Paul describes the unsaved as walking “in the vanity of their mind.” The well-known Romans 12:2 conveys that we will be transformed by the “renewing of [our mind].” A prominent Old Testament verse, Proverbs 23:7, says, “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

New Testament Expressions of Our Sin Problem

As we have already seen, there are two New Testament terms that give expression to our sin problem. We must understand and define them also. They are “sin” and “flesh.” Sin, when used in the New Testament to refer to our sin nature, should be understood as “the knowledge of good and evil.”

Some have wanted to make flesh and old man synonymous. That is not the correct approach because Romans 6:6 says our old man has been crucified while Galatians 5:24 says the flesh with its affections and lusts have been crucified. We must understand, then, that *our old man is our flesh with its*

affections and lusts. Flesh is the root system of our old man.

One aspect of “flesh” is self-confidence that Paul writes about in Romans 8:3: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh . . .” The law, is an arrangement between God’s rules and the flesh of man. On three occasions—Exodus 19:8, 24:3 and 24:7—when the law arrangement was being made, the people of Israel said they would do all that the Lord said. No greater form of self-confidence could one find. It was their flesh speaking out.

But why the term “flesh”?

Genesis 3:7 records that the immediate effect on Adam and Eve for eating the forbidden fruit was that “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” What an amazing statement! It cannot mean they were blind before, because verse 6 makes it quite plain that they could see.

Furthermore, having realized their nakedness, “they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (v. 7).

The nakedness of Adam and Eve was not a problem for them before eating the forbidden fruit. Also, if their nakedness had been a problem for God, He would have provided clothing for them at the time of their need.

Adam and Eve are suddenly preoccupied with their bodies, and all the evidence indicates that the cause is the entrance into their lives of the knowledge of good and evil.

Evidence abounds that this preoccupation with the body has characterized all people in all places. Why are we plagued by what the medical world calls psychosomatic illnesses? What was the primary subject of the prayer requests when you last attended a prayer meeting? Answers to these questions are evident. We are preoccupied with our bodies. But why are we and all those around us preoccupied with our bodies?

An attitude of omniscience must have the raw materials of facts with which to reach conclusions and make choices that make one appear wise. Those raw materials are provided by our five senses and brain power.

Once the know-it-all attitude has reached its conclusions and made its choices, it must inform others of such brilliance. Again, the body is the essential and available vehicle.

We may conclude, then, that the New Testament refers to our sin nature as flesh because flesh is our attitude that we are wise, which must function through the body.

When Adam infected himself with the knowledge of good and evil, he infected all who would be born into the human race. Those of us who teach others how to walk with God must be faithful to inform them that they are dealing with a sin problem that is nothing less than an attitude of omniscience.

Chapter 3

In Christ Crucified—Now

Chapter one discusses the fact that when we entered the race of Jesus, we were crucified, buried and resurrected. We are crucified because our Lord was crucified as “The Last Adam”—the head of the spiritual race. While it is true that we entered the race of Jesus by a spiritual birth, the apostle Paul, in Romans 6:3, explains our entry into His race as being by “baptism,” saying, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Paul is not referring to water baptism, but to the work of the Holy Spirit when a person receives Jesus as Lord and Savior. Paul writes:

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. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:12–13).

The entire event of water baptism—immersion into and arising from the water—is a beautiful picture of a believer being placed into oneness with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. In this chapter, we will search out the meaning and significance of our crucifixion.

Our Old Man Is Crucified

The New Testament sets forth four different aspects of our crucifixion. One of them is that our old man is crucified. In Romans 6:6, Paul writes, “Knowing this, that our old man is

crucified with him. . . .” Our “old man” is our “know-it-all attitude” plus all that attitude has produced in us. Or, in the words of Galatians 5:24, our old man is the flesh with its affections and lusts. Stated yet another way, our old man is the type of person we became as the result of our birth into the race of the first Adam.

Imagine this scene. You and a friend are having a discussion in the presence of several mutual friends. You both believe—at least subconsciously—that you are wiser than God. In time, the discussion turns into an argument. What would be your inner thoughts and emotions if all of your observing friends suddenly said you were wrong and your opponent was right? Anger? Pride? Resentment? Spirit of competition? Depression? Jealousy? Fear? Covetousness? Hate? Paranoia? Desire for revenge? Criticism? Disgust? Self-pity? Also, what would be the inner thoughts and emotions of your opponent? Arrogance? Disrespect?

The *crucifixion* of our old man—the flesh with its affections and lusts—does not mean the annihilation of our old man. If that were true, we Christians would no longer have a sin problem with which to deal. Also, Christian parents would not pass on to their children a sin problem. However, even though crucifixion does not mean our old man is annihilated, it does mean he can be kept out of power. As a result, we can have an increasing freedom from him by living out our union with Christ.

Dead to Sin

Romans 6:2 and 6:11 both indicate a second feature of our crucifixion. We are dead to sin. Paul writes, *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* (Romans 6:1–2).

The word “dead” is a verb, and a literal translation is “how shall we who died to sin.” Romans 6:10 says that Jesus “died

unto sin.” That is, He died with reference to sin. Immediately following Paul’s statement that Jesus is dead to sin, he *commands* us to “reckon” ourselves to be dead unto sin. That is, we are to believe we are “dead to sin.” A literal translation of “dead to sin” is “dead ones with reference to sin.” “Sin” again is a reference to our know-it-all attitude.

Crucified to the World

A third feature of our crucifixion is crucifixion to the world. Paul testifies:

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14).

The world consists of all those who are not walking in the Spirit. This means that carnal Christians as well as the unsaved are people of the world.

Through the cross, the world has been crucified to us. We should not be disturbed when people of the world no longer want to associate with us. We should be concerned if there is nothing about us that makes those of the world uncomfortable in our presence. In Luke 6:26 Jesus says, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.” In the same way, when we were saved and crucified to the world, we became uncomfortable in close fellowship with those of the world.

Dead to the Law

According to the apostle Paul, the spiritual failures of many servants of the Lord are the result of attempts to live by law. There is much cause for rejoicing, then, when we realize that in our crucifixion, we died to living by law. The key passage teaching our death to law is Romans 7:1–4. Romans 7:1–3 records a simple illustration: If a woman’s husband dies, she is free to remarry. Paul’s application of the illustration is not quite so simple. Here is his statement:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:4).

