

CONQUERING THE ENEMIES WITHIN

By

RONALD GENE CHRISTIAN

A Topical Devotional Study on
Living the Abundant Christian
Life!

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TO

GERALD LEE CHRISTIAN

my biological brother

who, for many years, has been
an example of a gentle and
godly man, and one who has
personally helped me to
'conquer my enemies within'.

INTRODUCTION

'Conquering the Enemies Within' - this title describes both the reality of man's enemies and the possibility of man conquering those enemies. Jesus came in order that man might have life and might have it more abundantly. He came to earth, not to subtract but to add, not to destroy but to save, not to condemn but to forgive! The last word of Christianity is not denunciation but affirmation, not sacrifice but salvation, not sorrow over sins but joy over redemption. It was not the purpose of Christ to come to earth to save mankind in part but to save mankind to the 'uttermost'. Where sin abounds, grace superabounds! The saving power of Christ applies not only to the forgiveness of outward and obvious sins, but it equally applies to the deliverance from inner perverted attitudes and from hurtful emotions.

But, alas, how many professing Christians live truly abundant lives? Even though many rightfully claim assurance of sins forgiven, many of these same persons struggle with unresolved guilts, terrifying fears, nagging inferiority complexes, debilitating jealousies, hurtful negativism and criticisms, consuming greed, destructive doubts, devastating anger, resentments and bitterness, and unChristlike self-centeredness, as well as several other 'enemies' of the soul'.

Is there any solution to these problems, any power that can be appropriated to conquer these enemies within? Thanks be unto God, there is! 'Christ is the answer' - this is not only an overworked phrase, but it expresses a workable reality! But, while it cannot be denied that Christ is the answer to man's problems, it should not be supposed that the above-mentioned 'enemies' are always easily or quickly conquered! Learning to conquer powerful spiritual enemies involves a process in which one's mind must be open to God-given understanding, one's heart must be open to new truth, one's spirit must be receptive to God-wrought change.

The power of God to conquer man's enemies is limitless, but that divine power becomes effective in the struggling person's life only to the extent that there is an obedient response to revealed truth!

It is the purpose of this short devotional book to impart understanding to the mind, to offer encouragement to the heart, and to give guidance to the soul - all for the ultimate purpose of helping sincere people to 'conquer the enemies within'.

A few comments regarding the content and format of this short book are in order. There are thirteen short chapters, with each chapter discussing one of the several 'enemies' with which most believers struggle, at one time or another, in their lives. After discussing the nature of the 'enemy', practical steps to overcome the particular 'enemy' are offered. This book is designed to be used as a daily devotional guidebook, with attention given to one chapter each week for thirteen weeks. There are about five to ten 'devotionals' provided for each of the thirteen 'enemies', one at a time for each of the thirteen weeks. Each page includes, along with the practically-oriented devotional reading, an appropriate Scriptural reference to read, a written Prayer for the Day, and a written Affirmation for the Day. The individual chapters contain enough content, and yet are short enough in length, that they could well serve as material for small study groups within a local church. Sunday School classes or

'Christian Growth Groups' which choose to use this material as the basis for dialogue, will find a set of thought-provoking questions at the end of each of the thirteen chapters. These questions will help a group to understand and to apply the concepts which are related within each of the chapters.

As author of this book, I have sought to share those truths that have helped me (and that are continuing to help me) to overcome my personal 'enemies within'. As a 'fellow struggler' on the spiritual pilgrimage of life, I feel compelled to share those insights which I am learning to apply in my personal spiritual battle against the 'enemies within'. It is my prayer that many people may profit from the application of these life-transforming Biblical principles. May you, the reader, experience the sweet joy of conquering your enemies - the 'enemies within'!

Ronald G. Christian
Fort Collins, Colorado

CHAPTER 1

FREEDOM FROM REAL GUILTS

"GUILTY! EVERYONE GUILTY?"

Dr. Karl Menninger, in his book 'Whatever Became of Sin?' begins his first chapter with an intriguing illustration. On a sunny day in September, a stern-faced, plainly dressed man could be seen standing still on a street corner in the busy Chicago Loop. As pedestrians hurried on their way to lunch or business, he would solemnly lift his right arm, and pointing his finger at the person nearest him, shout the single word 'GUILTY!' Notes Menninger, "Then without any change of expression, he would resume his stiff stance for a few moments before repeating the gesture. Then, again, he would raise his arm, point, and solemnly pronounce the word 'GUILTY!' to the passerby. The effect of this strange pantomime on the passing strangers was extraordinary, almost eerie. They would stare at him, hesitate, look away, look at each other, and then at him again; then hurriedly continue on their ways.

"One man, turning to another, exclaimed: 'But how did he know?'

"No doubt many others had similar thoughts. How did he know, indeed?

"Guilty!' Everyone guilty? Guilty of what? Guilty of overparking? Guilty of lying? Guilty of unfaithfulness to a faithful wife? Guilty only of evil thoughts - or evil plans?" (Whatever Became of Sin? pg. 1,2)

Think of the havoc that guilt produces! Unrest, agony of mind, severance of relationships, ineffectiveness in creative work, and on and on!

Romans, chapters 1-3, is written primarily to contrast the righteousness of God's character with the sinfulness of man's character. The universality of sin among all humanity is the devastating conclusion of these three chapters. Chapter one is a description of 'down-and-out' Gentile (pagan) sinners, morally perverted and grossly immoral. Chapter two is a description of self-righteous, hypocritical Jews who prided themselves in their racial descent, and claimed God's special favor because Abraham was the father of their faith. Chapter one and two of Romans reveal two sides of one coin. The 'coin' is sin. One side of the 'coin' is the life of sensuality. The other side of the 'coin' is the life of self-righteous morality. Both ways of life are condemned by God. Neither the down-and-out sinner nor the up-and-out sinner can gain God's approval. Both the sins of the flesh and the sins of the spirit bring God's judgement. Irreligious passion and religious hypocrisy both bring God's severe judgement. Sinful actions and sinful attitudes are alike condemned. The sensual sins and the sophisticated sins alike are scrutinized. Neither the life of paganism nor the life of religion can gain God's approval. The repulsive life of sensual perversion and the respectable life of self-righteous morality are equally offensive to the all-holy God, and both ways of life lead to the same eternal destination!

"O God, forgive me for secretly thinking that my own 'righteousness' in some way makes me more acceptable to you. I exchange the filthy rags of my own self-righteousness for the pure garments of thy holiness and righteousness!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The worst enemy of Christ-centered Christianity is self-centered religion!

"GOD HAS NO GRANDCHILDREN—ONLY CHILDREN!"

There are two major flaws in attempting to gain God's approval by a life of outward morality.

First, the man of self-righteous morality is shallow in his understanding of the nature of sin. He can easily condemn the immoral behaviour of 'out-and-out' sinners. Adultery, stealing, cheating, murder, and other such actions are easily and rightly condemned. But the man of morality finds it difficult to diagnose the universal disease of all mankind — the disease of self-righteousness and self-centeredness. "The thing that is deeply wrong with human nature is not that some people commit adultery, and some steal, but that all of us are self-centered -- the decent and the indecent, the nice and the nasty. Manners, polish, refinement, and culture only cover the disease, like rouge on the face of a woman dying of anemia. They can't affect the deadly disease underneath." (Questions People Ask About Religion, William Sangster, pg. 58)

The second flaw in the man of self-righteous morality is his hypocrisy. Of the self-righteous Jews, God says, "You are just as bad (as the Gentiles). When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are talking about yourselves, for you do these very same things...God will punish the Jews for sinning because they have his written laws, but don't obey them. They know what is right, but don't do it. After all, salvation is not given to those who know what to do, unless they do it." (Romans 2:12-15, Living Bible)

At the time of my conversion, I was an 'up-and-out' sinner. I was living a morally respectable life, with no noticable 'bad' habits, and attending Church services three times a week. I read the Bible, memorized Bible verses, 'said' prayers, and performed my share of 'good deeds'. I believed that because I was a fifth generation Free Methodist, I was morally acceptable to God and that God would automatically let me go to heaven. I, like the morally upright Jews described in Romans, felt that God favored me. I reasoned that because I didn't indulge in grossly immoral sins, that surely I was acceptable enough to God! The day came, however, when I realized that God has no 'grandchildren', only children. A second-hand experience of God, through my godly mother, would never suffice! I needed personally to repent of my sins—my sinful attitudes, my pride, my self-righteous claims, my dependence upon morality alone to save me. I realized that 'up-and-out' (religious) sinners needed God just as much as 'down-and-out' (irreligious) sinners. One kind of sinner can go to hell as quickly as the other kind!

If all are sinners, is there any hope? Wrote Paul, "Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; yet now God declares us 'not guilty' of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins." (Romans 3:23,24 Living Bible)

"O God, I see from your Word that it is not the circumstances of my birth that make the difference; it is the crisis of my spiritual rebirth that determines my destiny for time and eternity!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who is born once, dies twice--in time and eternity! He who is born twice—physically and spiritually—dies only once in time!

INADEQUATE WAYS OF DEALING WITH GUILT

There are many guilty people who claim innocence in regards to sin. Some rationalize sin, and say "I am as good as many church folks!" True, but irrelevant! What does this statement prove? God is our standard, not other people! Hypocrites will keep many people out of heaven!

Some project the blame of their sins onto someone else - that is, they scapegoat their sins. "It is easy enough to find all kinds of defenses behind which to seek to hide. We may blame our sins on our heredity, on our environment, on our temperament, on our physical condition." (Daily Study Bible; Barclay; pg. 39; I John) "We ascribe the responsibility to a group, we offer up scapegoat sacrifices, we perform or partake in dumb-show rituals of penitence and atonement." (Whatever Became of Sin?; Menninger; pg. 17)

"At three I had feeling of
Ambivalence toward my brothers,
And so it follows naturally
I poisoned all my lovers.
But now I'm happy; I have learned
The lesson this has taught;
That everything I do that's wrong
Is someone else's fault."

Have you heard people try to escape personal moral responsibility by saying, "The devil made me do it!" ?

It is bad enough to rationalize sin. It is perhaps worse to blame others for our actions of moral irresponsibility. Worse yet, is to be callously indifferent to sin and sin's consequences. Notes Barclay, "At first a man regards some wrong thing with horror; the second stage comes when he is tempted into doing it, but even as he does it, he is still unhappy and ill at ease and very conscious that it is wrong; the third stage is when he has done the thing so often that he does it without a qualm." (Daily Study Bible; Barclay; Ephesians; pg. 114)

There are those who "claim that sin has no effect upon them, who say that they can sin and take no harm; who insist that they can take their pleasures, and, if need be, make their mistakes and emerge none the worse for them". (Daily Study Bible; I John; Barclay; pg. 39) In other words, there are those who feel that they can sow 'wild oats' and yet never have to 'reap wild oats'. They do not see the 'cause and effect' of sin! Paul wrote, "Don't be misled; remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it: a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows! If he sows to please his own desires, he will be planting seeds of evil and he will surely reap a harvest of spiritual decay and death; but if he plants the good things of the Spirit, he will reap the everlasting life which the Holy Spirit gives him." (Galatians 6:7,8 Living Bible)

"O God, not to deny them or to rationalize them. Help me to accept personal moral responsibility for my wrongs, rather than to 'scapegoat' them onto someone else. Then, true confession of my sins shall lead to complete resolution of my guilt and total healing of my soul!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The pain of confession will lead to the pleasure of conversion!

"THE FORGOTTEN WORD OF PROUD TWENTIETH CENTURY MAN"

In the last devotional we looked at various inadequate ways to deal with guilt. Some rationalize sin. Some project the blame onto others. There are some who are callously indifferent to sin and to sin's consequences. And there are still others who outrightly deny the very existence of sin. They deny the reality of guilt and declare that what one feels is not real guilt, but only guilt feelings or guilt impulses. Some psychiatrists have gone so far as to say that guilt feelings or anxiety feelings are caused because a person secretly wants to commit certain acts but dares not because of parental or societal restrictions. Thus, according to their theory, society's restrictions are mainly to blame for people's 'guilty feelings'. Some belittle the idea of an objective Moral Law such as the Ten Commandments.

Notes Paul Rees, "Someone ought to set up a 'Bureau of Missing Words'. If we had such an institution, somewhere on its dust-laden shelves would be found the word 'sin'. It is the forgotten word of proud twentieth century man...There is simply no end to the lengths we will go in building a silky vocabulary that leaves out the serpent-hissing word - sin...The one thing that most of us are stubbornly unwilling to do is to locate the troubles of human society where they really are - inside of our own prideful, peevish, perverse hearts, with their wicked unbelief that turns away from God's Christ and serves other gods instead." (The Word of The Lord Came Unto Me Also; pg. 160,161)

Our Scripture reading for today records Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees who claimed to be innocent, although Jesus knew they were guilty. They denied their sin, and were barred from God's forgiveness! "Then Jesus told him (the healed blind man), 'I have come into the world to give sight to those who are spiritually blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.' The Pharisees who were standing there asked, 'Are you saying we are blind?' 'If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty,' Jesus replied. 'But your guilt remains because you claim to know what you are doing.'" (John 9:39-41 Living Bible)

Comments Barclay, "The man who is conscious of his own blindness, and who longs to see better and to know more, is the man whose eyes can be opened and who can be led more and more deeply into the truth. The man who thinks he knows it all, the man who does not realize that he cannot see, is the man who is truly blind, and who is beyond hope and help. Only the man who realizes his own weakness can become strong. Only the man who realizes his own blindness can learn to see. Only the man who realizes his own sin can be forgiven." (Daily Study Bible; John: vol. 2; pg. 58; Barclay)

"Almighty God, awaken me to my true moral condition. Let me see myself, not only as I am but as what I can become through your transforming power. I am a great sinner in need of a great Saviour. Where sin in my life abounds, your forgiving grace superabounds! I claim your forgiveness for all my sins!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Holy Spirit has come into the world 'to disturb the comfortable, and to comfort the disturbed'. I will allow Him to disturb me now, that He may comfort me eternally!

SEVERE 'LOVE IN ACTION'

What is the answer to the problem of complacency which we described in the last devotional? Complacent and 'blinded' persons (John 9:41) need to be disturbed by the Holy Spirit. Someone said that the Holy Spirit has come to 'disturb the comfortable and to comfort the disturbed'. Such persons need conviction of sin. They need to stop rationalizing sin, to stop denying sin. They need to see the seriousness of self-deception: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8) These persons need to humble themselves and confess their sins, in true repentance, following an awakening of the Holy Spirit. "And when he (the Holy Spirit) has come He will convince the world of its sin, and of the availability of God's goodness, and of deliverance from judgement." (John 16:8 Living Bible)

It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to convict of sin. It is important to realize the nature of sin. The complacent need to be disturbed. There must be an awakening of guilt, before there can be a resolution of guilt. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to awaken in man a wholesome sense of guilt, which might be likened unto spiritual fever which is intended to motivate one to go to a doctor - Jesus!

"The repression of conscience, the reflex of self-justification and the projection of guilt upon others, are only false solutions to the problem of guilt...The only true solution, both from the psychological standpoint and in the light of the Bible is the reverse of this, namely, the acceptance of our responsibilities, genuine recognition of our guilt, and repentance and the receiving of God's forgiveness in response to this repentance.

"To tear men from this impossible situation and to make them capable once more of receiving grace, God must therefore first of all reawaken within them the repressed guilt. This is the positive significance of the sombre, severe and threatening pages of the Bible...

"Jesus Christ Himself, speaks with an implacable severity which is the source of much misunderstanding, because it seems to be contrary to the love of God. This severity can only be understood if we are aware of its ultimate aim. It aims, not to suppress the arrogant sinner, but to arouse his sense of guilt, and so to humble him, thereby opening for him the way of grace." (Guilt and Grace; Gournier; pg. 142)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shifts guilt from the mere formal level of the ACT to the deeper level of the MOTIVATION. Jesus teaches that outward respectability may cover an inward impurity. A good action can have bad motives. Jesus' scrutiny and seeming harshness is really 'love in action' for the purpose of awakening suppressed guilt to produce healing.

"O God, deliver me from self-delusion. Help me to confess my sins openly, in order that I might know the joy of full forgiveness and the peace of total reconciliation. 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God always acts in love towards sinners - severely towards the complacent and soothingly towards the repentant. I will be repentant!

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF SIN

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to continue the ministry of Jesus in the world today.

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement." (John 16:8 NIV) The word that John uses of the work of the Spirit "is the word which is used for the cross-examination of a witness, or a man on trial, or an opponent in an argument. It has always this idea of cross-examining a man until he sees and admits his errors, or acknowledges the force of some argument which he had not yet seen...Now clearly such cross-examination can do two things - it can convict a man of the weakness of his case, and the strength of the case which, up to this time, he has opposed. In this passage we need both the meanings; we need both convict and convince." (Daily Study Bible; John vol. 2; pg. 192; Barclay)

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict man of his sin, and to convince a man of his own weakness and of Christ's strength.

The Spirit of God, speaking through the Holy Scriptures, convicts man of inward attitudes and sinful desires against which there is no civil law. Civil laws are made against murder, but only the Spirit can convict a man for anger. Civil laws can convict a man for perjury and fraud, but only the Spirit of God can convict a man of malice and resentment. There are civil laws against adultery, but who, other than the Spirit of God, can convict one of lustful desires and impure thoughts? Laws against stealing are made by society, but only God's Spirit can convict one of the wrong in covetousness, envy, and jealousy. What passes the scrutiny of man, does not pass the scrutiny of God. Jesus said that the Spirit convicts the world of sin because the world does not believe in Him. One may not be a murderer, or an adulterer, or a thief, but if he does not truly believe in Christ, that person stands condemned. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:18 NIV)

Jesus said that the Spirit convicts the world of sin because the world does not believe in him. In God's sight the worst sin of all is unbelief. The most respected man of the world may be the chiefest of sinners, for he may be the man who has sunk deepest in the mire of unbelief.

In understanding the Spirit's conviction, one must first realize that conviction is personal. Says one, "He (the Holy Spirit) undertakes to convince every man of his own utter sinfulness - to convince him that his individuality is as fully recognized by God in the sinfulness of the world as was that of Adam in the first transgression, or as though he were the only one in all the world who had ever sinned." (The Holy Spirit, A Study; Hogue; pg. 154)

"Father, I come to you with a receptive heart and an open hand to receive your gifts of divine grace. I stand convicted of my own inadequacies, and convinced of the adequacy of your grace. What passes the scrutiny of man cannot pass your scrutiny. I confess my hidden sins in order to receive your revealed mercy."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will not allow society's approval of my outward conduct to blind me to my need for God's cleansing of my inward condition!

THE CONVICTING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the last devotional we said that conviction of sin is first personal. Next, we can say that conviction is guilt-producing. What made the crowd to whom Peter preached feel pricked in their hearts (Acts 2:37)? Before this time, the people in this crowd felt comfortable and complacent and even thought they had done God a service by crucifying the professed Messiah - Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit that made them realize that they had committed a terrible sin in crucifying the very Son of God! It was the Holy Spirit that made them cry out, under the preaching of Peter, "What should we do?" They saw themselves as God saw them, and "they were moved to the depths of their hearts." (Acts 2:37 Berkley)

Third, it is the Holy Spirit who allows the concealed sin of the sinner to be exposed. Again, the Spirit's purpose in this is redemptive. Repressed guilt of hidden sin must be exposed in order for healing to be affected. The Bible says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." The following true account interestingly describes this truth. "A few years ago The Times reported a strange case of crime in a certain German town. A lady in that town found a basket on her doorstep, and the basket contained a pigeon. There was a note also inside, an urgent, imperative, threatening note which said that if the lady did not fasten a certain sum of money to the clip on the pigeon's leg and release the bird immediately, her house would be burnt down that night. The lady immediately informed the police and the police acted with amazing rapidity...They chartered two aeroplanes and having tied a streaming ribbon to the bird's neck they released the bird and instructed the pilots to pursue it. The pigeon rose in the air and wheeled round several times before it finally took its course. The inhabitants of the town...stood in amazement at the strange gyrations of the two aeroplanes and feared for their church steeple; but as soon as the pigeon flew on a direct course the aeroplanes were in hot pursuit, while the police followed, as best they could, in a high-powered car below. Presently the pigeon flew down to a loft and one of the aeroplanes took a photograph of the spot while the other dropped a note to the police. The police dashed to the house and discovered two brothers untying the tell-tale ribbon in feverish haste from the bird's neck and they were placed under immediate arrest. The men protested, however, that the bird was not theirs. 'It just flew into our loft', they said, 'it is not our bird.' 'Very well,' said the officer, 'we will test that', and he ordered the pigeon to be taken away and released from a distant spot...and it came home. A second time it was taken away and a second time it came home. A third time - and a third time it came home. And every time...it deepened the certitude of their guilt. Finally, they broke down and confessed...SIN IS LIKE THAT. IT COMES HOME." (Daily Readings; William Sangster; pg. 57)

"O God, my sins - even the secret sins of my heart - are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him who sees all and who knows all! Where can I go to hide from your presence? Nowhere, for you fill the universe with your presence! I confess even my hidden sins to you. In Jesus' forgiving name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The One who knows all is ready to forgive all - if I openly confess my sins to Him!

I John 3:4-10; James 4:17

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF REAL GUILT?

Notes Paul Tournier, "'False guilt' is that which comes as a result of the judgements and suggestions of men. 'True guilt' is that which results from divine judgment." (Guilt and Grace; pg. 67 in 'The Best of Paul Tournier')

One cause of true guilt is transgression against the known laws of God. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." (I John 3:4)

What is the meaning of the 'Laws' of God? Using the Bible as a whole to interpret this, we can say that 'Laws' refer to at least two areas: the Laws of Morality (Exodus 20 - the Ten Commandments) and the Laws of Relationships (Matthew 22:37-40 - Love for God, Neighbor, Self).

The Laws of Morality (Ten Commandments) can be 'boiled down' to one word - 'Respect'. The first four commandments refer to Respect for God, and the last six commandments refer to Respect for Others. To violate the Laws of Morality is to violate the call to respect for life. To transgress against the known laws of Respect (Ten Commandments) is to bring guilt to one's soul.

The Law of Relationships is only an amplified form of the Laws of Morality. "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:9,10)

Love is the supreme Law - love for God, love for others, and love for one's self.

Not to surrender fully to God in love is to sin against God. Not to care compassionately for others is to sin against one's neighbor. Not to sincerely love oneself is to sin against one's own personhood. Thus, guilt is incurred when one is not truly loving God, loving others, and loving oneself. Lovelessness is sin!

Prayerlessness is a form of lovelessness and is sin. Said Samuel to the nation of Israel, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you." (I Samuel 12:23)

Failure to do the good we should have done also constitutes sin, according to James 4:17. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." These sins are sometimes called 'sins of omission' in contrast to the 'sins of commission' which is described in I John 3:4. Jesus gave the Golden Rule: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

"O God, the more I understand the nature of sin, the more I sense my need for your forgiveness. I have broken most of the Ten Commandments. I have failed to love you supremely, to love myself wholesomely, and to love others sincerely. I do not ask to be treated justly. I ask rather to be treated mercifully!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love...He does not treat us as our sins deserve." (Psalms 103:8,10)

Matthew 7:12; 25:31-46; James 4:17

WHAT ARE 'SINS OF OMISSION'?

Jesus gave the Golden Rule: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

Notes Barclay, "It is not difficult to find many parallels to this saying in its negative form...Many voices had said, 'Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you', but no voice had ever said, 'Do to others what you would have them do to you..."

"When this rule is put positively, when we are told that we must actively do to others what we would have them do to us, a new principle enters into life, and a new attitude to our fellow-men. It is one thing to say, 'I must not injure people; I must not do to them what I would object to their doing to me.' That, the law can compel us to do. It is quite another thing to say, 'I must go out of my way to help other people and to be kind to them, as I would wish them to help and to be kind to me.' That, only love can compel us to do. The attitude which says, 'I must do no harm to people', is quite different from the attitude which says, 'I must do my best to help people'." (Daily Study Bible; Matthew; Barclay; pg. 280)

Failure to do practical works of compassion is also considered serious sins of omission which incur both guilt and eventual judgment from God. Some of Jesus' strongest teaching on the sin of omission is found in Matthew 25. "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matthew 25:42-45)

Good intentions are good, but good intentions must find good expressions.

"A bell is not a bell til you ring it,
A song is not a song til you sing it.
Love in your heart is not put there to stay,
Love is not love til you give it away."

"The guilt of omission...comprises all that we had dreamed and have not attained, the poems shoved into a secret drawer which still have a few lines missing or a few corrections to be made; it comprises the promises made in the mystical impetus of a short-lived moment; all that we have attained only incompletely, begun and abandoned; all that is unfinished, timid, unexpressed, shapeless." (Guilt and Grace; Paul Tournier; pg. 52)

"Lord God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I confess all my sins to you - the sins I remember and the sins I don't remember, my sins of commission and my sins of omission. Not only have I transgressed against your visible laws, but I have, even worse, broken your heart by being indifferent to your love. Give me not only forgiveness for what I have done - transgression - but impart to me strength to do what I haven't done - deeds of compassion!

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God will enable me to translate my good impressions and my good intentions into good expressions!

LOOKING AT THE CURE FOR REAL GUILT

Psalms 32 tells us that unconfessed sins have tragic results, in terms of both the body and the soul. Increasingly it is being shown that hidden, suppressed, and unconfessed sin infects the body as well as the soul. David wrote of the result of his own unconfessed sin: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." (Psalms 32:3)

Guilt impairs the soul as well as the body. Guilt produces within man a sense of God's displeasure. Man is made for God and remains restless until he finds rest in God. Guilt causes man to avoid his own best Friend (Jesus Christ), and makes that Friend out to be an enemy!

Guilt also brings to man the sense of divine conviction. The hand of God rests heavy upon the sinner: "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." (Psalms 32:4)

What is the cure of real guilt? Psalms 32:5 is the answer to coping with guilt: "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the Lord' - and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)

Notes Dr. Karl Menninger, "If the concept of personal responsibility and answerability for ourselves and for others were to return to common acceptance, hope would return to the world with it!" (Whatever Became of Sin?; Menninger; pg. 188)

How is real guilt dealt with? David knew by experience: "I acknowledged my sin unto God...I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." (Psalms 32:5) There is no attempt to escape personal moral responsibility. The blame is not put on one's environment, heredity, background, society, parents, or friends. Says Dr. Boisen, perceptive psychiatrist, "My observation is that the patient who condemns himself, even to the point of thinking he has committed the unpardonable sin, is likely to get well. It is the patient who blames others who does not get well...Self-blame, even when it leads to severe psychosis, means the recognition that something is wrong and the acceptance of one's responsibility for the difficulty. The emotional disturbance which follows is then analogous to fever or inflammation in the body. It is not an evil but a manifestation of nature's power to heal." (quoted in "The Crisis In Psychiatry and Religion; O. Hobart Mowrer; pg. 66) Real guilt comes, not from acts which the individual would commit but dares not (Freudian psychology), but from acts which he has committed but wishes that he had not committed (Christian view). Therefore, confession of sin to God is the only way to find deliverance from real guilt!

"Merciful Father, your Word teaches me that you forgive all my sins, and heal all my spiritual infirmities, and redeem my life from the pit, and crown me with love and compassion (Ps. 103:3,4) - if I am willing to confess all my sins to you in the spirit of true humility and repentance. Glory!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: As far as the east is from the west, so far has the Lord removed my transgressions from me! (Ps. 103:12)

FINDING THE JOY OF GOD'S SALVATION

Acknowledgement of a life of transgression which leads to a sincere confession of sin is the first step towards a full and abundant life, free from the plague of debilitating guilt! Involvement in earnest prayer is always necessary if there is to be release from guilt. David confessed to God: "Against thee...have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." (Ps. 51:3) He spoke directly to God in prayer. David's guilt was not imaginary guilt; it was real guilt. He had broken God's law ("Thou shalt not commit adultery", etc.). Such guilt could only be resolved by confessing his sin to God - not to man. "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities...Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." (Psalms 51:8,9,12a) Only God, through His Son, has power to forgive sins. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." (Mark 2:10)

To experience full release from guilt, it is necessary to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the Cross. He is our sin-bearer. He judged our sins and took our hell on Mount Calvary, when he died, the godly for the ungodly. Therefore, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:18) "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (I John 5:12)

After one becomes a believer, through the exercise of faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, there is need for daily confession of sins of commission (I John 2:1,2), sins of omissions (James 4:17), and even sins of ignorance. After one has surrendered himself to Christ, there is need for daily cleansing. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin." (I John 1:7 NIV)

Some Christians strangely think that love for God is incompatible with confession of sin on a daily basis, and thus, such persons accumulate guilt because of a lack of daily confession. In the life of every believer there is need for a daily 'soul-purging' through confession. All believers need daily cleansing of mistakes and failures and human blunders, even though these things are not sins, in the strict sense of the word (I John 3:4). Even believers who are mature in love are not assured of perfection in judgment and in conduct. Even unintentional errors or sins of ignorance should be confessed to God, and, if necessary, to man (James 5:16). Jesus taught His followers to pray, "Forgive us our debts", which assumes a need for sincere daily confession.

"O God, I see now that there is no way to experience forgiveness of sins except through Jesus. For He is my atoning sacrifice. Through His death, I may live. Through His blood, I may experience cleansing from all my sins. Thank you! Thank you!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The cost of forgiveness is great - it cost the death of Jesus! I will ever glory in the Cross of Calvary!

I John 1:7; 2:1-2

EXPERIENCING DAILY CLEANSING AND CONFIDENCE

It is possible for a Christian to sin, but if a Christian falls into an act of sin, God, because of Christ's atonement, will forgive and restore the repentant believer to fellowship. This is the teaching of I John 2:1. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (I John 2:1) Jesus, as advocate, pleads our case before the Heavenly Father. "An advocate is a helper, a supporter of someone's cause, an advocate is someone's defense." (Barclay) Jesus is the one who intercedes on man's behalf before God the Father. Jesus alone is worthy to be an advocate before the Father, because Jesus alone is inherently righteous.

Spirit-filled believers are not to have a 'sin-fixation'. Rather, they are to have a 'Christ-fixation'. Believers should not focus on sin. They should focus instead on the Saviour! For where sin abounds, grace superabounds!

But, while declaring the proper focus and emphasis, it is important for the sincere Christian to recognize his need for constant cleansing. The blood of Christ cleanses, and continues to cleanse, from the pollution of sin, as the believer continues to 'walk in the light' of truth (I John 1:7). Even the Spirit-filled believer must maintain his sense of forgiveness and power by constant reliance upon the cleansing blood of Christ. His sense of release from a sense of perpetual guilt is found to the degree that he continues to appropriate the cleansing blood of Jesus, constantly applied to the believer's life!

He who practices 'agreeing with God's grace-estimate' of himself (I John 1:9) (present tense in Greek for 'Confess'), is he who enjoys a sense of pardon and a sense of conscious release of guilt. When the repressed guilts in the believer's life are released into the conscious mind, it is this process of confession that must be practiced in order to continue to enjoy a sense of relief and pardon.

To 'pray without ceasing' is to practice an attitude of confession. Not centering primarily upon the sin, but focusing primarily upon the mercy and love and grace of Christ, whose blood continually cleanses as one continues to confess. Grace is always and only for the humble, not for the self-satisfied - and this goes for believers as well as for the unsaved.

Jesus is the believer's advocate who pleads his case before the Father, and who applies the atoning blood to his sin.

"'Confess' means 'agree along with'. O Lord, I agree along with you - that you are right and I am wrong, that you are the all-sufficient Saviour and I am the totally-needy sinner, that your blood alone can cleanse me initially from my moral pollution and can continue to cleanse me from my daily shortcomings and sins."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "The cleansing stream, I see, I see! I plunge, and, oh it cleanses me!"

Romans 5:1-2; 8:31-34; Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:35

LEARNING TO FORGIVE YOURSELF

"What is the cure for real guilt?" There is a five-fold answer to this important question: (1) Acknowledgement of transgressing life, resulting in humble confession of sin, (2) Involvement in earnest prayer, (3) Acceptance of the Son of God as Saviour, (4) Daily confession of sins and failures, and (5) Learning to forgive yourself of your forgiven sins and mistakes.

It is this last step that we must focus our attention on today. Notes William Sangster, "Having accepted the forgiveness of God, don't brood over the past. There are many people in the family of God who do not doubt God's forgiveness, but they never seem able to forgive themselves. The memory of their sin lacerates them. It is hardly ever out of their minds. So, far from being able, as some are, to forgive themselves lightly, they seem unable to forgive themselves at all. Just like some unhealed wound in the body, this unhealed wound in the spirit drains their strength, hinders their progress, pours pus into the blood-stream, and keeps them in a state of spiritual invalidism.

"God has forgiven you; forgive yourself. Who are you to have superior moral values to the Almighty God? Here are two things which will help you to forgive yourself.

"(1) Can't you see that your unwillingness to forgive yourself is a form of spiritual pride? What you are really saying, at the deep level of your mental and emotional life, is this: 'How could I ever have done that?' (Note the stress on the 'I'.) 'Me! A spiritual giant like me!' injected into your veins. Accept the forgiveness. (You cannot undo the past. God has forgiven it, and, if God has forgiven you, who can justly accuse you? That is the first thing: forgive yourself.

"(2) Here is the second. In some mysterious way - beyond our human fathoming - God can use sin...the God who is mighty in creation is also mighty in transformation." (Daily Readings; William Sangster; pg. 71)

God will not allow anything in our past lives to be wasted. He can take even the bad of one's past and use it in the development of good! I know of one man, who for many years lived deeply in sin, but soon after he became a Christian he began to champion righteous causes. He was no stranger to pornography when he was not a Christian, but soon after his conversion to Christ he spear-headed a courageous campaign against pornography within his local community. Another man, before he was a believer, involved himself in deceptive practices and ended up in prison for several months. After becoming a Christian and after he was released from prison, he began a Christ-centered prison ministry which gained national recognition and acceptance! So, whatever your past sins are, confess them to God, and allow God to use even your past sins to bring about some good! Doing this helps you to learn to forgive yourself.

"Loving God, if you have hid my sins in the 'sea of your forgetfulness', then I have no right to live remorsefully. Confessing all my sins to you, I now release from my conscious mind the regrets and shame which my sins have caused me. Henceforth, allow me to live confidently and joyfully!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because God has already judged my sins in the person of Jesus when He died on the Cross, I will never have to face an angry Judge, but only a loving Friend!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM REAL GUILT'

1. What evidence is there from Scripture that everyone is guilty of wrongdoing?
2. How can chapters One and Two of Romans be described by way of contrast, as each relates to the subject of sinners?
3. What are two major flaws in attempting to gain God's approval by a life of outward morality?
4. Name and describe four inadequate ways of dealing with real guilt.
5. If Jesus is 'Love Incarnate' (i.e., God in human form who best demonstrated the love of God), then how can we justify Jesus' seeming harsh and severe treatment of some of the religious leaders of His day?
6. What can be learned, from a study of 'The Sermon on The Mount' (Matthew 5:21-42), regarding the true nature of sin?
7. Share at least three different characteristics of the Holy Spirit's Conviction of sinners.
8. How does Paul Tournier distinguish between 'False Guilt' and 'True Guilt'?
9. Name and describe at least two causes of real guilt. What is the difference between 'sins of commission' and 'sins of omission'? Give Scriptures which describe these two types of sin.
10. What is meant by the 'Laws of Morality' and the 'Law of Relationships'?
11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Lovelessness is sin!"
12. What is the 'Golden Rule' as Jesus stated it, and in what way is the 'Golden Rule' unique among the ethical principles taught in the ancient world?
13. What does Matthew 25 teach mankind regarding the importance of good works? Based on a study of this chapter, is it accurate to say that, unless there is evidence of good works in one's life, one's profession of faith in Christ is meaningless?
14. List and describe the five steps that are involved in a person realizing an effective cure for real guilt in his life.
15. Contrast the Freudian view with the Christian view, regarding the origin of guilt in one's life.
16. Why is confession directly to God through prayer the only adequate method of ridding oneself of guilt? Why is a human mediator not adequate in the confession act? (Note I Timothy 2:5,6)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM REAL GUILT'

17. After one becomes a believer, through the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ, why is it necessary for such a one to daily confess his sins to Jesus Christ?
18. According to I John 1:7, what condition must be met if a believer is to enjoy daily cleansing from Christ?
19. What is the significance to the believer of the present tense in Greek for 'Confess'? In light of I John 1:7,9; 2:1-2, give your interpretation of the following statement: "Grace is always and only for the humble, not for the self-satisfied - and this goes for believers as well as for the unsaved."
20. What insights could you share with a sincere believer who is having a difficult time forgiving himself of his past?

CHAPTER 2

FREEDOM FROM FALSE GUILTS

THE SWEETEST WORD IN THE WORLD!

I have a friend who, when I first met him, was at the height of his career as a research scientist. My friend, by nature a personable, generous, good-humored man, came to my office many times during a lengthy and dark period in his life. Broken-hearted and guilt-ridden, tears surfaced much of the time as he poured out his heart regularly to me. He told me that one of the biggest problems of his life was his overwhelming sense of guilt. Guilt as a result of his wife leaving him, causing multiple psychological and social problems in the lives of his children. Guilt because of his past over-involvement in his work which he felt was a contributing cause of his divorce. Guilt resulting from his ambivalent feelings associated with his hard decision to put his parents in a nursing home. Also, his former work as a scientist in biological and hereditary research involved some moral and ethical problems which were in conflict with the Christian beliefs which he was taught as a child and youth. In addition to these various guilts associated with his relationships with his wife and children and parents and job, there was the recurring guilt that surfaced to his conscious mind to plague him - the guilt caused by his wartime experiences during World War II.

Some would give almost anything to be rid of their plaguing sense of guilt! To many people, the word 'Forgiveness' would be the sweetest word in the world!

In thinking of guilt, three classes of people come to mind. First, there are those who are guilty, but who think that they are innocent. These people need conviction of sin. Second, there are those who are innocent, but who think that they are guilty. These people need comfort and reassurance. Third, there are those who are guilty and they know they are guilty. These people need forgiveness and cleansing.

Christ has the answer to those who should feel guilty and don't. He has the answer to those who should feel innocent and don't. He also has the answer for the many who feel guilty and should. Through the Holy Spirit's convicting, forgiving, and comforting ministry, the needs of all persons can be adequately met.