In Paul's application of the illustration, a Christian is the wife. The two husbands are the law and Christ. The death that frees the wife is her own. We believers died to the law by the body of Christ. That is, our crucifixion with Christ makes possible for us freedom from law-living. When we experience that freedom, we may live in a marriage of intimate relationship with Christ. The result of this union is fruit unto God.

Much light is thrown on our freedom from law by Romans 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh ..." By "law" here, Paul means "law arrangement." The law arrangement was weak because of the flesh. Our conclusion! *The law arrangement was an arrangement between the law and man's flesh.* Any law arrangement, whether with the commands of the Bible or with *our own self-made rules*, is an arrangement with our flesh. When our approach to Christian living is that of keeping rules in our own strength and wisdom, we place the burden on ourselves. Our attitude is, "I will do this" or "I will not do this." In other words, the moment we say we will keep some rule, we have brought flesh into prominence, and we are destined for much failure.

Our death to the law, then, is freedom from attempting to keep the commands of the Bible, man-made rules, the law of doing our best for Jesus, and even freedom from choosing to do good in our own wisdom and strength. Our death to the law is freedom from the flesh and all its tragic capabilities.

Chapter 4

In Christ Buried and Resurrected—Now

Water baptism is a beautiful picture of our immersion into Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit when by faith we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. It also pictures our immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This chapter presents a study of the Scriptures dealing with our burial and resurrection.

Buried—Now

Romans 6:4a says, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.” Just as our crucifixion with Christ has multiple meanings for us, so does our burial with Christ.

Significance for Our Crucifixion

Our burial with Christ is as real as our crucifixion with Christ. It also is of much significance. Just as our old man was crucified, he also is buried. Our burial gives added significance to our victory over our old man. He is both crucified and buried. Our burial means a second lock on the door.

Significance for Our Resurrection

The only specific reason the Scriptures give for our burial is that it is preparation for our resurrection. Romans 6:4 reads:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We are buried that we might be raised up. Consequently, any discussion of our burial introduces a study of our resurrection.

Resurrected—Now

In Romans 6:5, the apostle Paul writes, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

The word “planted” is better translated “united.” The message of Romans 6:4–5 is that believers have the privilege and power to walk in newness of life because they are resurrected as is their Lord.

Our death and resurrection are “in the likeness” of the death and resurrection of Jesus because His was physical and ours is spiritual. In Ephesians 2:4–6, Paul provides our broadest base for understanding our spiritual resurrection. He does so by taking the one concept of resurrection and expanding it into three separate and distinct thoughts. He writes:

*God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-
with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,
hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath
raised us up together, and made us sit together in
heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

The spiritual resurrection of all believers has three dimensions. We have been *quickened, raised up and seated in heavenly places*. We will be better able to understand the significance of our resurrection by imagining ourselves with our Lord at the time of His resurrection. Why not use your powerful gift of imagination right now to see yourself in the tomb with our Lord’s lifeless body at the time of His resurrection? See those first movements of the body. What has happened?

Quickened With Christ

What had to happen before the body moved? Life, the life

of God, had to return to that body. In that moment, Jesus was quickened—made alive. This is what happened to us spiritually the moment we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. In Romans 8:9b, Paul writes: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The Spirit of God came to live in us at our conversion as He came to live in the body of Jesus at His resurrection.

Raised With Christ

The second aspect of our resurrection mentioned in Ephesians 2:4–6 is that we have been raised with Him. In our imagination, let us return to our Lord’s tomb. We first saw the initial movements of the lifeless body indicating the return of the life of God into the body. We now watch as our Lord leaves the tomb. He leaves the place of the dead. For more light on this, we must return to Romans 6:4:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

A literal translation of “raised up from the dead” is “raised out from the dead ones.” Paul does not say He was raised from death. When we were baptized into the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we were raised out from among the dead ones. Our experience confirms this bit of theology. If you came to the Lord as late as your teen years, you can remember very well how you either suddenly or gradually changed your close companions. You moved away from the unsaved—the spiritually dead ones—to those who are alive in Christ. From that time forward, you have been unable to have *close* associations with those who do not know our Lord.

There may be one exception to this change of friends. There are those who have come to know their unsaved condition after many years in church life. Therefore, their close associates all along had possibly been Christians. Otherwise the state-

ment holds true.

You may argue, “I was saved as a small child and certainly was not raised from the dead ones.” But you were! Do you not remember that when you became a teenager and the “dead” ones began to act like dead ones, you had to break close association with them? It happened! Even though it was not worked out in experience for several years, when you became a Christian, you were raised from among the dead ones.

**Seated in the Heavens
With Christ**

Let your imagination of our Lord’s resurrection continue. See our Lord only weeks after His quickening and raising up ascending to the right hand of the Father. It is not difficult to imagine because the record of the ascension is in the first chapter of the book of Acts. We now must grasp the fact that we believers are seated there with Him. We were placed there with Him the moment we were placed into union with Him in death, burial and resurrection at our conversion experience.

Chapter 5

Christ in You—Now

“Christ lives in me,” is the dynamic testimony of many. Others testify, “I just permit Jesus to live through me.” No discussion of the biblical theme of our union with Christ would be complete that did not set forth the truth that Christ is “in” all believers. Many, however, are limited in their experiences of Christ living through them, because they do not understand that they are “in” Christ.

Taught in Scripture

The most casual reader of the New Testament cannot miss its teachings that Jesus lives in believers. Romans 8:9b declares, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The famous Galatians 2:20 says, “Christ liveth in me.” John 14:23 Jesus says, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” In John 14:16–17 Jesus promised His followers that the Holy Spirit who was “with” them—because He was in Jesus—would be “in” them. It is commonly accepted among all evangelicals that since Pentecost the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ, has been “in” all believers.

Confirmed in Experience

Ephesians 4:30, which says “grieve not the holy Spirit of God,” reveals that the Spirit lives in believers. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit grieves because of our sins, His grief spills over into our hearts. As a result, the grief

we experience when we sin confirms the blessed truth that *Christ is in us—now*. Those who do not experience grief when they sin should have reason to doubt they have entered the Kingdom of God.