Because many sincere believers find it easy to be plagued with guilt feelings, for no apparent reason, we must take time to deal with False Guilts. Living the Spirit-controlled life means effectively dealing with False Guilts. We must look at both the causes and the cure, in our treatment of false guilts. There is comfort for the people of God!

"Father, help me to distinguish between real and false guilts in my life. Help me to expose myself to the cleansing blood of Christ when I am truly guilty of sin, and to the comforting presence of Christ when I am needlessly swallowed up in unfounded guilt feelings."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will commit my accusing conscience to the verdict of the cleansing blood of Christ and the comforting presence of the Spirit.

THE CONDEMNATORY VOICE OF AN OVERLY-SENSITIVE CONSCIENCE

Among the many causes of false guilts is the condemnatory voice of an overly-sensitive conscience, seeking to accuse, even though there is no Biblical or objective basis for such condemnation. Sometimes this overly-sensitive conscience is developed in one's childhood. Children can develop notions and impressions that some things are wrong or evil, even though the things which are producing guilt feelings are not wrong at all. Such false guilts need to be thrown aside and a new confidence with God and man regained. God is greater than human ideas and notions, and in God's sovereign love and mercy He will calm human doubts and deliver from false guilts.

Perhaps a few illustrations will help make this point clear. Some have said that sex feelings are sinful or that attraction to the beauty of the opposite sex is sinful. These feelings and attractions are not lust or sin but are part of our normal, healthy life - everybody has them. Lust is sin, but not sexual attraction.

Some have imposed false guilt on conscientious persons by saying that self-love is sinful. Self-love is not sinful! Self-love is assumed in Christ's commandment to love one's neighbor as one's self. To act as if you had no self-love is to act dishonestly. Self-centered love is sinful, but not self-love. Loving Christ supremely, you are to love yourself subordinately and others sincerely. But to love others sincerely, you must love yourself truly. You need not feel guilty because you love yourself!

Some have imposed false guilts on teenagers by saying that ambivalent feelings by teenagers toward parents is wrong. During adolescent development, it is normal for young people to experience ambivalent feelings towards parents at times, for these feelings are part of the unconscious struggling for adult status and independence.

Writes J. B. Phillips, "All religions, Christianity unfortunately not excepted, tend to excite in certain people an artificial sense of guilt, which may have little or no connection with a man's actual standing before God. Probably Pharisaism, which Christ attacked with bitter scorn, represents this tendency at its highest... The danger of such a system, and the reason why Christ attacked it so violently, is that its values are artificial. The proud and correct feel 'right with God' just when they are not, and the sensitive humble man feels hopeless and overburdened for the wrong reasons." (The Newborn Christian; pg 174) As C. S. Lewis says, "We may create scruples. And scruples are always a bad thing - if only because they usually distract us from real duties." (The Joyful Christian; pg 170)

"Father, awaken my conscience to discern the sinfulness of real sin and the innocency of manmade scruples. Help me to deposit in the moral wastebasket all false guilts which are robbing me of peace of mind and joy in living. I want to live abundantly!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Son has made me free, therefore I will not burden myself today with the needless baggage of false guilts!

LEARNING TO PRACTICE SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Many feel guilty because they cannot accept themselves. Some sincere believers cannot accept themselves because their overly-sensitive conscience has been wrongly trained to condemn them. The conscience, by itself, is not always a reliable guide to determine right or wrong actions or attitudes. The conscience simply stands guard over the values that one puts into his moral nature, and therefore the conscience itself cannot determine the objective rightness or wrongness of a moral value. One must refer to an objective moral standard (a standard not dependent upon cultural, social, or personal preferences) to determine the actual rightness or wrongness of moral values.

Where does one find the right moral values to feed into his moral nature, over which the conscience merely stands guard? The Holy Scriptures, carefully applied to the believers' mind by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit applies those Scriptures to one's life through the channels of prayer and meditation and counsel. One must always evaluate his conscience to determine the source of its training - whether or not the trainer of the conscience is reliable. It is important to look to Jesus, rather than primarily to others, for a standard for Personal Convictions. (See Romans 14:5,22)

Some believers have a hard time accepting themselves because of a sense of personal unworthiness in light of the great personal sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. There are those believers who feel guilty because they know they are partly responsible for Jesus' death on the cross. To counter this false guilt (if it can be called that), one must recognize that he is made worthy and acceptable 'in the Beloved' and he has been made an inheritor of the riches of grace. In response to these unspeakable blessings, let him be full of gratitude and full of good works (Titus 2:14), not full of guilt and self-despising.

Some feel guilty because of their failure to live up to someone else's expectations, or because of failure to live up to their own expectations. "Much of our tension and anxiety can be traced directly to a fear of inadequacy. We should meet this fear... by learning to accept ourselves. We probably are Not adequate for all our ambitious schemes, and only at the cost of enormous nervous energy can we succeed in becoming momentarily what we really are not... Suppose we accept ourselves good-humoredly, realizing our limitations and how much we have to learn, with cheerfulness and without envy of those who are, or appear to be, more adequate than ourselves." (The Newborn Christian; pg 129; J. B. Phillips)

"Father, deliver me from the self-imposed tyranny of forcing unrealistic expectations upon myself and of pursuing overly ambitious plans which are the inventions of my own unsanctified imagination. My perfectionist standards have caused undue strain and drain in me, inflicting in me needless guilt and causing me needless envy of others whose attainments are higher than mine. Give me a faith, sane estimate of myself and of my abilities and potential."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The gift of God's peace can only be received when I have ridden myself of my over-mastering desire to appear bigger than I really am!

LIVING IN 'EARTHEN VESSELS'

Because the treasure of God's salvation is contained in 'earthen vessels', the emotions of even Christians can play tricks on them. Christians are not exempt from bouts with depression caused by physical and mental weariness. Believers must remember that they were not saved by their feelings, nor do they remain saved by their feelings! We walk by faith, not by sight or by feelings! Therefore we must not gauge our spiritual lives by the tone of our feelings. We must continue to live by faith, based upon the commitment of the will, and not live by emotions which are greatly influenced by changing circumstances and by changing health.

"Many of the greatest saints have witnessed to the fact that there were times in their lives when it seemed that they had no faith at all. They tell us that Francis Asbury used to preach with great unction and power, and then go to his room and have spells of melancholy until he would feel that he was lost and there was no hope for him at all. Now this feeling came from the fact that his body was exhausted and his nerves frayed.

"I think that the same thing must have been true with Elijah when he went off under the juniper tree and had such a spell of the blues. It was the physical reaction that came after his great conflict with evil on Mt. Carmel. His spiritual condition was not changed, for God went out to him and helped him." (Earthen Vessels; pg 44,45; John Church)

How can one counter problems of guilt feelings, because of weariness? First, get rest. Such a person in this state needs not to struggle in prayer, but he needs to sleep and rebuild his body, or perhaps to re-create himself through exercise and leisure. Second, this person needs to keep living by faith, not by feelings. "If you expect to live by your feelings, you will find yourself in a constant state of doubt and uncertainty and you will always live an up-and-down life. You will find that your feelings fluctuate and go up and down like a window shade, but thank God that does not have to be true of your spiritual state and standing in Jesus. The fact that you are in Jesus Christ is a fact that was established by a deliberate choice of your will, and that fact can only be changed in one way, and that is by a choice of your will." (Ibid; pg 45,46)

"Jesus, Thou are all compassion. Amidst my changing emotions, you remain steadfast and faithful to me. In my sadness, you are my gladness; in my loneliness, you are my companionship; in my depression, you are my hope; in my sinning, you are my forgiveness. Amidst the changes and chances of life, your resources are infinite to meet all my needs! I am profoundly thankful!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My faith is fixed on the fact of God's trustworthy character - a fact that keeps my feelings intact!

'THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN'

In Revelation 12:10, Satan is called 'the accuser of the brethren who accuses them before our God day and night.' Satan is able to disguise himself as 'an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11:14). Satan is the accuser of the brethren, who appears at times as an angel of light - seeking to produce a condemning conscience in the Christian. This is one of the common sources of 'false guilts'. Satan enjoys accusing the believer of things of which he is not guilty!

Believers can be thankful that against this darkening, confusing, subtle force stands the powerful and merciful Spirit of God who comforts believers and who stills the accusing voice of Satan.

The Scriptures tell us how to counter this dreadful accusation of Satan: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." (Rev. 12:11)

Satan hates the blood of Christ, for it is Christ's blood which cleanses from all sin. (1 John 1:7) Satan also hates the testimony of the humble believer, for that testimony declares Christ's power - the very power that will ultimately vanquish Satan altogether!

In speaking of Satan, there are two traps to avoid. First, it is possible not to take Satan seriously at all. There are those who outrightly deny his existence, which is a great and dangerous mistake! There are others who are ignorant of his evil devices, and thus they are often entrapped in his subtle snares. Paul warned us not to be ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Cor. 2:11). There are others who believe that if they never think of Satan or mention Satan by name that Satan will leave them alone. All of these responses are responses which show that the persons involved are not taking Satan seriously.

There is a second trap to avoid in dealing with Satan. It is possible to be overly-preoccupied with Satan. Someone wisely said, "What gets your attention, gets you!" Don't give credit to Satan if you can help it! Don't give Satan undue attention by talking too much or too often about him. Don't focus your attention or interest on Satan; instead, focus your attention on Jesus Christ! Glance at Satan but gaze on Jesus Christ! Recognize that while Satan's power abounds, Jesus' power superabounds! Be knowledgeable of Satan's tactics, but be more knowledgeable of the Holy Spirit's works! Never forget that you do not work for a victory, but that you work from a victory - a victory which was won on the cross and through the empty tomb!

"Father, help me to distinguish between your voice of true conviction of real sin in my life, from Satan's disguised voice of false accusations. Help me to arm myself with the Word of God and learn to resist the devil, as I remain steadfast in the faith. Victory is mine, through the Lord Jesus Christ! Thank you. Thank you!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Satan's head has been crushed! Satan's death sentence has been pronounced and his execution date has been set! He is a defeated foe!

THE BASIS OF CONFIDENCE

Listen to the apostle John's wise advice: "My children, let us love not merely in theory or in words - let us love in sincerity and in practice! This is how we shall know that we are children of the truth and can reassure ourselves in the sight of God, even if our own conscience makes us feel guilty. For God is greater than our conscience, and he knows everything." (1 John 3:18-20 Phillips)

Notes John Stott, "The suggestion seems to be (from verse 20) that it may not be either an unusually or an infrequent experience for the Christian's serene assurance to be disturbed. Sometimes the accusations of our 'conscience' will be true accusations, and sometimes they will be false... In either case, the inner voice is not to overcome us." (Tyndale Bible Commentary; The Epistles of John; pg 145)

Stott continues, "Our conscience is by no means infallible; its condemnation may often be unjust. We can, therefore, appeal from our conscience to God who is greater and more knowledgeable. Indeed, He knows all things, including our secret motives and deepest resolves, and, it is implied, will be more merciful towards us than our own heart. His omniscience should relieve, not terrify, us. So it is knowledge which alone can quieten the condemning heart, our own knowledge of our sincere love for others and supremely God's knowledge of our thoughts and motives. Stronger than any chemical tranquillizer is trust in our all-knowing God." (Ibid; pg 146)

The one who experiences the divinely-imparted love can be assured that he is of the Truth, and therefore he can have a tranquil heart. "It is the mind's knowledge by which the heart's doubts may be silenced... Love is the final objective test of our Christian profession, for true love, in the sense of self-sacrifice, is not natural to man in his fallen state. Its existence in any man is evidence of new birth and of the indwelling Spirit, and it shows itself 'indeed'. 'There are actual things we can point to - not things we have professed or felt or imagined or intended, but things that we have done.' (Law) If we thus love 'in truth' (v. 18), we may indeed have full assurance in our hearts. 'The fruit of love is confidence.' (Wescott)." (Ibid; pg 145,146)

Suppose the condemnation which you feel is because of real sin in your life, and is not the result of false guilt? Then recognize that the Sovereign mercy and love of God is still 'greater than your heart' (1 John 3:20). God knows your heart and can judge rightly. Whatever the source of condemnation - be it false guilt or real guilt - God is greater than the condemnation and can restore the believer to true confidence!

"Father, restore unto me the joy of my salvation. You are the source of my joy, for you are the solution to the problem of my guilty feelings which have stolen away my joy. You came to earth, not to condemn, but to save - to save me from the real guilt of my sins and from the false guilts resulting from my inadequacies. Thank you for your total provision!

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who is greater than my heart will stand guard over my heart, delivering me from all guilt - both real and false!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM FALSE GUILTS'

1. In thinking of the subject of 'guilt', three classes of people come to mind. Name those three classes, and briefly tell what the basic need of each of those three is.
2. Are you sometimes plagued with 'guilt feelings' for no apparant reasons? How do you cope with such feelings?
3. Do you believe that it pleases God for believers to feel guilty? Why? or Why Not?
4. Name and describe some of the false guilts which believers have had imposed upon them, and share how you would help such believers to identify and to cope with such false guilts.
5. What are scruples and why are scruples always a bad thing.
6. Why is the conscience not always a reliable guide to determine right or wrong actions or attitudes?
7. Where can one find the right moral values to feed into his moral nature, by which he may determine what is really right and wrong?
8. How can one effectively deal with his sense of inadequacy, the feeling of which brings guilty feelings?
9. What is the relationship between 'Feelings, Faith, Fact' in living the Christian life and in dealing with guilt feelings?
10. How can one distinguish between feelings which are the result of false guilts and real guilts, especially in light of the fact that Satan is 'the accuser of the bretheren' (Revelation 12:10) and is able to incite feelings of guilt?
11. When one's conscience condemns him, what should he do in order to see his confidence restored (according to I John 3:18-24)?
12. If, as a believer, one recognizes that he has actually and really sinned, thus incurring guilt, what should he do, according to I John 1:9 - 2:2?
13. Share a personal experience in which you found wonderful victory over either a false guilt of a real guilt.

CHAPTER 3

FREEDOM FROM TERRORIZING FEARS

CONQUERING FEAR THROUGH FAITH

Fears of all kinds plague millions of individuals. In psalms 34 there are two kinds of fears mentioned. One is a fear that is harmful, for the Psalmist rejoices that God has delivered him from it. There are many varieties of harmful fears, all of which the Psalms declare, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Ps. 34:4) Later in this same Psalm, the Psalmist speaks of a fear that is wholesome and helpful - the fear of the Lord (Ps. 34:7,9,11). The fear of the Lord is a reverential fear - a respect and honor of Divinity.

Fear, like love, is a basic emotion of man which can be either helpful or harmful, depending upon what the object of fear is. There are fears which are helpful to man. "Fear in the form of caution has been one of man's stoutest allies in the long development of our race... Fear, moreover, is a guardian of morality... Fear has moved man to some of the greatest discoveries he ever made. Fear of the dark led him to make the candle, the oil lamp, and the electric light. Fear of pain pressed him on to the discovery of anesthetics. Fear of disease drove him to discover or devise the healing drugs." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 81) There are also many harmful fears, such as the fear of the future, the fear of failure, or the fear of death.

It is that fear which is harmful and destructive that we want to consider for the next several days. The Psalmist makes it clear in the Psalm which you read today that the way to overcome destructive fear is to trust in the Lord. We must conquer fear through faith (See Psalm 34:5,8,10,15,22).

Faith releases, but fear ties up. Faith in God releases one, but terrifying fear of God ties on up. Faith in the character and nature of God releases one from despair and convinces one that life is inherently good. He who believes that God is who the Bible says He is - a God of infinite love, wisdom, and power - is the person who sees Reality as ordained for good purposes and not for bad purposes. Thus, his whole outlook on life is positive and happy. On the other hand, he who sees God as one to be avoided and feared is the one who has a most dismal and terrifying outlook on life. Luther was only released from his terrifying fear of God and the consequent terror of life that it produced, when he came to his experience of justification by faith. Faith in God liberated him from his false conception of God and of life in general. Reverential fear is always appropriate when we approach God (Matthew 10:28, I Peter 1:17, Proverbs 9:10), but terrorizing fear of God only shows that our love for God is not yet perfected (I John 4:18).

"God, to the extent that I put my faith in you, to that same extent am I delivered from my terrorizing fears. I ask two requests today: that I might be filled with reverential respect for you and that I might be emptied of terrorizing fear of you. Release me from my dismal fear and capture me with your bright love. In Jesus' name, Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God is love - He wants what is best for me!
God is wisdom - He knows that is best for me!
God is power - He can give what is best for me!

FAITH RELEASES - FEAR TIES UP!

We said yesterday that faith releases, but fear ties up. This is a principle that applies to all relationships in life - whether that relationship is with God, or with nature, or with other people, or with one's self. One who believes that God is a God of perfect love, wisdom, and power, is one who has been released from the bondage of fear.

Think of this principle as it relates to one's relationship with Nature. Faith in Nature releases one to new discoveries while terrifying fear of Nature limits one in his experiences of new discoveries. All of man's discoveries in nature have depended upon man's faith in the predictability and consistency of Nature's Laws. Even before the planet Uranus was actually discovered, it's position in the sky was predicted on the basis of man's faith in the Law of Gravitation. On the other hand, terrifying fear of nature kept man for centuries from discovering Nature's secrets and using them for his advantage.

This principle applies to one's relationship with other people. Faith in people releases one, but fear of people ties one up. Fear of people causes suspicion, hate, betrayal, and war, but faith in people builds strong and enduring relationships. The foundation of peace is faith in people, while the foundation of war is suspicion and fear.

Faith in self releases oneself, but fear of self ties one up. The poised, positive and contributive person is the person who has faith in himself. The insecure, inferior, defeated person is the person who has lost faith in himself and has come to fear himself. Faith in oneself releases one to realize his fullest potential, but fear of self thwarts one's abilities and stunts one's growth. Many who have an inability to be alone, and yet an insecurity among people, are plagued with fear - the fear of self. Such are often defeated in the face of problems because the center of their personality - Self - is not intact. It was to such individuals that Christ so graciously ministered, inspiring confidence and imparting self-respect.

Further, faith is natural while fear is unnatural. "Fear is not my native land; faith is. I am so made that worry and anxiety are sand in the machinery of life; faith is oil. I live better by faith and confidence than by fear and doubt and anxiety. In anxiety and worry my being is gasping for breath - these are not my native air. But in faith and confidence I breathe freely - these are my native air... The need of faith is not something imposed on us dogmatically, but it is written in us intrinsically. We cannot live without it. To live by worry is to live against Reality." (Abundant Living; E.S. Johnes; pg. 85)

"Father, I am inwardly constructed to live by faith, not by fear. Fear paralyzes me, while faith relaxes me. I can breathe more deeply, see more clearly, feel more intensely, when living by faith. Every nerve, tissue, and brain cell in me is made for faith, not for fear. Help me to walk by faith, not by fear. In Jesus' name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I must live by faith if I expect to live a long and abundant life!

THE PARALYZING POWER OF FEAR

Faith is contributive but fear is destructive in problem-solving. To have problems is not a sign of weakness. Norman Vincent Peale says somewhere, "Problems constitute a sign of life. I would go so far as to say that the more problems you have, the more alive you are." What is a sign of weakness is encountering problems with fear instead of with faith. To look at a problem with faith is to attack the problem and find and carry out a workable solution.

Fear in the face of a problem not only blocks one in finding a solution to the problem, but fear can actually complicate the problem. Fear over an imaginary problem can create a real problem. "A school teacher was suffering from heart trouble, her heart beating so loud and rapidly that at the least effort it 'seemed to jump out of her body.' The doctors could find no physical reason for her heart condition, but they discovered that she was worried over a lump in her breast; she was sure cancer was developing there. When she was assured that there was no lump and no cancer, she went home happy and relieved. The heart became normal, and she is happy and efficient in her work. The fear and worry had caused functional disturbance. The disturbance was real, but it had been caused by an unreal fear." (Abundant Living; pg. 86; E.S. Jones)

"An Eastern legend says that a pilgrim met the Plague and asked, 'Where are you going?' The Plague replied: 'I am going to Baghdad to kill five thousand people.' A few days later the pilgrim met the Plague again and charged him with killing fifty thousand instead of five thousand. 'Oh no!' said the Plague, 'I killed only five thousand; the others died of fear.'" (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 82)

Said William James, the famous psychologist, "Our belief at the beginning of a doubtful undertaking is the one thing that assures the successful outcome of any venture." Jesus said, "All things are possible." The Christian must eliminate the word 'impossible' from his vocabulary. "Anxiety is like a magnet. It draws unhappy results to itself. But so also is faith. Indeed faith is a much more powerful magnet, one which draws to itself the most incredible blessings." (Norman Vincent Peale) Like a magnet, faith attracts people because faith in a man creates a winsome personality, while fear repels people because fear produces a withdrawn and self-centered personality. Faith solidifies relationships and makes one other-centered. On the other hand, fear and suspicion of others destroys relationships and results in a self-centered life. The person who lives only for himself will have no one to applaud him but himself!

"Father, heal me of the paralysis of fear, and help me to rise and walk straight into the face of life's challenges and problems, not with a screwed-up courage of my own but with a Spirit-wrought trust. I am calm in the calmness of Christ!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: There is no problem too big but what Christ's power is bigger yet! I intend to tap that power today!

"NEVER TAKE COUNSEL OF YOUR FEARS"

It takes real intelligence and effort to live by faith and courage. It is not hard to succumb to one's problems and to yield to one's fears. Norman Vincent Peale tells the story of General Stonewall Jackson. "One night during the Civil War Jackson was in conference with his generals. He was planning a daring sortie in the Shenandoah Valley. It was a brilliant plan, strategically. The odds were high, but the possibility of success existed. Only a genius could have conceived it and carried it through. At the conclusion of the meeting one of Jackson's generals said timorously, 'But, General Jackson, I'm afraid of this. I fear we can't quite carry it off.' Jackson, so the story goes, arose, put his hand on his subordinate's shoulder, and said, 'Never take counsel of your fears, General. Never take counsel of your fears.' Jackson was a man who took counsel not of fear, but of faith, and faith canceled out fear." (Overcoming Anxiety and Fear; pg. 16)

It is easy to take counsel of one's fears, and hard at times to take the road of faith. Practically speaking, how can we use faith to cancel out our fears? We must try to answer this question, both today and tomorrow.

First, face fear and determine to overcome it. "An old cowboy said he had learned life's most important lesson from Hereford cows. All his life he had worked cattle ranches where winter storms took a heavy toll among the herds. Freezing rains whipped across the prairies. Howling, bitter winds piled snow into enormous drifts. Temperatures might drop quickly to below-zero degrees. Flying ice cut into the flesh. In this maelstrom of nature's violence most cattle would turn their backs to the icy blasts and slowly drift downwind, mile upon mile. Finally, intercepted by a boundary fence, they would pile up against the barrier and die by the scores. But the Herefords acted differently. Cattle of this breed would instinctively head into the windward end of the range. There they would stand shoulder-to-shoulder facing the storm's blast, heads down against its onslaughts. 'You most always found the Herefords alive and well', said the cowboy. 'I guess that is the greatest lesson I ever learned on the prairies - just face life's storms.'" (Overcoming Anxiety and Fear; pg. 7) Theodore Roosevelt one time wisely said, "I have often been afraid, but I wouldn't give in to it. I made myself act as though I was not afraid, and gradually my fear disappeared." Joshua was doubtless afraid when the leadership over the Israelites was placed in his hands, following Moses' death, but God spoke to Joshua and alleviated his fears: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9 NIV)

"Father, what have I to fear when I know that you are right beside me, protecting me, correcting me, and guiding me through both life's troubles and life's triumphs! Like Joshua, with added responsibilities, give me added courage to obey and strength to follow you."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will listen today to the calm voice of faith, not to the clammering voice of fear!

USING FAITH TO CANCEL OUT FEARS

How can we use faith to cancel out our fears? We said yesterday that we must first face fear and determine to overcome it. Secondly, after facing fears, we must find out why we have these fears. This involves serious, objective thinking. Use the reasoning quality of the mind to attack the illusive emotion of fear. If necessary, list the fears individually and pray about each one individually. In seeking to understand the cause of certain fears, it may be necessary to seek the counsel of a wise friend or minister. Self-knowledge can lead to a cure. Try to identify those fears, for instance, which originate in your early childhood, fears that have long been suppressed in the subconscious mind.

Third, we must constantly affirm our faith in Jesus' power to overcome our fears. Relax, let go of your fears, and let God constantly fill you with His power and poise. God conquered all fears on the cross and through the Resurrection, and He is able to impart the benefits of that victory to you. You must be relaxed and receptive. "Do not go skulking through life, being timorous and afraid. Say to yourself, and mean it: 'In the name of God and by the power of Jesus Christ I hereby stand up to my fears with faith. I am no longer afraid.' If you do not weaken, your fears one by one will finally slink away. But you must be vigilant. If you let down your faith, your fears will try to return. You have given hospitality to them for so long that they feel at home in your mind. Sadly, you may even miss them. But deliberately become obstinate, gloriously obstinate. Tell yourself that with God's help you will not let them come back. Keep filling your mind so full of faith that there will no longer be any room for fears." (Faith Builders; Peale; pg. 20,21)

Fourth, practice faith every day in order to defeat your fears. Make faith affirmations during difficult circumstances, such as "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13) Remember that He is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worked in us." (Eph. 3:20) Exercise yourself daily in faith meditations. One man who was haunted for a long time with fears and insecurities, read through the Bible underlining in red pencil every statement relative to courage and confidence. Engage daily in faith prayers. Stretch your faith a little every day by asking God for a few things that seem impossible. Associate with people of faith. Involve yourself in faith actions and projects. This will enlarge your faith and drive away fears faster than almost anything else, for faith in action is God in action. To see God work miracles through your life, action will make your faith grow by leaps and bounds!

"Give me both knowledge of the source of my fears and determination to overcome my fears. Help me to affirm constant faith in Jesus' power to overcome my every fear. Help me to practice faith affirmations, faith meditations, faith prayers, faith associations, and faith projects. Then I shall become a man of faith!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When fear comes knocking on my heart's door, I will send Jesus to the door!

FACING THE FEAR OF FAILURE

Terrifying fear in the face of a problem or a responsibility can contribute to failure. "More people than might be supposed are deeply troubled by the fear of failure. It is a dangerous fear to have working against you, for it can cause the personality to freeze and therefore induce the very failure you fear." (Overcoming Anxiety and Fear; Peale; pg. 25)

Faith contributes to success. Jesus said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." The man of faith must eliminate the word "impossible" from his vocabulary. Let what William James said be implanted in our minds: "Our belief at the beginning of a doubtful undertaking is the one thing that assures the successful outcome of any venture."

Failure is almost certain in one form or another to come to all persons, but, depending upon how we react to failure, failure can be a means of exercising faith or of becoming more fearful. Many there have been who, after experiencing failure, were simply spurred on to increased effort which led eventually to a greater success than what they would have had if they never had experienced defeat. I recall one friend's attempts to have his writings published with so many failures that he had made a scrapbook of 'reject slips' from publishing companies. He persisted, year after year, and finally was successful in having nearly ten of his books published! It is said that 'Babe Ruth' struck out more times than he hit home runs!

How should we react to our fears of failure? Work and keep working, in spite of the fear of failure. Consistent involvement will not only reduce the fear of failure, but such involvement will bring the possibilities of success closer to reality! Says Norman Vincent Peale, "Honestly admit your fear and then act as though you were unafraid - and with the help of God go on and do your job with total neglect of fear. You will make the grade with the Lord's kindly help."

Failure and success must not be the main consideration in confronting a task, but rather faithfulness in carrying out God's commands. There have been great missionaries who have labored for many years with very little apparent or visible success. Says John Wesley: "On every occasion of uneasiness we should retire to prayer, that we may give place to the grace and light of God, and then form our resolutions without being in pain about what success they may have." (Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection; pg. 130) "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (I Corinthians 15:58 NIV)

"Father, deliver me from the fear of failure. When my terrestrial look is dark and forbidding, let me be assured that your celestial look is always bright and inviting. Your causes cannot fail, so when my cause is identified with your cause, I too cannot fail!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Love never fails, regardless of the tangible results of my loving!

FACING THE UNKNOWN FUTURE

The unknown creates fears in many, and yet the fact of not knowing the future can add zest and anticipation to life. Who would want to know every detail of the future? It is an act of God's mercy to veil the future. If we knew the details of the future, we might become both complacent regarding effort and terrified regarding problems.

When Jesus said, "Take no thought for tomorrow" He did not forbid legitimate planning for the future. What He did forbid was hurtful worry in regards to the morrow.

What should be the relationship between the present and the future? First, the Christian must exercise faith in a God who is all-wise (He knows what is best), all-loving (He wants to give what is best), and all-powerful (He is able to give what is best).

Secondly, the Christian must claim the promise that Paul gave to young timorous Timothy: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (II Timoth 1:7) God gives the Christian power to cope with any circumstance of life. God gives the Christian love - love that is centered on others and love that is centered on God. The more that one becomes preoccupied with others, the less one becomes preoccupied with self. The less one becomes preoccupied with self, the less one is fearful of the future. God also gives the Christian wisdom in dealing with circumstances that will arise - be those circumstances favorable or unfavorable. God will open your mouth and put the words in your mouth to meet the challenging situations of life.

Thirdly, act with confidence, living life to the fullest today, planning reasonably for tomorrow, but not worrying about tomorrow. The God who took care of you in the past is the same God who is able to take care of you in the future. Take one day at a time. Don't borrow trouble from tomorrow. Divide and conquer. "Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day." (Matthew 6:34 Phillips)

Fourth, close each day thanking God for that day and open each new day with a prayer for guidance. "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God." Let that be your motto for life. Praise and confidence drives away fears!

Fifth, remember that love casts out all fear (I John 4:18) "Love delivers from self-attention, gives you other-attention; and therefore love, not faith, is the method of getting rid of fear. For love produces faith as a by-product of that love. You are not afraid of people you love." (Christian Maturity; E.S. Jones; pg. 230)

"Father, help me to live one day at a time, reflecting on the past to learn and planning for the future to prosper, but never becoming guilt-ridden because of the past or terror-stricken because of the future. Let me feel your comforting hand on my shoulder and see your guiding finger charting my future course in life. Calm my fears and help me to rest secure in your love."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who holds the unknown future in His mighty hands is He who holds my hand today!

CONQUERING THE FEAR OF DEATH

Norman Vincent Peale, in his book 'Overcoming Anxiety and Fear', relates a most interesting story of a woman who faced what she thought was impending death with trust and calmness!

"Eleven minutes after take-off our beautiful high shiny jet went into a nosedive. We were 249,000 pounds hurtling through space. We went into the dive at 19,000 feet and forty seconds later the Captain pulled us out of it a 5,000 feet - just eight seconds before we would have crashed! As we pulled out of the dive the No. 3 engine tore out of the wing and fell to earth. No. 4 was hanging on by a few bolts. We lost most of our hydraulic fluid and a lot of electrical power. Several other mechanical failures developed. But our Captain landed that powerful plane at an emergency field as gently as one would handle a newborn baby. If eggs had lined the runway they would hardly have been damaged. It was truly the greatest miracle I shall ever experience. When we started to encounter turbulence I ran to my jump seat in the tail of the plane but was thrown off balance. I grabbed onto a shelf as we nosed over. At first I just couldn't believe it was happening. I knew our pilots were superbly skilled. I felt certain they would pull us out of it. But it was an unmistakable fact: we were smoothly and quietly plunging through space. I became very close to God when I accepted this. I felt no fear. I thought of a beloved aunt who every night says a little prayer for me. I thought how happy I was to have been even a small part of my church. I thought how strongly I had endorsed the power of positive thinking and the Golden Rule. At no time did I experience fear. I was so happy about my life including religion. I did tell God there were so many things I wanted to do yet. I wanted to stay just a little while longer. I said, 'Lord, I never got my happy marriage and my happy family.' But we were still hurtling downward and I reluctantly terminated my conversation with God. I accepted the fact that we would be blown to bits upon impact. I added a little P.S. to God: 'If this is the way You want it, Lord, I guess this is the way it's going to be.'" Then suddenly the plane righted! Jackie could hardly believe her senses. "But it was real. We were flying merrily along on a level!" Later this woman told Dr. Peale, "I found in this terrible experience that by positive thinking and right living from day to day you can develop an inner condition that will sustain you through life's worst ordeals and roughest moments." (pg. 14-16)

Wrote John Bunyan, "Let dissolution come when it will, it can do the Christian no harm, for it be but a passage out of a prison into a palace."

"Father, help me daily to build up my faith in you, so that when the winds blow and the storms threaten, I will have a strong backlog of faith to draw upon. When physical death finally overtakes me, let me see the gates of heaven open wide for my entrance! In Jesus' conquering name! Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Placing my faith in the Deathless One, I shall never die! (John 11:26)

ASSURANCE IN THE FACE OF DEATH

Allow me to share a very intimate experience with you. On August 14, 1981, my brother's 15-year-old daughter tragically died as a result of an accident. Needless to say, my brother was deeply grief-stricken as a result of this unspeakably great loss. Two weeks later, on August 29, 1981, my brother had an unusual vision of his daughter, Sharla. The following account, written by my brother, describes that unusual vision.

"I have never in my life had an experience like this one. I have never experienced such intensity... First, I heard Sharla's voice. Her voice was clear, but seemed to be coming from far away. She was saying in her beautiful, distinct voice, 'Hello, dad. Hello, daddy. It's me -- Sharla.' Then, I saw Sharla. Sharla was absolutely beautiful and striking. She was healthy, and so totally alive. And most striking of all was something I can only describe as an 'essence' -- a halo of luminous light -- a 'glow' -- surrounding her entire body. She seemed to be 'floating' -- so gracefully, without any rush; just totally there, yet so distinctly different and beautiful...

"Sharla said, 'Hi, dad. I can only stay for awhile; then I have to leave again. I have come back to say how very much I love you. I want to lie between you and Marsha' (her younger sister). Sharla then kissed, hugged, caressed, and expressed her love to Marsha and to me. She said, 'Daddy, don't be sad; I love you, daddy. I must go now. I love you daddy...' And then Sharla, in all her perfect beauty 'floated' off to Heaven.

"At that point I awoke screaming and screaming... 'Sharla! Oh, Sharla! I love you, Sharla. Oh, Sharla! I love you. Sharla, I want to go with you! Sharla! Sharla!!! And then she was gone...

"I was screaming out loud -- over and over again -- for Sharla. I was totally shaken! I don't understand what happened; it seemed so totally real. Whatever it was, I am totally grateful to God. I shall never forget how alive, how totally healthy and beautiful Sharla was. How gracefully happy she was with eternity -- yet how thoughtful and kind and beautiful she was to express her love and affection to Marsha and to me.

"We serve a perfect and loving God. How I love you, Jesus. Thank you for the assurance that I will see Sharla in all her glory again some day in eternity. Thank you, Sharla. I love you -- and I am homesick for Heaven."

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them... He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21:3-4)

"Father, I thank you for your gift of unspeakable joy which I can experience even amidst life's overwhelming tragedies. You are the God of all comfort who comforts me in all my sorrows. Thank you for destroying all my enemies, even my greatest enemy of all - death. My faith is in a deathless Saviour!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and who gave Himself for me - in order that I may never taste eternal death!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM TERRORIZING FEARS'

1. Is fear, in and of itself, a right or wrong emotion? Why or why not?
2. How can one distinguish between a helpful and a harmful fear? Name examples of both.
3. According to Psalms 34, what is the basic way to conquer fears?
4. What is the difference between a reverential fear of God and a terrorizing fear of God?
5. In terms of one's relationship with God, with nature, with other people, and with one's own self, show how the principle 'Faith releases, but fear ties up' works out.
6. Illustrate what is meant by the principle: "Faith is Natural but Fear is Unnatural".
7. Illustrate how Fear blocks one in finding a solution to one of life's many difficult problems.
8. Do you agree or disagree with William James' statement: "Our belief at the beginning of a doubtful undertaking is the one thing that assures the successful outcome of any venture." Why or why not? Can you illustrate this principle from an experience in your own life?
9. Share an experience from your life when you found it easy to take counsel of your fears and hard to take the road of faith.
10. Share an experience in your life when you found victory over a difficult problem in your life because you exercised faith in God.
11. Practically speaking, how can you use faith to cancel out your fears.
12. How have you learned to cope with the 'fear of failure'?
13. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement by John Wesley: "On every occasion of uneasiness we should retire to prayer, that we may give place to the grace and light of God, and then form our resolutions without being in pain about what success they may have."
14. What are the most effective ways in dealing with the 'fear of the future'?
15. What Scriptural help have you found in overcoming the 'fear of death'?

CHAPTER 4

FREEDOM FROM INFERIORITY COMPLEXES

THE ENEMY OF INFERIORITY

Face inferiorities for what they are - enemies! Inferiority feelings are enemies that hinder in creativity. We are made by God to be creative and anything that hinders in that creative process is an enemy. Some foolishly mistake inferiority with humility. A grave mistake, for inferiority is an enemy of creativity while humility is the source of creativity.

What is humility? Humility is a sane estimate of yourself in the light of God and in the light of other people. Looking at self in the light of God should lead to neither boasting or to despair, but instead to gratitude. "Your dignity arises solely from your relationship to God. How can the child of a King feel inferior? How can a blood-bought sinner be proud?" (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 80)

Looking at yourself in the light of others should lead neither to inferiority or to boasting, but to humble cooperation. The humble person has a sane estimate of himself and a sane estimate of others. He never considers himself worthless and seldom considers others as geniuses. Rather, he sincerely appreciates others for their person and for their abilities, and truly accepts himself as having real worth. He knows that his abilities and the abilities of others are all God-given. There is no room either for boasting or for despair, but only for joyous cooperation with God and with others as you work together creatively to carry out God's purposes.

Never admit, even to yourself, that you are inferior. For one to say that he is inferior is to tell a lie! God taught Peter - and He would teach us today - to call no man common or unclean (Acts 10). "When Muretus, the poor scholar, was overtaken by sudden sickness centuries ago in the Low Countries, he was picked up out of the gutter and carried into a hospital. It never crossed the mind of the two young surgeons standing by the table on which he had been laid that this mud-stained, ill-clad boor could understand a word of their conversation, for they were talking in Latin. The theme of their discussion was a certain dangerous operation which was just being mooted in Europe, and with a sudden inspiration, one of the surgeons nodded toward Muretus and said to his colleague: 'Shall we try the experiment on this worthless creature?' But Muretus had understood every word. Who better? Nor did he say, 'I am a scholar and a gentleman. You can't do that to me!' In polished Latin he said to those startled youths: 'Will you call that man worthless for whom Christ dies?' That is the ground of our worth: the solid, sufficient, and only basis of it. And it is the same for everyone. We were dear enough to have shed the sacred blood." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 77)

"Father, help me to see that to call myself inferior is not merely a weakness that causes great damage to myself, but that it is a sin against my Creator. To devalue myself is to devalue the highest product of your creation and the purchase of Christ's redemption. Help me to accept and to love myself."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I am of infinite worth to God. He does not love me 'for something', but for myself alone!