According to the eighth chapter of Hebrews, God puts His laws in our minds and writes them in our hearts. This is a reference to the resident Christ who is moment by moment saying “Yes” and “No” as we live out our lives. Only we believers have this unceasing direction for those things we should and should not do. It is continual and effective evidence that Christ lives in us.

Not the Same As Being Filled With His Spirit

In Paul’s second great prayer recorded in his letter to the Ephesians, he writes:

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:14–17a).

Jesus may be “in” us without “dwelling in” us. Paul uses this terminology to express what he means in his command in Ephesians 5:18 that we be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. As encouraging as it is to be absolutely certain that the Lord Jesus is “in” us, we must never think that His presence “in” us is all we need. He must “dwell” in us. We must be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.

Because Christ is “in” us, it is possible for us to be filled with His Spirit. We must be *filled* with the Spirit of Christ.

Yet it is only as we continue to experience what it means for us to be “in” Christ that we will continue to be filled with His Spirit.

Part Two

Basic Approaches

Imagine yourself as an Israelite priest gazing across the Jordan just at sunset the day before you are to cross the river and begin the conquest of Canaan. Excitement fills you! In only hours, God will begin the fulfillment of the age-old promise to you and your people of inheriting this land of rest and abundance. It is going to be your privilege to be among those who first experience the fulfillment of the promise. Also, though, you are nervous—because war is inevitable. You are curious about the tactics the Lord will dictate for the conquest. Yet you will undertake them whatever they are. Little do you know that His tactic in your first encounter with the enemy calls for you to parade around Jericho while blowing a trumpet.

Your present position as a Christian is possibly very much like what you just visualized. You are God's child. You have not entered the land of abundance and rest. You do not know the God-given tactics for your personal victory in life. Yet you know you will undertake them when the Lord reveals them—whatever they are.

Those tactics for possessing the life of abundance and rest are two in number and are suggested in the chapter titles “The Approach of Faith” and “The Approach of Choice.”

Chapter 6

The Approach of Faith

Believers who have never heard of their union with Christ. experience, to a degree, some benefits of their crucifixion, burial and resurrection. An example is our change of close associates at the time of our conversion to Christ, which is one feature of our resurrection. We will never, however, fully experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection until we use the tactics commanded in Scripture for doing so. Just as we received salvation by learning, believing and choosing, we fully experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection in the same manner.

This threefold process for experiencing our crucifixion, burial and resurrection is set forth in orderly fashion in Romans 6:3–13. In verses 3–9 the apostle Paul informs us of our crucifixion, burial and resurrection; in verses 11 and 13 he commands us to believe; in verses 12–13 he commands us to choose. In this chapter we will focus on our responsibility to believe that we are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

The Commands of Faith

There are two commands of faith. The first is in verse 11. Following his declaration in Romans 6:10 that our Lord is dead to sin and alive to God, Paul writes: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). Our attention here is on the word “reckon.” The significance of the word here is that we are to “believe.” We are to believe we are dead to sin and alive to God.

Our believing that we are dead to sin and alive to God is not a promise to God we will not sin, nor is it repentance of sin. We are simply believing that we are dead to sin and alive to God. *We are as responsible to believe that we are dead to sin and alive to God as we are for tsharing the Gospel of Jesus.* If we are not believing ourselves to be dead to sin and alive unto God, we are in disobedience.

The second command of faith is in verse 13. In the middle of the verse, Paul writes, “Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.” In light of the overall passage, Paul is saying that we are to yield ourselves to God as those who are crucified, buried and resurrected. Because he mentions in verse 6 that our old man has been crucified, Paul must mean here that by faith we are to give ourselves to God as those whose old man has been crucified and buried and as those who have been raised from the dead.

The Continuation of Faith

Paul’s command to “reckon”—that is, “believe”—is a command of continuous action. We are to believe each moment of the day that we are dead to sin—that is, we are free from our sin nature—and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Some have left the impression that reckoning is a one-time act. According to that thought, the moment a person understands, believes and chooses his union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection, he will live in victory all his remaining days on earth. *That approach is neither scriptural nor effectual.*

In Romans 8:2, Paul writes: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” The Holy Spirit operates in the lives of all believers by a law. That law is to give us the abundant life through our union with Christ. Consequently, the Holy Spirit will remind us throughout each day that we are dead to sin and alive to God. When He gives the gentle reminders, we are to respond with a

positive faith that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

In Romans 6:16 Paul teaches that we become slaves to things we do over and over. So when we believe continually that we are dead to sin and alive to God, in time, we will be slaves to that faith.

In His graciousness, the Lord often permits weeks of continuous victory when we first understand how to experience the abundant life. In time, however, that sovereign work gives way to the New Testament idea of growth. Then we take the way of growth—certain but slow.

Our days following the sovereign work of victory proceed as follows: At the beginning of the day, the Holy Spirit reminds us of our crucifixion, burial and resurrection. We respond by confessing those things to be true of us. Then He gives us those gentle reminders throughout the day. At first we may go hours at a time without being aware of God and of our union with Christ. In time, though, we will develop an enslaving habit of believing we are dead to sin and alive to God by responding to the reminders of the Holy Spirit.

The Consequences of Our Faith

All the previous discussions about our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection have possibly caused you to wonder, “If we are already crucified, buried and resurrected, why must we believe these things true of us in order to experience them?” This is a question that has disturbed many, and also one that demands an intelligent and a biblical answer. The answer is in the following statement and is of such importance that it would profit all believers to memorize it. *There are things true of us in the Christian life that we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.*

Forgiveness of our sins is a classic example of this spiritual law. Have you ever confessed an act of sin more than one time? You have! In the earlier days of your walk with the Lord, you possibly confessed one act of sin a hundred times. All Christians have been guilty of such unnecessary confessing. When were you forgiven? According to 1 John 1:9, you were forgiven the very first time you confessed. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” You were forgiven, but you kept confessing. Why? *You had not experienced forgiveness.* You experienced forgiveness when you believed the promise of Scripture. One God-loving believer experienced forgiveness for a sin 12 years after God had forgiven him. He had continued to confess the sin for 12 years after he was forgiven.