ACCEPTING YOUR PERSONAL UNIQUENESS

Some who are told not to be inferior swing from one extreme to another - from inferior feelings to egotistical feelings. If man is not to feel inferior, neither is he to feel superior. Some people are possessed with illusions of grandeur - living in a fantasy world in which they are the center of power and influence! "A father said to his daughter who had been slipping in her achievements: 'You are not the least bit inferior.' To which the girl replied: 'No, the fact is, I'm superior in many things.'" (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 105) This girl had failed to find a sane estimate of her abilities. A disciplined goal is the product of a sane estimate of yourself, a mark of true humility. We are neither a worm or a wonder, only an ordinary person becoming an extraordinary servant of Christ because of the grace of God.

Idolizing others of greater ability, some people are not only experiencing regular rounds of defeat and failure, but are also failing to reach their own potential. "A minister felt that he should do the work of Moody. He prayed hard and worked hard, but no spectacular Moody results came. And then he came to the conclusion that when God got hold of Moody He got hold of a bigger man, and that God expected him to do his own work, not Moody's." (Ibid; pg. 105)

God has made each of us differently and to do different work for Him. Have you yet learned to accept your own personal uniqueness? Your personal individuality is to be seen for its true purpose - to complement the whole work of God. "Everything God has made has its own personal identity. There are billions of leaves but no two have ever been alike. No two raindrops ever have been identical. And no other person has ever been made or ever will be made exactly like you. The print of your finger is different; you think differently, and you look different from any other person that ever lived. One day a sixth-grade teacher asked her class, 'What is here in the world today that was not here fifteen years ago?' She expected the class to tell her of some of the new inventions and discoveries. One little boy held up his hand. 'All right, Johnny,' she said, 'what is here that was not here fifteen years ago? He said, 'Me.'" (Roads to Radiant Living; Charles Allen; pg. 84)

Comparing yourself with others can lead to one of these reactions: feelings of inferiority, feelings of superiority, feelings of jealousy. Seeing yourself properly in light of God and of others results in humility before God and in appreciation for others. Remember, even before you were born, God set you apart for a special purpose (Jeremiah 1:5)

"O God, deliver me from my tendency to compare myself with others, which inevitably causes competitive feelings of strife. Help me to compare myself with myself and with your divinely-revealed potential for me. Then I shall have the joy of becoming Christlike in my upward striving rather than the grief of becoming carnal in my outward striving. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because I am the product of a unique creation, I can accept my personal uniqueness without either inferiority or superiority.

AIM AT A GOD-GIVEN GOAL

It is essential to have a disciplined goal - a product of a sane estimate of yourself. However, a disciplined goal must be formed in the light of God's possibilities for you. Advises Norman Vincent Peale: "Realistically estimate your ability; then raise the estimate ten percent." This is one way of saying that a sane estimate of one's abilities must also be a faith estimate. God is able to make of a person what he is unable to make of himself. Look at yourself, not as other people look at you or as you look at yourself presently, but try to see yourself as what God can make of you. God has a vision of what he wants you to become, and it is on the basis of that vision - as it is progressively made known to you - that you should be setting and resetting your goals.

In setting your own personal goals, always keep God's goals and purposes in mind. The purpose of God in history is the redemption and salvation of all mankind. Get your gaze on God and not primarily on yourself, and your self will automatically be developed. One who loses himself in God and in others not only finds God and others, but he automatically finds himself! But he who majors on finding himself to the exclusion of God and others, not only loses God and others but he ultimately loses himself. Lose yourself in order to find yourself - a divine law of the universe!

It is a law of life that you become like the people whom you constantly look at. If you constantly gaze at God with His love, glory, and holiness, you will finally become Godlike! To get your eyes off of yourself and your inferiorities, you must get your eyes on Christ and lose yourself in His great purposes. One's involvement in God's purposes is one's strength and one's secret to self-fulfillment. Involve yourself totally in God's purposes and your inferiorities will soon be gone!

How can you build self-confidence and get rid of your inferiorities? First, face inferiority feelings for what they are - enemies that hinder in creative endeavors. Never confuse inferiority with humility. Second, never call yourself inferior for you are of infinite value to God, both because of God's unique creation of you and because of Christ's redemption of you on the cross. Third, aim at a disciplined goal - a goal formed on the basis of a sane estimate of your abilities. Fourth, aim at a God-given goal - a goal that is based on a faith estimate of your abilities which are awakened by God's power. Following these simple steps will keep you from either belittling yourself or from boasting of yourself.

"Father, give me a faith, sane estimate of my abilities and help me to use all of my abilities for the glory of Christ and for the good of men. Root out of my mind all self-despisings, and give me a wholesome self-love. If Christ is willing to keep company with me in my heart, I can enjoy keeping company with myself!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because God's power is at work within me, I will accomplish the otherwise unaccomplishable!

SELF-WORTH BASED ON HUMAN EVALUATION

Luke 10:38-42 is a study on 'Self-Worth'. In Martha's case, her self-worth came from her activity, from her performance. As long as others felt good about her achievements, she felt good about herself. In Mary's case, she derived her self-worth from what she saw herself to be before God. Do you find your self-worth as a result of what you see yourself to be before God?

Self-worth based on human evaluation has many drawbacks. If one bases his self-worth on the praise he gets from his peers, he is looking to an unreliable and variable source for support. The praise of peers is changeable and is often based, not on the facts, but upon the whims of changeable people. The praise of peers so often is conditional - 'if you do this, then I will accept you.' There is no 'for better or for worse' commitment to the person himself, but commitment based only upon performance. Jesus himself refused to value himself and his mission on the basis of human evaluation and praise. The person who bases his self-worth on material things will be destroyed for 'the world passes away' (I John 2:17). The Bible tells us not "to set hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy." (I Timothy 6:17)

Don't set your hopes and build your sense of self-esteem on friends, for friends may leave you or forsake you.

Don't build your sense of self-worth on your physical beauty, for such beauty is only 'skin deep' and it fades like the autumn leaves. There are adults still hanging on to the symbols of youth - fads and fashions in clothing - as an attempt to maintain a crumbling sense of self-worth.

Don't set your hopes and build your sense of self-worth on popularity, for the world's popularity is elusive and passing. Writes Sangster, "Fame is the will-o'-the-wisp which beckons others on... Sir Walter Scott achieved it - great, and worthy, and deserved fame - but there was that in him which not all the praise of men could satisfy. When he was dying, he said, 'Bring me the book'. 'The book?' they said. 'What book?' 'There is only ONE book', he answered a little wearily. 'Bring me the Bible.'" (Daily Readings; pg. 90)

If one bases his sense of self-worth upon the evaluation of human categories like we have described, he is left with an aching void. A deep sense of self-worth cannot be found in any of earth's possessions or relationships - however good they may be. Only God can affirm you at the deepest level of your being. There are those who are constantly seeking to be affirmed by others, but who find that even those who are nearest and dearest cannot fill the inner void in their lives. God alone can give one a lasting sense of value.

"O God, help me to hold in the eye of my reverent imagination the picture of the person you mean for me to become. Human evaluation of me is unrealistic, variable, fleeting, and incomplete. Use my sanctified imagination to pull me out of the mire of my inferiority complexes. In Jesus' powerful name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To have the quiet smile of God's approval resting on my life is worth more to me than the applause of all of earth's kings!

SELF-WORTH BASED ON DIVINE EVALUATION

Seeing yourself as God sees you is realistic, for God knows everything about you. One who gains a sense of self-worth from God will have a deep inner happiness, regardless of the outward circumstances, for God's evaluation of a person is unchanging and loving. One who allows God to love him, feels constantly loved, and in turn loveable and loving.

Further, God's evaluation is constant and permanent. As Mary sat at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:39), her self-worth was greatly enhanced, for she learned of God's love which is permanent and unchanging.

We may come boldly before the throne of grace without intimidation, for God's estimate of us will never change. He loves us with 'no strings attached.' His dealings with us are always consistent with his permanent love for us. His constant, unfailing presence and companionship is what gives life value and worth.

Deriving a sense of worth from God, takes care of several things: (1) Deep feelings of inferiority - for you are important to God and loved by God, regardless of what you are and regardless of who you are. You are seen to be so important to God that He gave His Son to die for you personally. Your soul is of more value to God than the value of the entire world's wealth. You are unique - no one else can take your place. You are so important that God knows you by name, knows the number of hairs in your head, and knows your future!

(2) Takes care of Guilt. Your worth is so great to God that God wants you to live as a forgiven, restored, healthy, and happy son of God! You are a soul for whom Christ died! Greater value than that cannot be placed on anyone! He loves you so much that He is willing to cast away your sins in the 'sea of His forgetfulness.'

(3) Takes care of relieving anxiety - because we have one with us who is totally capable and able to deal with all of life's perplexities! You are worth more to God than any other thing in the world, and God has promised to take care of you!

(4) Deals with hostility against one another. We can be relaxed toward one another because we are loved by God. There is no need for carnal competition against one another. You don't need to compete for God's attention, for the Heavenly Father is capable of giving personal attention to each of His many children. God loves you as if you were the only one to be loved in His family!

"O God, pull me out of the mire of my own self-despisings. Let me stand erect before the world, chin up and eyes focused upon you and the needs of others. Surrendering my false ego to you just now, I am willing to allow you to love me. Love me into loving others with the security of a secure ego, cleansed and made whole through the blood of Christ. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will begin this day to build my sense of self-worth upon God's estimate of me!

LEARNING TO DEAL WITH INSECURITY

How do you deal with those terrible feelings of insecurity and inferiority? Become convinced of God's unconditional personal love for you as an individual. Then surrender to God's love for you. No longer hold bitterness toward God! The root cause of insecurity is, as one man said, "rejection of self with an unconscious bitterness toward God for making me the way He did." Begin therefore to look at yourself through God's point of view. No longer hold bitterness toward God for the 'frame' of your life which God gave to you. Instead, transfer your attention to the 'picture' - your soul - which is eternal and redeemable. Your 'frame' includes your personal background, physical appearance, talents, job, money, nationality, parentage - all of which are subject to competition and comparison which can produce insecurity and inferiority feelings. The 'picture' is the inner soul of man which is made for God's fellowship and which is redeemable. Centering on the external and perishable frame will only make you subject to competition and invites insecurity. Why build one's security on the basis of the 'frame' - the perishable qualities - which can be so easily compared with the 'frame' or another, leading to jealousy and ill feelings. Get your focus on Christ and off of others! "If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Then we won't need to look for honors and popularity, which lead to jealousy and hard feelings." (Galatians 5:25-26 Living Bible)

He who accepts God's wisdom in producing a great variety of 'frames' will thank God for his personal limitations as well as his assets. He who accepts God's love, which seeks to be personally applied to each person, learns to replace temporal values with eternal values, and competitiveness with compassion.

How do you maintain your love for God, in light of your persistent imperfections and limitations which you observe in the 'frame' with which He created you? Following our initial and total surrender of ourselves to the great and loving Designer, we must "recognize the fact that God is not finished creating us and that His reputation is definitely at stake in the 'finished product'. Thus, it is a great deal easier to say, 'Lord, thank you for the way you have made me thus far' and to have a new confidence and expectation for what He will do in the future... It is not enough to thank God that we are not worse than we are. This is not really accepting ourselves. We must see, as God does, value in what He has already done." (Bill Gothard, quoted at a Seminar)

"Father, deliver me from my tendency to compare myself with others, which often leads to feelings of bitterness and jealousy. Help me to accept myself good-humoredly, to love others sincerely, and to know that God is developing within me the traits of inner beauty which shall make me both winsome and attractive to others."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because God's reputation is at stake in the 'final product', I can rest assured that God's dealings with me has highest priority to God!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM INFERIORITY COMPLEXES

1. How can one distinguish between feelings of inferiority and a feeling of humility, especially in light of Philippians 2:3 and Romans 12:10?
2. What is the basis of true humility?
3. What is the result of true humility, in terms of one's attitudes towards himself and towards others?
4. Is it a sin to call oneself inferior? Why? or Why Not?
5. Why is idolizing others or comparing oneself with others devastating to one who is seeking to develop a wholesome self-esteem?
6. What does it mean to have a 'faith, sane estimate' of one's abilities?
7. In setting your own personal goals, what should you always keep in mind?
8. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To get your eyes off of yourself and your inferiorities, you must get your eyes on Christ and lose yourself in His great purposes." (Why? Why Not?)
9. Suggest definite ways in which you can build self-confidence and get rid of your feelings of inferiority.
10. Specifically name some of the 'drawbacks' of basing your self-worth on human evaluation.
11. Tell specifically the advantages of deriving your self-worth on the basis of divine evaluation.
12. Tell how, deriving a sense of self-worth from God alone, takes care of feelings of inferiority, feelings of guilt, feelings of anxiety, and feelings of hostility against one another.
13. What is likely the root cause of feelings of deep insecurity?
14. What is the motivation for thanking God for your personal limitations as well as your personal assets?
15. How do you maintain your love for God, in light of your persistent imperfections and limitations which you observe in the 'frame' with which He created you?

CHAPTER 5
FREEDOM FROM JEALOUSY

FACING THE PROBLEM OF JEALOUSY

"Oscar Wilde used to tell a fable... The Devil was once crossing the Libyan Desert when he came upon a group of small fiends who were tempting a holy hermit. They tried him with the seductions of the flesh; they sought to sow his mind with doubts and fears; they told him that all his austerities were worth nothing. But it was of no avail. The holy man was impeccable. Then the Devil stepped forward. Addressing the imps he said, 'Your methods are too crude. Permit me for one moment. This is what I would recommend.' Going up to the hermit he said, 'Have you heard the news? Your brother has been made Bishop of Alexandria.' The fable says 'A scowl of malignant jealousy clouded the serene face of the holy man.'" (Daily Readings; Sangster; pg. 200)

The Bible tells us to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15). Why is it that we find it sometimes harder to rejoice with the rejoicing ones than to weep with the weeping ones? Because we cannot envy people's sorrows, but it is easy to envy people's joy.

Notes William Barclay, "It may be said that envy is the last sin to die. It reared its ugly head even in the apostolic band. The other ten were envious of James and John, when these two had seemed to steal a march upon them in the matter of precedence in the coming Kingdom (Mark 10:41). Even at the last supper the disciples were disputing about who should occupy the seats of greatest honor (Luke 22:24). So long as self remains active within a man's heart there will be envy in his life. E.G. Selwyn calls envy 'the constant plague of all voluntary organisations, not least religious organisations.' C.E.B. Cranfield says that 'we do not have to be engaged in what is called 'church work' very long to discover what a perennial source of trouble envy is.' Envy can only die when self dies." (Daily Study Bible; I Peter; pg. 225)

"We may define this vice as pain, grief, or annoyance felt at the happiness, success, or fortune of another; displeasure or regret aroused by the superiority of another - plus a certain degree of malice or malignity and a desire to depreciate the person envied... It was the secret hurt you felt when somebody with whom you had matched yourself in thought or with whom others matched you, surpassed you or was considered to have surpassed you. It was the secret elation and gloating you found in your heart when he stumbled and fell. That was jealousy! It is deadly in its nature and can cast a long shadow over the whole of life." (Secret of Radiant Living; Sangster; pg. 94)

"Father, help me to rejoice with those who rejoice as well as to weep with those who weep. Enable me to take genuine pleasure in the success of others, regardless of the degree of success I am allowed to enjoy. Uproot the ugly weed of jealousy from my heart and plant in its place the beautiful flower of good will and love. In Jesus' magnanimous name. Amen"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Learning to appreciate others without envy makes my inward world peaceful and my outward world grateful!

DESTRUCTIVENESS OF JEALOUSY

What is the context from which jealousy arises? "The people we do not know and who completely outshine us do not provoke us to this sin. It is the people whom we do know, who move in the same circle, and who just surpass us, who unconsciously set the trap into which we fall. Let any man, therefore, eager to be on guard against this subtle vice, watch himself in his estimation of those who are doing the same work that he is doing, and doing it in the same circle. Let him mount a DOUBLE guard over himself when he hears them praised - even though the praise may honestly sound extravagant to him. Saul's jealousy of David may already have been a spark in his heart before the women shouted, but it flared into flame at the feminine cry: 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands.'" (Secret of Radiant Living; Sangster; pg. 95,96)

Jealousy destroys physical health. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

Envy and jealousy are destructive because they cause one to strive for places of eminence and superiority, thus causing mental stress. In his popular book 'None of These Diseases', Dr. S.I. McMillan notes: "Psychic turmoil, arising out of our desires to go to the moon or to attain superiority over our fellows, is very common. An outstanding psychiatrist, Dr. Alfred Adler, taught that most modern nervous and emotional disorders grow out a definite striving for power. Because the average man in his mad drive to power is in a daily race with others for earthly goals, his day is full of failures, frustrations, banged-up feelings and, often, fenders... Is it not a pity that we are cursed with an innate urge to be ever madly racing with one another like the participants in a stock car race? In our excitement to be first we become oblivious to the damage we inflict on others and ourselves. The stock cars that are battered, banged, dented, and noisy are no worse off than bruised humanity broken down with many a disease from life's competitions." (pg. 133,134)

Jealousy destroys human relationships. Envy can spoil friendships and destroy old fellowships. "Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?" (Proverbs 27:4) "We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." (Titus 3:3) Envy breeds hatred, resentment.

Jealousy robs one of his own just joy, because he is obsessed with the greater triumphs of others. A little boy is overcome with joy when he receives his new bike for Christmas, but returns after riding it for one hour, all disgruntled. When his parents inquire where his joy has gone, he replies, "George has been given a bicycle too. It is a better one than mine. It has a three-speed gear."

"God, don't let me go through life begrudging others of their happiness and success, and at the same time losing my own joy and contentment. Deliver me from my mad pursuit for success and recognition based on a competition with others. Help me to be neither the object or the subject of jealousy, but to live at peace with all men. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Outdoing one another in showing love and in demonstrating generosity is the only kind of competition that is acceptable and worthy.

STEPS TOWARDS DELIVERANCE FROM JEALOUSY

Christ alone can deliver one from jealousy. Step by step, let us note how this deliverance is accomplished. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. The battle against jealousy is won in the mind.

First, see the possibility of deliverance through Christ alone who never envied another. His denunciation of the Pharisees is not a manifestation of envy. Rather, His denunciations are manifestations of fierce love - love that sought to shatter the complacent and hardened hearts of self-deceived and self-righteous hypocrites.

When Jesus stated that the foxes have holes and the birds have nests but that the Son of Man hath not a pillow to lay his head on, Jesus was not revealing self-pity or envy. Rather, the Son of Man was stating the fact of divine love - love so great that sacrifice became the norm for the Master, and such sacrifice would become the norm for His followers.

He in whom no trace of envy and jealousy can be found, is the same who is able to deliver man from the crippling disease of jealousy. The first step towards deliverance is to understand that Christ is the one who alone is able to deliver.

Secondly, honestly face your personal need for deliverance. No physician can help a man who denies his disease and thus refuses treatment. As Sangster notes, "It is humiliating to admit it, and pride rebels at the idea that I should be jealous of him. 'Jealous? Me? Of him?!'" Denial of the problem cannot solve the problem.

Third, rechannel your tendency towards comparison with others. To constantly compare yourself with others is to do yourself great harm. God accepts you just as you are and therefore you don't need to build up your ego by comparing yourself with others in a less favorable condition than you, and you don't need to plunge yourself into despair or into jealousy by comparing yourself with others who appear to be in a much more favorable condition than you.

Unfortunately, competition and comparison is a common way of life in America. We compare mind with mind. We compare bank account with bank account. We compare beauty with beauty. We compare achievement with achievement. We pit wit against wit to outdo our fellows. We try to prove that our city, our church, our doctrines, our political concepts, and our ball teams, etc., etc., are the best! This tendency towards power, popularity, dominance, and leadership breeds envy, strife, and jealousy. The musical expresses this spirit of comparison and strife: 'Anything you can do, I can do better!' Competition and comparison breed jealousy!

"O God, I confess that jealousy is a serious problem in my life. Help me to rest secure in your unconditional love for me, and to know that I don't have to 'prove' myself worthy of your acceptance through performance and achievement in a world of competitive striving. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To love all and to serve all is Christ's command and my privilege!

RECHANNELLING YOUR TENDENCY TOWARDS COMPARISONS

Christ calls us to humble service, not to vain striving for glory and for honor among our peers. Said Jesus, "Don't you ever be called 'Rabbi' - you have only one Teacher, and all of you are brothers... and you must not let people call you 'leaders' - you have only one leader, Christ! The only 'superior' among you is the one who serves the others. For every man who promotes himself will be humbled, and every man who learns to be humble will find promotion." (Matthew 23:8,10-12) Phillips)

Dr. McMillan tells of a young woman who wanted to go to college. "Her heart sank when she read one question on the application blank: 'Are you a leader?' Being a conscientious girl she wrote 'No' and sent in the form with a heavy heart. To her surprise she received a letter from one of the college officials which read something like this: 'A study of the application blanks reveals that this year our college will have 1452 leaders. Therefore, we are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have ONE follower.'"

Dr. McMillan goes on to say: "We are living in a day when it is not difficult to find people who want to be head cook, but few are available to wash dishes. There are always several hundreds of girls who yearn to ride in the parade as the beautiful queen, but sometimes only a disgruntled half dozen will agree to decorate the float. Organizations have never lacked those who want to be boss carpenters, but they have had to search for men to drive nails and saw boards." (None of These Diseases; pg. 136,137)

'Competition for the top spot' - this too often describes the mood of our modern age. Competition breeds jealousy!

There is another movement in our day which breeds jealousy - the striving for equality. Notes Malcolm Muggeridge, "The notion of equality has been one of the very destructive forces in our society. We're not equals, we're brothers and sisters. It's quite a different thing. And it's that Christian notion of being brothers and sisters that has been an enormous stabilizing influence on the western world. But the minute you begin to follow this fantasy of equality, you don't produce a loving relationship among people, you produce hideous rivalries and envies, which God knows our society reflects. Each person is watching out and trying to see if the other person is getting more than he is, and even whether others are getting more out of life." Comparing ourselves with others can lead to either pride or to envy, depending upon the outcome of that comparison. The spirit of pride and the spirit of envy are neither the spirit of Christ!

"Father, help me to compare myself with Christ alone, not with other people. Comparing myself with Christ alone delivers me from stress due to peer comparisons and delivers me from complacency due to easy satisfaction with personal, present attainments. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God will help me to rechannel my strong impulse towards many outward comparisons with men, to one upward comparison with Christ!

REJOICING IN YOUR GOD-ORDAINED PLACE

We are continuing to look at the steps towards deliverance from jealousy. So far, we have looked at three: (1) See the possibility of deliverance through Christ alone who never envied another, (2) Honestly face your personal need for deliverance, and (3) Rechannel your tendency towards comparison with others.

Fourth, rejoice in the God-ordained place which Christ has for you personally. "Christ is able to convince us that each one of us has a place in the plan of God and that his plan is best. Being convinced of that, we envy no one. We can only wish them well in the working out of God's plan for them." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 98) God has a place for all in His great family. God has a work for each to do, and each work is important to God.

The Church is likened unto a human body. All members of the Body are different, but each member is dependent upon all the others. There is no need for any member to compare itself with any other member, for each member has a different function and each member is needed for the healthy functioning of the entire Body.

"The last recorded conversation between Jesus and Peter in John's Gospel finds Peter trifling with the wrong kind of comparison and unduly concerned about the destiny of John. 'What about him, Lord?', he said. 'What does that matter to you? Follow me yourself!', replied Jesus. (Ibid; pg. 98)

"To every envious soul, wanting to know why others should have things they do not have, Jesus would say: 'What does it matter to you? Follow me yourself.'" (Ibid; pg. 98)

The strong instinct towards comparison and competition must be transformed into the instinct towards compassion, caring, and complementation. Wrote Paul, "Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves." (Philippians 2:2-3 Phillips) 'Each for all, and all for each' - this spells harmony! If there is to be comparisons among yourselves as Christians, then "in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves." A great antidote against envy and jealousy is learning to enjoy others and learning to enjoy giving preference and honor to others. The only competition, worthy of the name of Christ, is the competition of love - seeking to outdo one another in acts of compassion and love!

"Father, your will is my peace. Wanting at times to change my place with that of another, I confess that I have doubted your infinite wisdom and personal love for me. Help me not to envy another, but gladly follow you, even to death by martyrdom if necessary!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will rejoice in the God-ordained place which God has given to me and not envy God's place for someone else!

ENJOYING THE 'SMILE OF GOD'S APPROVAL'

The fifth step in overcoming envy and jealousy is this: Realize that Christ can take away the desire for the approval and praise of the Crowd - the source of much envy - and that Christ can replace this desire with the sole desire for the praise and approval of God.

"No man remains envious who really sets his whole heart on the approval of heaven because that secures an independence of the praise and blame of earth. The simplest servant of the kingdom, quietly confident that he is doing his best, may feel the smile of God upon him. There is no richer reward in store for anyone... Being sure of God's approval no man need envy the praise of earth.

'The Master praises; what are men?'

(Daily Readings; Sangster; pg. 221)

Never focus on the praise of men or on the criticism of men. Rather, concentrate on living 'peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.' (I Timothy 2:2) Focusing on God rather than on men will keep one free from envy and jealousy.

Last, remember that any person "enjoying a high measure of success ought to carry it lightly and not stress his capacity to excell." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 99) Play down your successes. Emphasize long-time brotherhood. Don't magnify new differences in status or attainments or successes. Seek to live in love and harmony with all. Never deliberately provoke envy in another, either through overt remarks of conceit or through actions of pride. "Let your love be perfectly sincere... allowing one another to enjoy preference of honor." (Romans 12:9 Berkeley) Says Proverbs 27:2, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips." In other words, 'Don't toot your own horn!'

In considering the subject of jealousy, it is helpful for us to conduct the following spiritual check-up on ourselves.

"Have I a secret longing always to be first? or can I truly say that I don't care who is second, third or fourth, so long as Jesus is first?"

"Do I want God's cause to advance, or is my chief desire that I should advance?"

"Can I hear my colleagues praised and sincerely enjoy it?"

"Can I hear others praised for what I have done for God and still be more glad that it was done than grieved to be neglected?"

"Am I willing to take my wages in Christian service from God alone?"

"Am I after anything for myself?" (Daily Readings; Sangster; pg. 31)

"Father, deliver me from boasting of work done by others and from resentment when others boast of work done by me. Help me to die, both to the praise and to the blame of men, and study only to show myself approved of God. Make me jealous only for your smile of approval on my life! In Jesus' conquering name! Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Enjoying the smile of God upon my life and work, I can always bear the scorn of men!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM JEALOUSY'

1. Why is it that we find it sometimes harder to rejoice with the rejoicing ones than to weep with the weeping ones (Romans 12:15)?
2. How would you define envy or jealousy?
3. Why is envy such a common problem among those who engage in 'Church Work'?
4. What is the context from which jealousy often arises?
5. In what ways is jealousy destructive of physical health, of mental health, and of loving human relationships?
6. List six steps in overcoming the enemy of jealousy.
7. In what ways are competition and comparison the breeding grounds for jealousy?
8. Why is 'striving for equality' a breeding ground for jealousy?
9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "God has a place for all in His great family. God has a work for each to do, and each work is important to God." Do you believe that the attitude contained in this statement will help one to cope with feelings of jealousy? Why? or Why Not?
10. In terms of observable behavior, what is the difference between living a life based on comparison and competition and a life based on compassion, caring, and complementation?
11. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The only competition, worth of the name of Christ, is the competition of love - seeking to outdo one another in acts of compassion and love!"
12. How does seeking the approval of God rather than the applause of men help one in being delivered from the problem of jealousy?
13. Behaviorally speaking, what must one do and how must one act in the presence of his peers to avoid provoking his peers to envy and jealousy?
14. Can you share an experience in which you were wonderfully delivered from jealousy?

CHAPTER 6

FREEDOM FROM JUDGMENTALISM

FREEDOM FROM JUDGMENTALISM

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5 NIV). Having the mind of Christ means that we will be freed from the bondage of judgmentalism. To be freed from the critical spirit which seeks to judge our fellowmen, we must turn our eyes upon Jesus and look fully into his wonderful face.

My Master's Face

"No pictured likeness of my Lord have I;
He carved no record of His ministry
On wood or stone,
He left no sculptured tomb nor parchment dim,
But trusted for all memory of Him
Men's hearts alone.

Who sees the face but sees in part; who reads
The spirit which it hides, sees all; he needs
No more. Thy grace -
Thy life in my life, Lord, give Thou to me;
And then, in truth, I may forever see
My master's face! - William Hurd Hillyer -
(Christ and the Fine Arts; pg. 5)

"Thy life in my life, Lord, give Thou to me" - this must be the prayer of every sincere believer! The mind of Christ and the life of Christ is the mind and life of charity and acceptance. Not harshness, but sweetness of spirit. Not criticism, but compassion. Not rejection, but acceptance. Not judgmentalism, but charitableness. Not condemnation, but salvation. Not intolerance, but flexibility. Not dogmatism, but openness. Not rigidity, but adaptability.

The more of the mind of Christ that one experiences, the less of the spirit of criticism and judgmentalism will one possess.

"Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love thou art."

The Master's face is not sour and critical, but it is sweet and radiant - radiant with the love of the Father's heart.

"I cannot think or reason
I only know He came
With hands and feet of healing
And wild heart all aflame."

- Willard Wattle -
(Ibid; pg. 219)

"Father, help me to see people through the eyes of Christ, and in seeing people thus, see them as people who are redeemable and full of God-given potential! May I see beyond the surface to the depth, beyond the apparent to the real, beyond the action to the intent, beyond the face to the heart. Knowing all about another, I will forgive all in another. In Jesus' forgiving name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will not usurp God's authority in life - the authority to judge others!

VARIOUS WAYS OF JUDGING

Some judge a person's future on the basis of that person's present. "A play producer, Gilbert Frankau, was producing a play and was in need of a male actor to play the leading part. He sent to a theatrical agency for a young male actor and after he was interviewed and tested, Gilbert Frankau telephoned to the agent and said, 'This man will never do. He cannot act, and he never will be able to act, and you had better tell him to look for some other profession before he starves. By the way, tell me his name again so that I can cross him off my list.' The actor's name was Ronald Colman who became one of the greatest actors the screen has ever know." (Daily Study Bible; Matthew, pg. 266) Never judge a person's future on the basis of his present!

Some judge a person on the basis of partial knowledge or on the basis of external appearance. The person who is reserved while in a group, for instance, cannot be said necessarily to be timid at all times. Usually the persons you and I know are partially figments of our imagination. We judge them, on the basis of inadequate information.

How often have we judged a person to be snobbish, when this was not the case at all; he was inflicted with inferior feelings. A person who appears listless or passive most of the time, might prove to be one of the most aggressive and helpful persons during a period of emergency.

"There is a kind of crystal called Labrador spar. At first sight it is dull and without lustre; but if it is turned round and round, and here and there, it will suddenly come into a position where the light strikes it in a certain way and it will sparkle with flashing beauty. People are like that. They may seem to be unlovely, but that is because we do not know the whole person. Everyone has something good in him or her. Our task is not to condemn, and to judge by superficial unloveliness, but to look for the underlying beauty." (Daily Study Bible; Matthew; pg. 267)

Some judge a situation on the basis of unreliable circumstances. Imagine a situation in which a minister is called upon by a young widow woman to take her to the hospital on emergency, late at night. Suppose too that it is very difficult for the minister's wife to go with her husband, because of small children in the home. In such a situation, the neighbor who happens to look out the window just as the woman is getting into the minister's car, could judge the minister as being unfaithful or could reserve judgment and could put the best construction on the situation. As Christians, we must always give another the benefit of a doubt, regardless of the appearances surrounding a situation.

"Father, help me never to draw quick conclusions about people, without the adequacy of facts and without the sensitivity of deep understanding. Help me to believe the best about people, never the worst. Help me to assume, if there is any room for assumption at all, that people are much better than what others say they are. In the charitable name of Jesus. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Believing the best about others will help others to become their best!

"JUDGE NOT THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED!"

Matthew 7:1 says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." This can be interpreted as: "Do not condemn or criticize others if you do not want to be criticized yourself by others." The person who criticizes others most is usually the person who receives most criticism and is liked the least. This statement has also been interpreted as: "Do not judge others if you yourselves do not wish to be judged harshly by God at the final judgment of evaluation for believers."

The Scriptures definitely teach a coming judgment for believers - a judgment which will judge the quality of life believers have lived on earth! This judgment is sometimes referred to as 'the judgment of works', or 'the judgment of evaluation'. It is not a judgment to determine one's final eternal destiny. Rather, it is a judgment to test the worth and quality of the Christian's works and relationships on earth.

I Corinthians 3:10-15 is one of several Scriptures which refer to this judgment of believers. "Let each take care how he builds. There can be no other foundation beyond that which is already laid; I mean Jesus Christ himself. If anyone builds on that foundation with gold, silver, and fine stone, or with wood, hay, and straw, the work that each man does will at last be brought to light; the day of judgment will expose it. For that day dawns in fire, and the fire will test the worth of each man's work. If a man's building stands, he will be rewarded; if it burns, he will have to bear the loss; and yet he will escape with his life, as one might from a fire." (New English Bible) The Christian who judges may be saved eternally, but he is certain to suffer some type of loss at the judgment of evaluation. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done, whether it be good or bad." (II Cor. 5:10)

Jesus further says, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:2) Jesus seems to be saying: "Judge not, for in not judging others, you do not set the standard for your own judgment." The standard that we apply in judging others will be applied in judgment of us! If we expect much of others, much will be expected of us. If we judge others harshly, we will be judged harshly. "The slave who knows his master's plan but does not get ready or act upon it will be severely punished, but the servant who did not know the plan, though he has done wrong, will be let off lightly." (Luke 12:47,48a Phillips) By the way we treat others in this life, we set the standard for our own judgment hereafter!

"Father, just as I desire to receive mercy, not justice, from your hand, so help me to extend mercy, not judgment, towards others. To extend forgiveness to others is to receive forgiveness from you. To withhold forgiveness from others is to forfeit my forgiveness from you. Help me to judge not that I be not judged! In Jesus' lovely name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will seek to treat others in the same way that I desire to be treated by God - kindly and uncritically!

GOD ALONE IS CAPABLE OF JUDGING!

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matthew 7:3-5)

Jesus is saying: "Judge not for you are incapable of judging." God alone is capable of doing that. Notes Barclay, "No man is good enough to judge any other man. Jesus drew a vivid picture of a man with a plank in his own eye trying to extract a speck of dust from someone else's eye... Only the faultless has a right to look for faults in others." (Daily Study Bible; Matthew; pg. 268) It is hypocritical to criticize others when you have the same or worse faults in yourself. Said Jesus, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15)

This is a vivid picture that Jesus uses to describe the folly of judging others. It is like a blind oculist (eye doctor) attempting to remove a small speck of dust from another person's eye. Only God who clearly sees all men's hearts is capable of judging or criticizing.

Wrote Paul, "Now if you feel inclined to set yourself up as a judge of those who sin, let me assure you, whoever you are, that you are in no position to do so. For at whatever point you condemn others you automatically condemn yourself, since you, the judge, commit the same sins. God's judgment, we know is utterly impartial in its action against such evildoers. What makes you think that you, who so readily judge the sins of others, can consider yourself beyond the judgment of God?" (Romans 2:1-3 Phillips) However, as Lloyd-Jones points out, "There is all the difference in the world between doing that (Judging) and expressing an enlightened, intelligent criticism of a man's views and theories, his doctrine, his teachings or his mode or manner of life. We are called upon to do the latter; but the moment we condemn and dismiss the person we are assuming a power that belongs to God alone and to no one else." (The Sermon On The Mount; pg. 169)

We are not to condemn a person, but we are to judge the rightness or wrongness of his position, morally and perhaps theologically. We are commanded to "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." (Jude 3) Jesus said we are to be 'fruit inspectors': "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:16) We are to examine and evaluate and discriminate between truth and falsehood, but we are not to judge men.

"Father, let me never be eager to tell others their faults, for I myself am full of faults. The faults I most readily see in others are the same faults that are most glaring in me. Deliver me decisively from all fault-finding. Help me to focus on the fine, good things in others. In Jesus' affirming name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: People grow through affirmation but wither through criticism. By God's grace, I will be an affirming person!

LEARNING TO CONQUER A CRITICAL SPIRIT

When you clearly see your personal need of forgiveness and mercy, you will be motivated to be forbearing, forgiving and merciful towards others (Eph. 4:30-31). Realize that the spirit of judgmentalism evaporates as soon as you become conscious of your own faults and when you are willing to speak freely of them. A humble spirit of confession is incompatible with a harsh spirit of criticism. The two cannot co-exist. So learn to practice sincere and humble confession. James wrote, "Do not grumble, brethren, against one another, that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the doors... Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." (James 5:9,16)

Confession is the way to healing - healing both for yourself and for another. It is a good solution to the problem of a critical spirit.

Only when I hate sin intensely within myself, will I love and accept the wrong-doer unconditionally, and know, not to condemn him, but to share with him my own wrongdoings. Only as I focus on taking the beam out of my own eye, will the wrong-doer be convinced of the beam in his own eye. Only when I, as a believer, engage in self-incrimination, open sharing, humble confession, will the wrong-doer be motivated to do the same.

To criticize a man is to drive a man into self-justification and thus away from repentance and away from God. We hinder, not help, a man by becoming his judge. By becoming his judge, we stand in the place of God who alone is Judge. The transgressor acknowledges wrong-doing in the quietness of personal contemplation or in the presence of a non-critical friend.