The same is true about prayer. We do not experience the Lord as we could until we believe we are in His presence. The same is true of justification. As Judge of the universe, God declared us to be righteous the moment of our conversion to Christ. As Judge, He desires to relate to us as though we are as righteous as Jesus. Yet we fellowship with Him in terms of our justification only as we believe He has received us as though we are as righteous as Jesus. In the same manner we will experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection only as we believe that we are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

It is possible, though, that we have believed for years that we have been crucified, buried and resurrected but our lives have not changed. We must add to our tactic of faith the tactic of choice, which we will now discuss in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

The Approach of Choice

Your lifelong search for a fulfilled life may end before you finish reading this chapter. If you have made the journey through the preceding chapters and if you are hungering and thirsting for all God has for you, you are almost home. When we understand, believe and choose our oneness with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, we begin to experience the abundant life God has for us. This chapter sets forth what the Bible teaches about how we may choose the crucified, buried and resurrected life. Romans 6:11-12 gives four “choice” commands.

Let Not Sin Reign in Your Mortal Body

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Romans 6:11).

“Sin” here is a reference to our know-it-all attitude. That Paul would give such a command indicates that our know-it-all attitude will continuously seek to control our bodies. This unceasing attempt to control is also revealed in the fact that the command is in the progressive tense. Continually, we are to be on the defensive. Our defense is in exercising our power of choice to “let not sin reign” in our mortal bodies. We are to choose continually not to live out of our own reasoning. We are to intelligently and consciously give up our own thoughts about life: thoughts of what we, others and the Lord are to do.

Paul says that when sin reigns in our mortal bodies, we obey our bodies. When sin reigns in our bodies, we become preoccu-

ped with our bodies. We pamper our bodies. They control us.

Do Not Give the Parts of Your Body to Sin

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin” (Romans 6:13a). This second of the “choice” commands is similar to the previous one but more pointed. The command of verse 12 deals with all the body. This deals with the parts of our bodies. Do not give any part of your body to the control of your own reasoning. As an example of what Paul has in mind, think of your ability to speak. Hundreds of times each day we speak. Yet, according to this command, we are never to determine ourselves when and what we are to speak. The tense of the verb is that of continuous action. We are to obey repeatedly.

Why does Paul deal with all the body in verse 12 and then with parts of the body in verse 13? The change implies that many of God’s children want the Lord to control them—but not totally. They desire to reserve some parts of their lives for their own control. So Paul commands that not one part of our body be under the control of our own reasoning power.

The passage warns that *when we use the parts of our bodies*, unrighteousness will be the result: “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.”

These first two of the choice commands concern what we are not to do with our bodies. The last two of the choice commands tell us what we are to do.

**Give Yourselves to God As
Those Alive From the Dead**

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (Romans 6:13b). This third command to choose the life of union with Christ includes the exercise of our faith as well. The faith feature of the imperative is in the last eight words—“as those

that are alive from the dead.” That is, we are to give our lives to God as those who have been crucified, buried and resurrected. The exercise of the will is expressed in the first four words—“yield yourselves unto God.” To yield is to make available.

The verb form suggests a one-time exercise of the will. Evidently, Paul changes from the progressive tense to suggest that every time we give ourselves to God we are to do so with the thought that it is a lifetime decision. Of course, we will time and again find ourselves controlling our own lives. Yet when we do, we respond with another lifetime decision to give ourselves to God as those who are already crucified, buried and resurrected.

When we give our lives to God as those alive from the dead, we give ourselves to Him as those whose point of view has been crucified and buried. Thus, we give ourselves to God to live only out of His point of view.

Give the Parts of Your Body to God

“[Yield] your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:13c). Just as we, for example, are not to give our ability to speak to the control of our own point of view, we are to give the use of that ability to God. We no longer have the right to speak to anyone about anything. *Furthermore, we do not have the right to remain silent.* All the parts of our bodies are to be placed under the control of the Lord. Paul’s last comment is that when God uses the parts of our bodies, He makes of them instruments of righteousness. Through our bodies, God will do deeds of righteousness.

Keep in mind that this is the last of a series of commands and is dependent on our obeying the four previous ones. Our ability to give the parts of our bodies to God is possible only when we refuse to give our bodies to the control of sin—our know-it-all attitude. When we make our members available to God, we do so as those who are crucified, buried and resurrected.

We should not wait to obey these four imperatives of choice to live out our union with Christ. A one-time act of the will does not give the changes we long for. We must continue to obey all five commands of Romans 6:11–13 until they become habit. We must obey them until we become slaves to them.

Romans 8:2 says, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Among other things, this passage means that the Holy Spirit will never cease seeking to bring us to the abundant life through the experience of our union with Christ. He will be the faithful One to prompt and enable us to obey these five commands. Our place is to respond to the most gentle reminder of the Holy Spirit to obey them. As we do, little by little the Lord will bring the changes we have longed for these many years. Progressively we will possess the land of abundance and rest.

Let us take the first step into life now. Let us continue those steps at each prompting of the Holy Spirit. Change will come. We will now examine some of the changes we will experience.

Immediately following the five faith and choice commands, in Romans 6:14 Paul writes, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

The first word of Romans 6:14, “For” can be translated “Then.” It should be translated “Then” in this verse. That is, when you live out the commands of Romans 6:11–13, You are not under law but under grace. You have lifted the burden from your own life and given it to God. You no longer have to make decisions. You no longer have to try to make things happen.

In addition, sin will no longer have dominion over you.

Part Three

Life Transformations

“I need to be different. I need change!” Surely, this is the cry of us all. And when we continually live out our union with Christ, we will experience those longed-for changes.

Probably we all have experienced the excitement of planning a vacation to a place we have never been before. A part of the excitement was in acquainting ourselves with those things we would see and do in this new place. It is now your thrill to become acquainted with the land we will enter by living out our oneness with our Lord. And in this case, we are not going on vacation. We will enter this land to stay—and the longer we stay, the more inviting it will become.

The general theme for our preview of this spiritual haven to which we travel is “Life Transformations.”

Remember that all of these transformations are ours by experiencing our oneness with Christ. It may help to review chapter six and seven as you read.