'Judge not' - that is the call to every Christian. How can you rid yourself of this overbearing, destructive practice? "The spirit of judgmentalism evaporates as soon as I become conscious of my own faults and speak freely of them to my friend, as he speaks to me of those which made him reproach himself." (The Best of Paul Tournier; pg. 85)

Confession is contagious! The cost of being a counsellor is to confess my own faults to the counsellee. Healing of the troubled person takes place, not in the atmosphere of criticism or self-righteousness, but in the atmosphere of mutual caring and sharing. How are conflicts and problems in relationships solved? Not by exchange of logic and debate and arguments which are generally exchanged as if in the presence of two deaf men. But by exchange of heartfelt confession of personal weakness and needs, creating an atmosphere of true caring and sharing. When my attitude changes from one of judgmentalism to understanding and humble confession, I build a bridge of love and openness, creating healing in relationships.

"Father, take away my fear of personal vulnerability. Make me honest and open and transparent. Tear down my walls of defense, and enable me freely to confess my sins, both to you and to those who love me. Then I shall enjoy fellowship at the deeper levels. In Jesus' name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Courage to confess my sins to others will allow me to enjoy the healing of God and the reconciliation of men.

DEMONSTRATING A CHARITABLE ATTITUDE

Being a loving person means allowing others to live their own lives, without imposing your own convictions and standards upon them. Hold your convictions confidently, but never force them on another. There is no place for harshness or arrogance in the holding of convictions. Have a generous and appreciative spirit towards others who differ from you, and even be willing to listen, to learn, and sometimes even to change your own ideas. "Oliver Cromwell wrote once to the intransigent Scots, 'I beseech you by the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken.' T.R. Glover somewhere quotes a saying, 'Remember that whatever your hand finds to do, someone thinks differently!'" (Daily Study Bible; Luke; pg. 130; Barclay)

A good motto is, "Live and let live!" When E. Stanley Jone's daughter was married, Jones remarked, "I never want to be in the way; nor out of the way - if I'm needed."

Tolerance - the right kind of tolerance - seems to be a lost virtue. Not the tolerance of compromise and worldliness, but the tolerance that excludes judgmentalism and narrow-mindedness.

"Of all the greatest religious leaders none was such a pattern of tolerance as John Wesley. 'I have no more right', he said, 'to object to a man for holding a different opinion from mine than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but if he takes his wig off and shakes the powder in my face, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible... The thing which I resolved to use every possible method of preventing was a narrowness of spirit, a party zeal, a being straitened in our own bowels - that miserable bigotry which makes many so unready to believe that there is any work of God but among themselves... We think and let think.'

"When his nephew, Samuel, the son of his brother Charles, entered the Roman Catholic Church, he wrote to him, 'Whether in this Church or that I care not. You may be saved in either or damned in either; but I fear you are not born again.'" (Daily Study Bible; Luke; pg. 130; Barclay)

Jesus condemned sin but he never condemned the sinner. He was open and accepting and charitable, and forbearing (Luke 9:49-50). There is no harshness of spirit in Jesus. Jesus is gracious, winsome, attractive, and loving. Jesus is not judgmental or condemning. The Son of God came not to condemn the world but to save the world (John 3:17). To the woman taken in adultery, Jesus said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She answered, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." (John 8:10-11)

"Lord, let me hold firm convictions without being harsh towards others who differ from me. Give me an open mind, a tender heart, a teachable spirit. Give me an expansive view of life, willing to learn from everyone everywhere. Give me that humility that welcomes correction and change throughout my entire life. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will not allow my first impression to be my last impression of people, but will direct my attention to the deeper qualities of people, which are discovered with increased time and deeper experience!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM JUDGMENTALISM'

1. Do you agree with the following statement: "The more of the mind of Christ that one experiences, the less of the spirit of criticism and judgmentalism will one possess."
2. Why is it unwise and dangerous to judge a person's future based on his present condition or achievements?
3. Why is it unwise and dangerous to judge a person on the basis of partial knowledge or on the basis of external appearance?
4. What is the difference between judging a person and evaluating a person? (consider Matthew 7:1, Matthew 7:15-20, and I John 4:1-3)
5. What does Matthew 7:2 mean to you?
6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "By the way we treat others in this life, we set the standard for our own judgment hereafter!"
7. Why is it true that God alone is capable of judging another human being?
8. What is perhaps the strongest motivation to be forbearing, forgiving, and charitable towards others rather than judgmental towards others?
9. In what ways is 'Confession' a good solution to the problem of a critical spirit?
10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Only when I, as a believer, engage in self-incrimination, open sharing, and humble confession, will the wrong-doer be motivated to do the same."
11. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To criticize a man is to drive a man into self-justification and thus away from repentance and away from God."
12. What is meant by the phrase 'Confession is Contagious'?
13. Is it possible to hold your own personal convictions firmly without imposing them upon others and without judging others for not accepting your convictions?
14. What are some right and some wrong expressions of tolerance in relationship to others?
15. In terms of attitudes and behavior, what does it mean to condemn sin without condemning the sinner?

CHAPTER 7

FREEDOM FROM NEGATIVISM

DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

There are many people who are seeing all of life through dark lens! Everything in life is colored by their dark evaluations. And yet, many of these same negative people would like to be positive, radiant, optimistic people. It is true that some people enjoy their negativism. They enjoy being different, obstinate, disagreeable, and troublesome. They live by negative reaction, and their perversion is further seen by their enjoyment of negativism. Life's most positive experiences they interpret negatively. But most people would like to be more positive, even though they would admit that many times they are basically negative.

The causes of negativism are multiple. A person's contrary attitude may be caused by fear, or by jealousy, or by inferiority, or by wounded pride. Who is able to discern the thoughts, intents, and motives of a man's heart? Only the Great Discerner - the Holy Spirit!

There is a radical cure for negativism. That cure is partly found in the initial work of the Holy Spirit, through His cleansing and empowering Presence. When the Holy Spirit sheds abroad God's love in our hearts by faith, we find life automatically becoming more positive in outlook.

However, while the initial work of the Holy Spirit may immediately cleanse the heart, it usually takes time, practice, and discipline to change the mind from a negative to a positive slant.

There are many believers whose hearts have been cleansed instantaneously but whose minds are still in need of further transformation. A sincere heart and a negative mind may co-exist within the same person! Why? Because the negative mind of the sincere person has confronted difficult problems which have cast a negative shadow upon his entire outlook on life.

We must spend several days looking at some of the problems which have caused some sincere believers to become negative and joyless in their response to life in general. The inadequate concepts which many people entertain have cut short their joy and peace and positive faith. If we can give anyone a more adequate view of life and of life's problems, with the result of imparting a new joy and confidence to life, then the effort will be very worthwhile.

After confronting some of the problem areas of life which cause some to react so negatively, we must offer some positive alternatives which can expand the mind's understanding and which can fill the heart with new joy and hope and faith.

"Father, you have cleansed my heart from the sin of deliberate disobedience; now cleanse my mind from the subtle presence of negative thoughts. Fix my mind upon what is true and good and right. Help me to face all of life with a positive 'Yes', not with a negative 'No'. In Jesus' positive power. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will be a voice for positive action, not an echo of negative reaction!

THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER TO SUFFERING -

Human suffering will either make or break a human being. The sun can either melt water or harden clay. Suffering can make the heart tender or tough, drive a person to God or drive a person from God.

Human suffering, either personally experienced or personally observed, can cause one to react negatively to all of life.

With every type of suffering there is an accompanying peril. The sufferings of infirmities (2 Corinthians 12) can cause one to be plunged into despair. The suffering of chastisement (Hebrews 12:5-9) can cause one to harden his heart against God. The suffering of persecution (2 Corinthians 11) can cause one to develop hatred for his enemy. The suffering of temptation can result in one falling into sin. The suffering from life's losses can cause one to become bitter towards God and towards people.

Yes, suffering has destroyed many persons. It has caused some to grow hard, or bitter, or cynical, or negative in their viewpoint of life. "A great actor was dying and said, 'Let down the curtain, the farce is over. There is no reality in life; it is a farce.'" (The Divine Yes; pg. 15; E. Stanley Jones)

Said one negative and despairing person about life: Life is "a bridge of groans across a stream of tears." (P.J. Bailey) Vachel Lindsay, a late American poet who snuffed out his own life with a bullet through his brain, said, "Life is a loom, weaving illusion."

If Christianity cannot deal with the problem of human suffering, then Christianity has no basis for offering hope amidst despair, joy amidst sorrow, peace amidst conflict. What is the Christian answer to suffering - the answer that negates negativism and transplants joy and hope and peace in its place? What was Jesus' attitude toward suffering? "He accepted the fact of human suffering. He neither explains it nor explains it away. If he had attempted to explain it, his message would have been merely another philosophy, for a philosophy has to have an explanation for everything. His was a gospel - Good News - even 'in spite of'. A philosophy explains, but it does not change. The Gospel may not explain, but it does utterly change. Jesus transforms suffering by using it. The victim may become victor... A Christian expects to take things as they come, good, bad, or indifferent, and use them for a witness to Jesus. That puts a positive Yes upon every No that comes to a Christian. Everything furthers those who follow Christ. Just as an airplane goes up against resistance, against the wind, so the Christian rises on the wings of resistance." (Ibid; pg. 100,101)

"Father, just as Jesus took the worst that could have happened to him - a death on a Roman Cross - and turned it into the greatest symbol of victory - through the Resurrection - so help me to turn my little daily crosses into symbols of victory. Make me creative in the transforming of my failures into successes, my hurts into healings, my disadvantages into opportunities. Through Jesus' conquering name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God will teach me to turn my stumblingblocks into steppingstones!

TRANSFORMING 'INKBLOTS'

A short article written by Don Demaray appeared in the 'Light and Life' magazine, dated June 19, 1979, which most beautifully illustrates the principle of transforming the bad into the good.

"The story has about it classic dimensions. And it is true. John Ruskin, nineteenth-century writer and artist, emerges as the hero.

"A lady friend showed him the once priceless treasure in her possession, a handkerchief now ruined by an inkblot. 'Beyond repair', she moaned.

"'Let me have that handkerchief,' he demanded.

"'No problem. But why do you want a worthless piece of cloth?'

"'Never mind; just let me take it.'

"Days passed. John Ruskin returned the handkerchief. Using the blot as his center, the artist had drawn a pattern as beautiful as the finest piece of Belgian lace. With the imprint of the famous painter and art critic now upon it, the handkerchief took on many times its former worth.

"For all the world, it appeared that Joni Erickson's life suffered a blot beyond repair. But look! Books (yesterday at the Christian bookstore I saw her latest on the religious bestseller list) - yes, books, and also a movie of her life, an interview on the 'Today Show' and the loveliest sketches you ever saw done with pen in mouth. The Master Craftsman has literally used the inkblot (in her case a paralyzing swimming accident) and woven around it the most intricate and breathtaking of designs.

"The secret? Letting the Artist have the handkerchief.

"The unspeakably divine message of the gospel of redemption is just this: whatever happens to the Christian is meant as a stepping-stone to something better."

Problems and suffering can cultivate Christlike character in a person. Problems and suffering successfully met are a powerful witness to unbelievers. Suffering can cause one to fix his focus and attention on heavenly glories instead of on earthly concerns. One sees reality oftentimes more clearly through a tear drop! The trivial things of time and space grow strangely dim in the light of eternal values, made more real through suffering. Problems cause one to depend more heavily upon God's power and resources. When one is on his back, it is much easier to look up! Man's weaknesses provide opportunity for God's power and glory to be manifested. God glories in using weak men to do mighty things for Him. Many times those who are most effective in ministry are those who minister in an area in which they have personally suffered most.

"Father, help me to see the hidden blessings in my sufferings. I see that it is a Christlike work to sooth and to sympathize, but how can I myself sympathize if I have never really suffered? Help me to minister out of the wounds of my life. Use my sufferings to develop in me a tender heart, more responsive to God's love and to human needs."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God can turn every one of my problems into projects of Divine Grace, and God's projects are always successful!

POSITIVE POSSIBILITIES IN PEOPLE

When one contemplates the changeableness and corruption of human nature, it is easy to become cynical and negative. When foes distress and friends betray, is it any wonder that some grow sour and defensive? The negative person has little or no confidence in himself and thus has little or no belief in the moral worth and dignity of others.

Many people become negative because they are perfectionists. What is a perfectionist? A perfectionist is one who expects the impossible from himself, and thus, the impossible from others. "The 'perfectionists' are always tense and anxious about their own imperfections and the imperfections of others... They cannot get along with themselves or with others. They are demanding the impossible and getting the possible - with disappointment!" (A Song of Ascents; Jones; pg. 39)

Some are negative because they don't see the possibilities of divine grace in changing human nature from selfishness to selflessness, from sinfulness to saintliness.

The man who gazes on Christ and Christ's transforming power, will be delivered from negativism to positivism. Catching the spirit and hope of Christ towards sinful mankind, will transform our negative attitudes toward people. Christ can make the bad man good, and the negative man positive. "Someone asked a Negro minister, pastor of a growing and dynamic church, how he accomplished it. He replied: 'I hold a crown a few inches above my people's heads and watch them grow into it.'" (Idib; pg. 39)

"He (Jesus) was patient with and hopeful for the weak and the faltering and the sinful. And yet he did not compromise with and accomodate himself to their imperfections and sins... His love produces love, his faith procudes faith, his hope produces hope." (Idid; pg. 39)

"The mood of the present day is cynicism. Many people are soured on life. They are cynical and negative. This age has three sneers for everything and three cheers for nothing. It has a code of 'I don't believe in this'; 'I don't believe in that'; 'I don't believe in the other'. They are trying to live by a NO. And it is turning out badly and sadly, for you can't live by a NO. You have to live by a YES.

"Bertrand Russell said that life is a bottle of very nasty wine that leaves a bad taste in your mouth... Sartre, the French existentialist, said, 'Hell is other people.'" (The Divine Yes; Jones; pg. 14,15) Man, without contact with the Hopeful God, falls into despair, cynicism, and negativism.

"Father, deliver me from all cynical devaluations of man, due to my inadequate views of human nature. Help me to realize that you have power to transform the ugly into the beautiful, the selfish into the selfless, the sinful into the serving, the perverted into the pure. In Jesus's name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Man is not only a creature with potential for unlimited evil, but he is a creature whose greatness is found in his unique creation and in his potential for limitless redemption!

CHRISTIANITY - LIFE-AFFIRMING OR LIFE-DENYING?

There are far too many believers who are negative and joyless, thinking that negativism is a sign of spirituality. The Bible commands Christians to be sober, so some Christians interpret this to mean joyless, serious-minded, and even miserable!

"Jesus is the YES - The divine YES. A great many people today would like to choose Christianity, but they think it is a NO to living. 'You cannot do this.' 'You cannot do that.' 'You cannot do this.' 'You cannot do the other,' - if you are a Christian. This is in fact a denial of the will to live. It is the will to surrender and die." (The Divine Yes; pg. 13)

How ironical that Christianity, which is to be the most positive and affirmative way to live, has been used as a defense for negativism and legalism!

The mind of Christ is gloriously positive! His teaching is life-affirming, not life-denying. Jesus never taught self-denial as an end within itself, but only as a means to the end of self-realization. The last word of Jesus is not losing, but finding. Christianity is not rigid discipline but glorious freedom of which discipline is the handmaiden.

Those who see Christianity as a list of demands, will be driven to negative despair, but those who see Christianity as a reservoir of limitless resources will be leaping with positive joy! Holiness is health and wholeness and ultimately happiness, not a series of negative prohibitions, as some have taught! The impure disease of self-centeredness must be destroyed in order that the wholeness and health of Christ-centered living may be actualized!

Christianity teaches that love transcends law, that delight replaces drudgery, that the liberty of the Spirit replaces the bondage of the flesh!

Jesus came that man may have life and have it more abundantly! Nothing forbidding or forlorn about Jesus! Jesus said, "I am not come to destroy, but to save men!" Any destroying that Jesus does is for the purpose of saving. He destroys sin in order to impart salvation! The yoke that Jesus places on the neck fits, and therefore it is pleasant and productive. His yoke is easy and His burden is light! His work is our happiness! Pain, endured for Jesus becomes our pleasure! His laws are not burdensome or grievous. We delight to do his will, for His way is the way we were meant to live! Therefore His commands of love turn out to be the same as the demands of our human nature. There is a glorious compatibility between man's needs and God's resources!

"Father, you only subtract sin from my life in order that you may multiply joy in my life! I delight to surrender to you, for through surrender I find freedom - freedom from the bondage of self-centeredness! Bowing low at your feet, I can stand tall before everything else. Thank you for enabling me to say 'Yes' to life. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I have a right to run out and embrace life and enjoy it fully, for it is my Father's good pleasure to give me the Kingdom!

PRACTICING THE PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE AFFIRMATION

Those nonbelievers who have grown sour on life and have spelled life with a capital 'NO' are to be pitied, but more to be pitied yet are those sincere souls who have made sorrow a virtue and sadness and somberness a way of life - in the name of Christianity!

Perhaps nothing has hurt the cause of Christianity more than a joyless and colorless professing Christian who communicates more sadness than gladness. "Is there anything that would more, and better, publicize the faith than life lived with joy and assurance - the happy abandonment of those who live to better all things but who know... that if the worse comes to the worst they need not fear those who kill the body and afterwards have no more that they can do?" (Daily Readings; Sangster; pg. 202)

"Among the many misunderstandings which have affected the common mind of man concerning the religion of Jesus Christ, none is more perplexing or more false than the widespread idea that to receive it is to be made miserable... The fact that there is a cross at the heart of the Christian faith, and that following Christ involves some rigorous self-denials, does not alter - and cannot alter - this central truth; the fruit of the Spirit is joy." (Ibid; pg. 144)

Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" What a positive affirmation! What a positive way to live!

The emphasis is on Christ! Christ in you is the hope of glory! Christ in you is the source of unearthly wisdom and strength! Christ in you is the fountain of overflowing joy! Christ in you is the constant cleanser of negativism and pessimism! The mind of Christ is always gloriously positive. Christ in you is the basis of your positive faith and positive attitudes!

Practice the presence of God in your life! Practice the principles of positive affirmation! Say 'Yes' to life's 'No's'! Bless and do not curse life and relationships! Don't dwell on negative conditions and don't absorb the negative spirit of reactionary and critical people. Dwell on the positive. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." (Philippians 4:8 NIV) Dwell in the congregation of the positive and the praising! Praise God for all things, and praise God in spite of some things! In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God for you, in Christ Jesus.

"Father, help me to be positive, not negative, to show approval and not disapproval, to give acceptance and not rejection, to be appreciative and not critical, to be edifying and not derogatory, to be constructive and not destructive, to show affection and not hostility, to be delightful and not unpleasant. In Jesus' positive and affirming name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Evil companions corrupt good manners, and negative thinkers destroy positive motivation. I will be positive and keep company with positive persons!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM NEGATIVISM'

1. Name some of the basic causes of negativism.
2. What effect does the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion and cleansing have upon the person who is greatly influenced by negative attitudes?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "While the initial work of the Holy Spirit may immediately cleanse the heart, it usually takes time, practice, and discipline to change the mind from a negative to a positive slant."
4. Name five different types of suffering and the peril associated with each one of these types of suffering.
5. What is the Christian answer to suffering - the answer that negates negativism and transplants joy and hope and peace in its place?
6. Which of the three following reactions to suffering is the Christian reaction or response (and tell why): Explain Suffering, Explain Away Suffering, Use Suffering.
7. List several of the potential benefits that can be derived from suffering.
8. In what ways can contemplation on the changeableness and corruption of human nature foster a negative attitude toward life?
9. Why do some people who are perfectionists tend to be negative?
10. How can catching the spirit and hope of Christ towards sinful mankind help transform one's negative attitudes?
11. Why do some people (believers) strangely think that being negative and reactionary is a sign of spirituality?
12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christianity is not rigid discipline, but glorious freedom of which discipline is the handmaiden. The last word of Jesus is not losing, but finding."
13. Is Christianity basically a list of demands or a reservoir of limitless resources? What Scriptural basis can you give for your answer?
14. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christianity teaches that love transcends law, that delight replaces drudgery, that the liberty of the Spirit replaces the bondage of the flesh."
15. What are some Biblical principles of positive affirmation that you have practiced, principles that have helped you to ward off the harmful effects of negative thinking?