Chapter 8

At Last—Spirit-Filled Living

I used a computer to write this book. If you have never used computers before, there is something strange about them you need to know. They always do what you command them to do. They do not always do what you *mean* for them to do. Many of us have known similar frustration in seeking a continual filling with the Holy Spirit. We knew we were to be filled. We had experienced that filling right after we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. We have had brief tastes of the filling since then. But nothing we have tried has resulted in the continual filling. Our failure was partly due to our lack of understanding. Consequently, as in the use of the computer, receiving and responding to a few words will enable the serious-minded servant of our Lord to enter the life of continual filling with the Spirit. These words are, of course, from the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit Continuously Seeks to Fill Us With Himself

For many years I begged for the filling of the Holy Spirit as if I believed the Lord was reluctant to answer my prayer. That bit of ignorance will keep anyone from continuous filling with the Spirit. Paul's command to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18 is in a tense of continual action. That truth alone should convince us that the Lord desires for us a continuous filling of the Spirit. Another verse, though, even more forcefully reveals the same truth. John 4:14 records Jesus' statement to the woman at the well, when He informed her that the

water He would give her would be in her a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Because the Holy Spirit is in us as a “spring”—a better translation than “well”—springing up, we know that from the moment we became Christians, the Holy Spirit has been seeking to fill us with Himself.

What a thought! And how it changes our understanding about the possibility of being filled with the Spirit. By being aware of His desire to fill us, we realize that the burden for the filling is not on us. Another fact that makes us know we can be filled with the Holy Spirit is that *we are not commanded to fill ourselves. On the contrary, we are to be filled. We are to receive the filling.* We are to continue to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit who has been seeking to fill us with Himself since the moment we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. If He wants to fill us so badly and we want to be filled so badly, then why are we not experiencing the filling of the Holy Spirit?

The Flesh Prevents Our Filling With the Spirit

In Galatians 5:17 Paul writes, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit.” If we are seeking to be filled with the Spirit and are not being filled, the hindrance is the flesh. Imagine the impossibility of filling a bucket with water when the bucket has rocks in it. It is just as impossible for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit when there is the continuous barrier of the flesh. Can anything be done about the barrier of the flesh that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit? Yes! Thank God this barrier to the filling of the Holy Spirit can be put out of power because it has been crucified.

The Flesh Has Been Crucified

In Galatians 5:24 we read the beautiful truth that when we gave our hearts to the Lord, our flesh was crucified. “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” What victory! The very moment we gave our hearts to

the Lord, our flesh with its affections and lusts was crucified.

When we understand, believe and choose crucifixion, burial and resurrection, we experience crucifixion, burial and resurrection. When we experience crucifixion of the flesh, the flesh is out of power. So when our flesh is out of power, the Holy Spirit is free to be in control of our lives. It can be assumed that many conscientious believers have agonized on their knees before the Lord for the filling of the Holy Spirit. *Stop your agony! Start your faith! Exercise your will! Experience victory!*

Remember that Paul's command of Ephesians 5:18 is that we continuously be filled with the Spirit. Some have been described as "Spirit-filled" as though they had reached a place in their spiritual lives that could be so described. It is not true. When Paul wrote his command that we are to be continuously filled, he knew that one filling was not enough—and that there is no such thing as believers reaching a place in their Christian lives at which could be described as "Spirit-filled." We must be filled again and again. Flesh will continue to seek to be back in power. Flesh must be continuously kept out of power by your continuing to reject it and continuing to believe it has been crucified. Keep on being filled with the Spirit!

In a sense, being filled with the Holy Spirit can be compared to buying a car. When we buy a car, we get four wheels, four tires, two or more seats, and so on. When we receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, we receive the benefit of all the things the Holy Spirit does in and through us.

We now turn our attention to those additional blessings that are ours when we are filled with the Spirit.

Chapter 9

What a Difference the Spirit Makes

The Scriptures reveal the many ministries of the Holy Spirit. This chapter features a number of them. Before we begin our exciting survey of this promised land of blessing, we need a brief orientation of the following thoughts. First, the previous chapter relates *how we may receive the filling of the Spirit*. Perhaps a review of that chapter would be advisable either before or after a journey through this one. Second, the Christian life is one of growth, and we must not think that from this moment forward we will continuously be filled with the Holy Spirit. Each day we can grow in the direction of a more continuous filling. Third, the changes we can expect are organized into four categories. They are: personal changes, changes in our relationship with God, changes in our relationships with others and changes in our Christian service.

Personal Changes

Any changes within us will find their way into our relationship with God; they will work their way into our relationships with others; and they will work their way into our acts of service. The changes mentioned here, though, do seem to be of such quality that they are more private than the others.

Joy—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy.” When we are filled with the Spirit, joy is ours regardless of the circumstances.

Peace—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . peace.” This means we have a peace within. It also means we are at peace with God and with others, when others will permit it. In a day characterized by turmoil, grief, despair, guilt, hate, strife and war, it is a thrill to know that we may be the children of peace by being filled with the Spirit.

Goodness—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . goodness.” Jesus says that only God is good. If we, then, are to be good, we will be so only when God is good in us. God is good in us when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Growth in Spiritual Knowledge—John 14:26, 16:13

On several occasions the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. In John 16:13, Jesus says the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. In John 14:26 He says the Spirit will teach us all things. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:9–10 that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the things that God has prepared for those who love Him.

Effective Praying—Ephesians 6:18

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit . . .” Our prayers change when we pray as we are led by the Holy Spirit! There will be less wasted time, fewer unnecessary requests, expansion of our vision of prayer needs, likely less emotion and a peace in our hearts that God is going to answer our prayers. More of our prayer requests will be answered by the Lord who leads us as we pray.

Continual Thanksgiving—Ephesians 5:20

“Be filled with the Spirit . . . giving thanks always for all things unto God” (Ephesians 5:18b–20a). An increasing number of God’s children are experiencing changes in their lives through giving thanks in all things. A friend testified that when she began to thank the Lord for a broken hip, a

physical healing began to take place. Some people have been lifted above deep depression when they began to thank God for all their circumstances. Such thanksgiving expresses our belief that God controls all our circumstances. Thanking the Lord for all things is not the natural thing to do. Yet when filled with the Spirit, we will continuously thank Him for all things.

The Abundant Life—Romans 8:6

“To be spiritually minded is life and peace.” A literal translation of the Greek is “the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.” Here the word “life” is in the sense of “life abundant.” In Galatians 6:8 Paul discloses that one who sows to the Spirit (rather, out of the Spirit) reaps everlasting life. Again, as in the Romans passage, the idea is the abundant life spoken of by our Lord in John 10:10.

Changes in Relationship With God

Our relationship with God can be a growing one as we are continuously being filled with the Spirit.

Love—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is love.” Our Lord says the greatest of all commandments is that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength. He then adds that we also are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Therefore, the first love direction of the heart filled with the Holy Spirit is vertical. As we continue to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, there is a resultant increasing outflow of love toward God.

Meekness—Galatians 5:22–23

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . meekness.” Our Lord says the meek shall inherit the earth. He also tells us to take His yoke upon ourselves, because He is meek. Meekness is availability. The word translated “meek” in the New Testament is used to describe a tamed horse that is under the control of its

master. Those who maintain that the Lord is not looking for our ability but our availability are correct. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He has our availability, because then we are “meek.”

Faith—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith.” Often the Scriptures encourage us to desire a growing faith in God. Romans 1:17 declares, “The just shall live by faith.” “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” is recorded in Romans 14:23. Hebrews 11:6 shouts, “But without faith it is impossible to please him.” We may have a growing faith by continuously receiving the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Continuous Guidance by the Spirit—Romans 8:14

Romans 8:14 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Plainly, as we are filled with the Spirit, we are also led by the Spirit. As we are continuously led by the Spirit, we walk in the center of God’s will.

Evidence of Salvation—Romans 8:13–16

The verse just quoted, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” means that as we walk in the Spirit there is evidence that we belong to the Lord.

Changes in Relationships With Others

Right relationships with others is a theme more prevalent in the New Testament than that of our relationship with God—not more important but more prevalent. What person has not suffered from a poor relationship on the human level? We welcome any help available in these horizontal relationships. Nothing but being filled with the Spirit will give the desired victory.

Longsuffering—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . longsuffering.” Longsuffering is the translation of a word that is a combination of two Greek words: “anger” and “afar off.” Put them together and you have “afar off from anger.”

Kindness—Galatians 5:22

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . gentleness.” The word translated “gentleness” has in it the idea of kindness. What a difference kindness can make! In a world that is characterized by self-centered rudeness and anger and hate, kindness will often mend broken relationships. Kindness in us has the added benefit of making others feel appreciated—which is no small service.

Unity Among Believers—Ephesians 4:3

This verse speaks of the “unity of the Spirit.” When the Holy Spirit has His way in the hearts of Christians, He welds them together in a strong bond of unity.

Changes in Christian Service

All conscientious servants of the Lord are driven with a sense of holy dissatisfaction. They are looking for an increase of fruitfulness for God. We will experience those increases as we are continuously filled with the Spirit.

We Become a Source of Life to Others—John 7:38

Our Lord promises, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Verse 39 reveals that the water is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The promise is not that a “stream” of life-giving water will flow from those who live a life of continual dependence on Him—not even a “river” will flow. The promise of Jesus is that “rivers” of life-giving water will flow from those who continue to trust Him—and we have seen that one result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is faith. Those rivers will flow to saved and unsaved alike.

A Change in Witnessing

Discovering and experiencing the life of continual filling with the Holy Spirit results in a believer’s witness to the unsaved of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus. In many there comes a radical change in our witnessing—a change that results in more fruitfulness.

Chapter 10

Freedom From Sin

“Tell him what you told me as we were eating dinner,” said one young believer to another. The one speaking had known of his union with Christ for several years and for a brief period had experienced it. The one he spoke to had no knowledge of his union with Christ. The third person was an older believer who had understood and experienced his oneness with Christ for years. The speaker made the statement in order to open the door for the older believer to explain our crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

“I was telling him as we had dinner that I resent someone and cannot help it,” the young man responded. There followed a discussion in which the older believer showed the younger one how, because of his union with Christ, he could be free from the resentment. Both young men went away rejoicing. This chapter teaches the good news that we do not have to continue in the grip of some sin that leaves us with feelings of guilt and failure.

Freedom From “Sin” and “Sins”

“My ulcer is acting up,” the gentleman responded when asked, “How does that make you feel?” I asked.

“It hurts!” he answered. In all likelihood, the man’s ulcer was caused by stress. The ulcer was a symptom of the stress,

and the pain was a symptom of the ulcer. Spiritually, we are like the man with the ulcer. We have an underlying sin nature—called “sin” in the New Testament—that is the cause of our “sins.” And just as the man’s ulcer resulted in pain, our sins cause us pain.

We can be certain that when the doctor of the man with the ulcer treated him for the pain, he also treated him for the underlying stress that was the cause of the pain. In the same manner, the Lord has provided us a way of freedom from our “sin,” our “sins” and the resulting pain. “Are you teaching sinless perfection?” people ask. It should be stated emphatically that it is only after we depart this life that we believers will be completely free of sin. Yet in this life we can have a progressive freedom from sin and sins—and the resulting pain.

Because many of the Lord’s children feel that their sins are worse than others, it may be an encouragement to review some of the sins of which we are all capable.

But when you follow your own wrong inclinations, your lives will produce these evil results: impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, spiritism, (that is, encouraging the activity of demons), hatred and fighting, jealousy and anger; constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticism, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your own little group—and there will be wrong doctrine, envy, murder, drunkenness, wild parties, and all that sort of thing (Galatians 5:19–21a, TLB).

This list of sins are found in a passage that indicates we may have freedom from them. It is essential for us to believe that a progressive freedom from the sins that grip us is possible—whatever those sins might be.

Freedom by Degrees

Often when a person first experiences crucifixion, burial and resurrection, the Lord gives several weeks of almost constant victory. Yet this is only to show us the type of life we may have by living out our union with Christ. It is a sovereign work of God. When that sovereign period of time is completed, progressive freedom from our sin, our sins and the resulting painfulness begins. Real growth begins. In Romans 6:12 Paul admonishes us to “let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.” His command indicates the unending attempt of our know-it-all attitude to control our lives. In Romans 7:17 Paul describes our sin nature as though it is another person living in us causing us to do things we hate and things we choose not to do.

Throughout Romans 6:11–23, the emphasis is on our need to experience repeatedly our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection. The promises of the passage assure us that when we continue to experience our union with Christ, little by little we will increasingly be set free from the control of our sin nature—and, as a result, we will be free from the sins that issue forth from our sin nature.

Experiencing freedom from sins is somewhat like peeling an onion. You remove one layer only to come to another. As we begin to experience freedom from those things that have caused us grief—in some cases for years—the Spirit of God will reveal other sins that we have never been aware of. The people around us have likely seen them in us for years. Now the Holy Spirit reveals them to us.

When the Lord reveals these hidden sins, we need to begin to receive freedom from them immediately. The Lord will likely reveal to us only two or three previously undetected sins at a time. As we receive progressive freedom from those two or three, He will then reveal others.

From the very moment we begin to deal with some particular sin in terms of our union with Christ, we have almost a complete freedom from that particular sin. We must deal with the great majority of our sins. With some we must deal over long periods of time. Some sins seem to be more deeply ingrained in us than are others. Those sins will raise their ugly heads time and again. Yet we must not despair. With complete faith in our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection and in the promises of God, let us set ourselves to continue to believe and choose freedom from those more stubborn sins.

Let us never “shake hands” with any sin. Just as the Israelites did not destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan when they were commanded to do so, some of God’s choicest servants have not willfully dealt with all their known sins. The Lord said to the disobedient Israelites of the nations they refused to destroy, “They shall be as thorns in your sides” (Judges 2:3). The history of Israel proves the prophecy true. Any sin from which we will not choose to have freedom will do the same for us. We must keep in mind that there is no such thing as sinless perfection in this life. Yet a growing freedom from our “sin,” our “sins” and the painfulness that results is a vast improvement over the life of defeat that some have resigned ourselves to.

Let us go forth with a joy and faith in our hearts that progressively we will be free from the sin, the sins and the resulting painfulness that have reduced our quality of life to a level far below our desire to be all God called us to be. Progress in freedom is certain as we continue to experience our oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

Chapter 11

Freedom From the World

Teenagers have a reputation for seeking permission from their parents to do a certain thing with the declaration, “Everybody’s doing it.” The apostle Paul’s “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2) is proof, though, that it is not teenagers alone who have an inborn tendency to conform. It is in us all—even if we are born-again children of God. And in light of Paul’s statement, all believers who neglect to make an honest effort not to do so will conform to the world.

Paul was aware of his own tendency to “fit in” and confessed it. He writes: *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world* (Galatians 6:14). All believers must be aware of the tendency to conform to the world. All must give time and attention to understanding those areas in which we may have conformed to the world.

We May Be More Worldly Than We Realize

“You are as worldly as you can be.”

These jolting words were from the Lord to the heart of a young man who had been living out his union with Christ for several months.

Because he was aware of Paul's testimony that the world was crucified to him and he to the world, as he reckoned himself dead to sin and alive to God, he also reckoned himself crucified to the world and the world crucified to him. He did so because he wanted complete victory in his life even though he was not aware of being a worldly person. So when the revelation came from the Lord that he was worldly, he was shocked.

The worldliness of which he was guilty was nothing immoral. It was something in which practically all Christians engage. But the Lord impressed on this young man that for him engaging in this particular thing was worldliness.

Many of the Lord's most devoted servants are like this young man. They are worldly in certain areas and do not know it.

By Misunderstanding the True Nature of the World

Many of us think of the "world" as being only that community of defiant individuals who reject our Lord and live in open sin against God. We should think of the world as those who are living under the control of Satan and the flesh. The people of the world are not walking in the Spirit.

It is possible that those who influence us the most have aspects of worldliness in them. Satan, the flesh and *the world* have influenced them to adopt approaches to life that are contrary to the lifestyle of the Scriptures. In some cases they do not realize they are embracing philosophies of the world.

We need to place our approaches to life beside the Scriptures. Where they do not harmonize with Scripture, we are living out philosophies of the world. Like a deadly, undiscovered cancer, undetected worldly philosophies may be eating away at our spiritual vitality and effectiveness.

**By Misunderstanding the True
Nature of the Christian Walk**

One reason worldliness has crept into modern-day evangelical Christianity is a misunderstanding of the Christian walk. We have adopted terms that only faintly correspond with New Testament terminology.

When we want to describe believers who are living an exemplary Christian life, we usually call them “dedicated” or “committed” to the Lord. These words are never used in the New Testament in that sense. We are so accustomed to thinking that the big thing for a Christian is “dedication” that we are certain those who have a passionate zeal for the Lord please Him most.

However, God is interested in our availability. Hebrews 11:6 declares “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” In John 6:29, Jesus says, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” Both verses imply that through faith we make our lives available to God. So, calling a believer “a man of faith” gets closer to the New Testament explanation of an exemplary Christian. Also, “a sanctified man” is better because it also means availability.

You may ask, “Are you teaching that the New Testament advocates that one can live the Christian life without commitment.” The answer is “Yes” if you mean by commitment doing your best for Jesus. The answer is “No,” if you mean by the word total availability to God. When we trust God to show us what to do next and then respond to His directives, we cannot be more available than that.

Galatians 6:14 says, that we may be free from worldliness “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Live out that experience and you will be set free from worldly living.

Chapter 12

Freedom From Law

The apostle Paul teaches that believers will, at least for a season, live under law. He then explains that this period of living under law is for the purpose of introducing us to the life of grace. *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound* (Romans 5:20).

In Romans 7:7–25 Paul gives personal testimony of his own experience in law-living and how it resulted in a type of spiritual “death” that drove him to God for grace. Paul begins his testimony by showing in Romans 7:1–6 how we may, by experiencing our union with Christ, have freedom from law. We must understand both *our involvement with and freedom from law* if we are to experience the abundant life.

Freedom May Be More Important Than We Realize

Our freedom from law is more important than some evangelicals seem to realize. Some seem not to be impressed with this aspect of living by grace.

Because Many of us Are More Guilty of Living By Law Than We Realize

Many evangelicals, not realizing it, are passionately committed to law-living. Romans 8:3 speaks of the weakness of

the law arrangement God made with the Israelites. That arrangement was between God's laws and man's flesh. The passage reads, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh . . ."

When the covenant was being made, on three occasions the Israelites said, "What God has said we will do" (Exodus 19:8 and Exodus 24:3, 7). That is the approach to the Christian life that many are taking today. That is legalism. If a person reads a command from God's word and promises God he will keep it without trusting God to keep it through him, he is living under the covenant God made with Israel. A person who promises God that he will pray so long every day is doing the same thing.

Such rules could have come from our pastor, the one who disciples us, our Sunday school teacher or any other well meaning servant of our Lord. Where the rules came from does not matter. What matters is the "I will do" or the "I will not do" approach which is always the approach of the flesh.

In Romans 7:21 Paul reveals that we are guilty of law-living if we do nothing *more than choose to do good*. The thing that makes even the choosing to do good law-living is the "I will do" or the "I will not do" approach.

Unfortunately, many warmhearted evangelicals are steeped in such legalism and do not know it.

Because Through Law-Living We Will Be Guilty of the Works of the Flesh

Because all law-living is flesh-living, when we serve the Lord in self-effort we will be guilty of the works of the flesh. We have already seen that any law arrangement is an arrangement between rules and the flesh. Notice then the result of law-living: *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,*

,seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like (Galatians 5:19–21a). Of course, no one will be guilty of all of these sins but freedom from the law, because it is freedom from the flesh, is also freedom from all of these deadly sins.

Because Law-Living Always Results in Spiritual “Death”

One of the most solemn statements in Scripture is Paul’s testimony in Romans 7:9 of falling back into legalism after becoming a Christian. He says, “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Law-living for Paul meant “death.” Some believe this testimony is of Paul’s pre-Christian days. Yet the overall context indicates that it is a Christian testimony.

A key to understanding Paul’s testimony as being Christian is to isolate a time when he was “without law.” His statement in Philippians 3:5 that he was a “Hebrew of the Hebrews” reveals that from childhood he was under law. That thought alone reveals that there was never a time before he became a Christian that he was “without law.” There is another way we know this is Paul’s testimony after becoming a Christian—his use of the word “revived.” The revival of sin implies that sin “vived,” had ceased to “vive” and then “vived” again. The implication of Paul’s “revived” is that sin “vived” in the pre-Christian Paul when he was under law, ceased to “vive” for a period following his conversion when he was not living by law and then vived again when he lapsed back into law.

Most everyone who has come to Christ as an adult has a testimony like the one just described. For a period of time after they received Jesus, their Christian life was one of joyfully walking with God without any thought of living by rules. After several months of such freedom, some well-meaning friend taught them that they needed to discipline themselves to regular periods of time for prayer and Bible study. That attempt at

for their lives on them. Now they must perform.

How did Paul, the believer, lapse back into law? Just before Paul's statement about the revival of sin through the law, he writes that covetousness filled him when he was confronted with the commandment not to covet. But what caused the confrontation? We can only guess, but conceivably it happened like this. He began to remember how covetous he had been in his pre-Christian days. He had longed to be the number-one Pharisee. Then he thought, "I just must not be as covetous as a Christian as I was as a Pharisee." *The law had come!* With the coming of the law, the burden for Christian victory was on him. Self-confidence was back. Sin was back. Death was just around the corner.

What does Paul mean by death? He did not die physically. He did not lose his salvation. He means an emotional and spiritual state of mind that can best be described with the word "death." It is that state of mind Paul describes in Romans 7:15. "For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Sound like someone you know? It does! We have experienced the same death Paul experienced. And what a death it is.

We may have a deep longing to do such things as love our enemies, forgive those who sin against us, minister in many ways and be bold in witnessing to the lost. Yet, regardless of how deep the desire or how often the effort, until we are under grace, we are unable to do any of our God-given responsibilities as effectively as we should. We faithfully make the effort, but we do not have the resources for success. Our failure is a living death. In time, we have experienced this death enough that we are able to give expression to the cycle of the events we go through. It goes like this: We adopt the rule or choose to do good. Sin—the know-it-all attitude—resurrects. We fail in our spiritual striving. Then comes guilt. Then comes depression. Then we feel second rate.

Freedom Through Experiencing Our Oneness With Christ

Because of our oneness with Christ in crucifixion, we may be free from law-living. The key verse setting forth our freedom from law is Romans 7:4. It reads: *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God* (Romans 7:4). This is, of course, a reference to our crucifixion, burial and resurrection, which Paul develops in Romans 6:3–13. So because all law-living is flesh-living, when we experience the crucifixion of our flesh, we are free from law-living of any type.

Freedom Enables Us to Live as Brides of Jesus Christ

In Romans 7:1-3 Paul reminds us that a wife is free from the law of her husband when he dies. Then in verse 4 he informs that we are free from the law by our own crucifixion that we might be married to another. Of course, the One we may be married to is the Lord Jesus.

When we relate to Jesus as His bride, we “bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:4). As Christ raised from the dead physically, we have been spiritually raised from the dead. What a marriage! And what fruit will come from it!

Freedom—Some Tough Questions

Relating to Jesus as His bride and permitting Him to take the lead in our lives can bring confusion. There are some things that bring questions.

What About the Imperatives in the Scriptures?

When we related to Jesus as our bridegroom, we will keep the Scriptures—but not by trying to keep them. He will guide

us in what we are to do and He will enable us. Does this mean that we no longer need to read our Bibles? No, it does not. The Holy Spirit, because He guides us into all truth, will continuously keep us reading and studying our Bibles. .

What About the Rules on Our Jobs?

The apostle Paul speaks to our responsibilities on our jobs when in his Ephesian letter he writes: “*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ*” (Ephesians 6:5). When we receive a word from our employer, we receive a word from the Lord.

What About Church Schedules?

When the Lord leads the church, He leads it as one body. In that sense there must be schedules arrived at by the body as directed by the Lord. It should not be considered legalism for us as members of the body to follow the direction of the Lord for that body. It would be impossible for the church to function if there were not God-given times for gathering together.

CONCLUSION

Because suffering as a Christian is so much a part of our experience of grace, we conclude with a brief discussion of how suffering relates to the life of grace. An appropriate place to begin is the passage about Paul's thorn in the flesh. Whatever that thorn was it was placing limitations on Paul's ministry. He prayed three times for God to remove it.

Then the Lord said to Paul, "'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9a)." The weakness that the thorn brought to Paul caused him to depend on God. The result was grace.

Paul then goes on to write, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10)."

Another passage concerning suffering that will profit those who live by grace is Genesis 50:1-20. Jacob had died and been buried. This brought fear to Joseph's brothers because they had sold him into slavery. Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

There is peace and victory when we realize that God is sovereign even in our sufferings.