CHAPTER 8
FREEDOM FROM WORRY

CONSTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY

In our Scripture reading for today, Jesus is warning Christians against the danger and folly of worry and anxiety. Says E. Stanley Jones: "The probabilities are that fear, worry, and anxiety are the greatest single trinity of evils a man can take into his life. He must root them out at all costs." (Abundant Living; pg. 65)

When Jesus said, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, not yet for your body, what ye shall put on", He was not advocating carelessness or indolence. The word used to translate 'Take no thought' is a word which indicates something which divides, separates or distracts. Thus, to 'take no thought' means that we are not to have a distracted, separated, double mind. Such a mind is a worried and fretful mind. There is no peace or integration, but such a mind is divided into sections and compartments. Such a mind keeps a person from seeing things as they really are. No cool, objective thinking can be engaged in when there is a worried, divided mind.

Jesus wants us to be delivered from a care-worn, fretful, worried life, which takes away all joy and delight. Christians are to be people with a long view, people who plan well and work hard, but people who also throw all their energies into serving God, not wasting their energies needlessly on worry.

Of course, there is a healthy type of anxiety which adds zest, tone, and direction to life. There is a saying which goes: "He who runs in fear, runs best." The student, for instance, who has some anxiety, will study better than the student who has none. "Up to a certain point, fear on the part of a surgeon may make him more skillful and careful lest he cut in wrong places, but fear pushed beyond a certain point could paralyze him. There is a healthy fear that gives us skill and drive." (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 65)

Fear, worry, and anxiety can even cause physical disorders. Ecclesiastes 11:10 (Moffatt) says, "Banish all worries from your mind, and keep your body from pain." "Doctors have put a tube down the nostrils of a patient into his stomach and have measured the effects of states of mind on the stomach secretions. The secretion of hydrochloric acid often doubled during states of worrying." (Abundant Living; pg. 69) Says one doctor: "Anxiety places more stress on the heart than any other stimulus, including physical exercise and fatigue... Not work, but worry makes us weary. Sleep refreshes our exhaustion from work, but not the weariness that stems from worry." (None of These Diseases; S.I. McMillan; pg. 60,89)

"Father, I am made by you and for you - not for fear, worry, and anxiety. Help me to cast all my care on you, knowing that you care for me. Deliver me from that nagging fear which makes me tremble on the brink of an unknown future. Cleanse me from the acid of anxiety that erodes away my sense of security and well-being. Give me a childlike trust that cancels my paralyzing worries. Release me and set me free - free to enjoy life in all its fullness."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: While planning carefully for the future, God will help me not to be full of care in the present!

REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT WORRY

Jesus said, "Take no thought for your life... Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matthew 6:25) If God gave something so great as life, is He not able to give provisions sufficient to sustain that life? If God willed that a person should be born, is God not able to give food to feed the body and clothes to warm the body? The God who created life is able to sustain life. Why then should Christians worry?

"Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26) If God cares for the hard-working birds, how much more will He care for the hard-working Christian? If God feeds the birds from the bounty of nature, how much more will God feed His own children! There is no need to worry.

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matthew 6:27) It is not conceivable that anyone would think that he could add one cubit or 18 inches to his height. 'Cubit' can also possibly refer to lengthening one's life. By worrying, no one can add height to his stature or add years to his life. Life will take its course, so why should one worry? In fact, worry can actually take years from one's life. Therefore, don't worry. It is costly. Worry will not help the situation. There have been cases where people died from an operation, not because the operation was that serious, but because they were obsessed with worry!

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:28-30) If God looks after the short-lived flower of the field and favors it with such unsurpassed beauty, how much more will God care for man, whose duration is much longer and who is the very capstone of God's creation. Worry is unnecessary.

"Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink: or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things to the Gentiles seek): for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." (Matthew 6:31-32) One morning when Luther was blue and discouraged, his wife appeared, in black. At Luther's inquiry as to what the mourning meant, she replied, "Haven't you heard? God is dead." When we worry and fret, we declare that God is weak or unable to cope with life's circumstances. Worrying is a characteristic of the pagan - not the Christian!

"Father, you work providentially, not accidentally; purposefully, not fatalistically; assuringly, not uncertainly. Then why should I worry? Help me no longer to worry, for worry contradicts my faith in a God of infinite love, power, and wisdom. Help me to rest assured that all circumstances are used by you to bring about my good and your glory!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I do not have to hold the world together through my worrying, for God sovereignly rules the world from His eternal throne!

STEPS IN DELIVERANCE FROM WORRY

In his excellent devotional book 'Abundant Living', E. Stanley Jones shares some helpful insights on how to overcome worry and fear. Some of the following points are taken from his list.

First, look fear in the face and desire deliverance. Running from fear only complicates the problem. Do the very thing that you fear most, and fear will soon take wings. One must genuinely desire deliverance. "A girl had a large purple lump on her forehead. This lump had come as the result of a great fear. When counseled by Dr. Fox she surrendered the fear and the lump disappeared. On seeing her again Dr. Fox remarked about the lump being gone. 'But', said the girl, grabbing her middle, 'I've got terrible pains in my stomach.' She was afraid to let go of her fears, for she lived by the attention which these illnesses brought her." (Abundant Living; pg. 71) There must be a will and desire to live and to be delivered from all anxiety, worry, and fear. If a man makes up his mind not to worry, half the battle is won.

Second, remember that Christ overcame all sin, including the sin of worry, on the cross, and that He is thus able to help you overcome your nagging fears and worry. Notes Jones, "When fears and sicknesses and sins come upon you to overwhelm you and to beat you into submission by their very overbearing presence, just calmly look each one in the eye and say, 'I am not afraid of you. You have been and are decisively beaten by my Lord. Will you bend your neck? There, I knew it! The footprint of the Son of God is upon your neck.'" (Abundant Living; pg. 73) "One man had 'A Worry Tree' in his front yard, where he hung his worries before he came into the house. For the Christian, that 'Worry Tree' is the cross. Hang your worries there." (Ibid; pg. 353)

'Remember' not only Christ's victory over your sins through His resurrection, but also remember your own past victories over frustration and adversity. It is a good practice to keep a dairy or a journal in which you record God's daily blessings in your life. When you tend to worry, refresh your memory and encourage your spirit of faith by reading of God's recorded victories in your dairy.

Third, realize that fear itself is usually worse than the thing you fear or are worried about. Said a great father to his son as his son was leaving the nest of the home, "Johnny, the thing to do, my lad, is to hold your own end up, and to do it like a gentleman, and please remember the biggest troubles you have got to face are those that never come."

"Father, sensitivity to life and to people and their needs is both my greatest asset and my greatest liability. It is my asset, for sensitivity to people gives me a selfless drive to reach out redemptively to help others. It is my liability, for sensitivity to people's needs often causes me to become worry-worn and fretful. As I become deeply involved with people and their problems, keep me released from anxiety and worry."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will cast my cares upon Christ today, for He cares for me!

FINDING VICTORY OVER WORRY

We continue to look at the steps in overcoming worry.

Fourth, relax in God's presence. There is nothing that will relax the mind and relieve the nerves like meditating upon the greatness of God. Transform worry energy into prayer energy. Take your gaze off of the object of fear and worry and fix the gaze on the object of love. Relax in God and don't try to hold up the world by your own strength. "In India we have a bird called 'Pity-to-do-it'. It goes around all day saying, 'Pity-to-do-it'. And they say that at night it sleeps with its feet in the air to keep the sky from falling! It is a champion pessimist and worrier. It doesn't relax night or day, according to the story: hence it is thin and scrawny and fussy." (Abundant Living; pg. 77) "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unot thine own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5) The story is told of a Bishop who was so worried about the affairs and problems of the world that he could not sleep. As he lay awake, tossing and turning, the Lord spoke to him, "Bishop, you go to sleep and I will stay awake all night and watch over the problems of the world!"

Fifth, meet troubles one day at a time. Said Jesus, "Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day." (Matthew 6:34 Phillips) The Jews had the following saying: "Do not worry over tomorrow's evils, for you know not what today will bring forth. Perhaps tomorrow you will not be alive, and you will have worried for a world which will not be yours." (Daily Study Bible; Matthew, Vol 1; Barclay)

"According to our Lord, the vital thing is not to spend every day of your life in adding up the grand total of everything that is ever likely to happen to you in the whole of your life in this world. If you do that, it will crush you. That is not the way. Rather, you must think of it like this. There is, as it were, a daily quota of problems and difficulties in life. Every day has its problems; some of them are constant from day to day, some of them vary. But the great thing to do is to realize that every day must be lived in and of itself and as a unit. Here is the quota for today. Very well; we must face that and meet it; and He has already told us how to do so. We must not go forward and tack tomorrow's quota on to today's, otherwise it may be too much for us. We have to take it day by day." (Sermon On The Mount; Martyn Lloyd-Jones; pg. 149,150)

Sixth, become involved in tasks. Those who are most involved in loving projects, are those who think and worry less about their own problems. There is great energy generated within you when you are creative and outgoing in your loving involvements with others.

"Father, as I seek to live a sacrificial life within the context of a society that has a high standard of living, I find myself becoming either anxious or coveteous of worldly possessions. Don't allow the cares of my daily life, with its consequent worry, to chock out the good seed of your Word in my life. Help me to live contentedly."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God has not given me a spirit of fear or worry, but a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7)!

"TYRANNY OF THE URGENT"

Related to the common problem of worry and anxiety, Charles Hummel, in his famous booklet 'Tyranny of the Urgent', shares some most helpful insights. Following are a few excerpts from that excellent booklet.

"When we stop to evaluate, we realize that our dilemma goes deeper than shortage of time; it is basically the problem of priorities... Not hard work, but doubt and misgiving produce anxiety as we review a month or year and become oppressed by the pile of unfinished tasks...

"Jesus' life was never feverish; He had time for people. He could spend hours talking to one person, such as the Samaritan woman at the well. His life showed a wonderful balance, a sense of timing...

"Jesus prayerfully waited for His Father's instructions and for the strength to follow them... He discerned the Father's will day by day in a life of prayer. By this means He warded off the urgent and accomplished the important (Mark 1:35).

"Many of us have experienced Christ's deliverance from the penalty of sin. Are we letting Him free us from the tyranny of the urgent? He points the way: 'If you continue in my word.' This is the way to freedom. Through prayerful meditation on God's Word we gain His perspective. P.T. Forsyth once said, 'The worst sin is prayerlessness. We usually think of murder, adultery, or theft as among the worst. But the root of all sin is self-sufficiency - independence from God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength we are saying, with our actions if not our lips, that we do not need Him. How much of our service is characterized by 'going it alone'?

"In prayer, Jesus impresses on our minds the assignments He wants us to undertake. The need itself is not the call; the call must come from the God who knows our limitations...

"If the Christian is too busy to stop, take spiritual inventory, and receive his assignments from God, he becomes a slave to the tyranny of the urgent.

"In addition to your daily quiet time, set aside one hour a week for spiritual inventory. Write an evaluation of the past, record anything God may be teaching you, and plan objectives for the future. Also try to reserve most of one day each month for a similar inventory of longer range." (Excerpts from 'Tyranny of the Urgent' by Charles Hummel)

"Father, teach me to number my days, that I might get a heart of wisdom. Let me see time in light of eternity, and make present decisions in terms of their effects upon the future. Help me to plan for tomorrow without becoming preoccupied with tomorrow. Help me to give attention to details without losing sight of the 'big picture'; to accomplish the important without becoming a slave to the urgent. In Jesus' name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who waits upon the Lord before trying to work for the Lord will both save time and multiply effectiveness in service!

FINDING AND MAINTAINING RELAXATION

Here are a few suggestions as to the art of finding and maintaining relaxation.

Make an initial surrender of yourself to Christ. Writes one medical doctor and psychiatrist: "After all, one of the greatest contributing factors to nervousness in the Christian is that self has not been crucified with Christ, leaving a struggle between the Spirit and the flesh because the patient does not walk in the Spirit, but makes provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14)."

Find a place of solitude. Establish a daily quiet time, preferably in the early morning. Says the above-mentioned doctor, "When Christians leave out daily fellowship with Christ, they suffer from spiritual malnutrition. If the Christian fails to take the daily requirement of spiritual calories because of worldly attractions and too many religious duties, he soon becomes anemic and run-down, his resistance is lowered, and he is an easy prey for disease (evil powers)."

Speak to your body parts and tell them to relax before prayer. Let go of your inner soul frustrations and let God renew your mind (Romans 12:2).

Pray through a Scripture (a Psalm of praise like Psalms 145-150 or a prayer like John 17). The ACTS formula is helpful as a guideline in praying. ACTS stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (i.e., intercessions - prayers for others; petition - prayer requests for yourself). In addition to prayer, be sure to read some verses from the Bible and underline ones you intend to memorize.

Allow the Holy Spirit to daily cleanse you from anxiety and worry. Confess all sins. The same doctor goes on to say, "If the heart is not cleansed daily of its cares and troubled thoughts, these problems accumulate and bring the Christian into a chronic nervousness, which, of course, is not a nerve disease at all, but a conflict in the soul between the old self-will (which should have been crucified) and the Holy Spirit, who came into the soul to make His abode there... Each trouble, as it arises, must be taken to the Lord and put into His care."

Throughout the day, when worry arises and bids for your attention, turn your attention to God - thus turning worry energy into prayer energy (Philippians 4:4-7). Remember, what gets your attention gets you! Learn to stay your mind on God, and you will be kept in perfect peace. (Isaiah 26:3).

"Father, help me to translate my worry energy into prayer energy, for prayer is the way of peace and poise and purpose. Break the tension of my nerves, by speaking peace to my troubled heart. Unscramble my thoughts and help me to stay my mind upon you alone. In thy constant presence is my perpetual peace!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Today I will practice the presence of God and make every contact with people a prayer contact!

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF VARIOUS TENSIONS

One of the greatest antidotes for worry and anxiety is prayer. "The spirit of prayer should be Alert Passivity which means that while your spiritual, mental, and physical sensibilities are awake and alert to God, yet they are also relaxed and receptive. I say relaxed and receptive, but the two attitudes are really one, for relaxation is receptivity. And yet there are two sides to real praying. If we are only relaxed we are weak. Dr. Alexis Carrel says: 'Lowering of the blood pressure is also dangerous. Brain and other organs demand a certain tension of the blood.' That is the alert side. But the brain and other organs demand a certain relaxation to be at their best. Prayer puts relaxation and tension together, and is therefore the perfect instrument of human well-being." (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 232)

Let's look at a few common forms of stress and suggest a few ideas and Scriptures that may be helpful in countering these various stresses.

There is stress because of a lack of money. Develop a trust in God who, as a caring Father, provides for our daily needs (Matthew 6:25-34; Proverbs 11:28).

Stress usually accompanies decision-making. Trust God for wisdom during trials (James 1:5) and for guidance during times of difficult decisions (Proverbs 3:5,6).

There is stress because of the challenges of daily work. The Bible tells us to commit our work to God and God will bring success (Proverbs 16:3; I Corinthians 15:38).

Stress is often times caused because of wayward children. Surrender your children to God and allow God to work in their lives. Allow your children to make their own moral decisions, after you have carefully and lovingly instructed them in the ways of Christ. If you have brought up your children in the ways of Christ, those children will likely serve the Christ you serve, eventually.

There is stress because of hard circumstances. Put your trust in the unchanging God who wills your ultimate good, and who uses all of your circumstances to accomplish that goal (Romans 8:28).

There is stress because of loneliness or disappointment. Realize that you are never alone; thus you need never feel lonely (Matthew 28:20).

There is stress because of concern for other people's actions and problems. "If you are fussily trying to manage other people in their supposed interests, surrender that fussiness - it is pure selfishness. That attitude ties up yourself and others... We tie ourselves up if we try to live other people's lives for them." (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 243)

"Father, 'in quietness and confidence shall be my strength'. In the quietness of my present contemplation, speak peace to me with your still small voice. In the face of disquieting circumstances, give me confidence that there are no troubles too great but what your strength is greater yet! My troubles, surrendered to You, become your triumphs! Glory and praise to your power!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: With Christ at the helm of my little 'ship', I will make it safe to the harbour of Heaven!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM WORRY'

1. How can a Christian live a careful and prayerful life, with attention given to long-range planning, and at the same time not become care-worn, anxious, and worried about tomorrow?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christians are to be people with a long view, people who plan well and work hard, but people who also throw all their energies into serving God, not wasting their energies needlessly on worry."
3. Give examples of some 'healthy' types of anxiety.
4. What are some of the harmful physical manifestations of worry and anxiety?
5. What examples from the world of nature did Jesus draw upon to illustrate the futility of worry, according to Matthew 6?
6. List six steps that are given as aids in overcoming worry.
7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Do the very thing that you fear most, and fear will soon take wings."
8. Share your experiences of overcoming fear and anxiety by focusing your attention on Christ and His love, rather than on yourself and your problems.
9. How does living life one day at a time help in overcoming the problem of worry and anxiety (Matthew 6:34)?
10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Those who are most involved in loving projects, are those who think and worry less about their own problems. There is great energy generated within you when you are creative and outgoing in your loving involvements with others."
11. What is meant by the phrase 'Tyranny of the Urgent'?
12. List several steps in learning to relax.
13. What alternative is there, according to Philippians 4:4-7, to expending worry energy?
14. What place does prayer have in effectively coping with worry and anxiety?
15. List several common forms of stress and effective ways to cope with each form of stress that you mention.

CHAPTER 9
FREEDOM FROM GREED

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THINGS

The parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:15-21) strikes at the heart of materialism as a way of life. It warns against the worship of things, and shows the tragic results of devaluing the spiritual. Notes William Sangster, "Our standards of value today - whether capitalistic or communistic - are frankly materialistic... The common element in both capitalism and communism is that what really matters is things. It is common to both that life consists in the possession and enjoyment of material goods. All their bitter quarrels with one another concern who shall have them, and how! Each occasionally pays lip service to higher values, but it is only lip service." (The Secret of Radiant Life; pg. 115)

The attitude of the Rich Fool towards things was wrong. By looking at his life with its wrong values, we can learn what the right attitude towards money and things is.

At first glance at the story, it may seem that the rich man was a fool because he did not dispise money. That is not the point of the parable, however. Money is not to be dispised, but used for the good of men and the glory of God. The rich man was not condemned because he had money but because he loved money and worshipped what money was able to purchase. It is not money itself, but rather the love of money, which is the root of all evil. Money can be used in a very beneficial way.

The Christian is not taught by this parable to dispise material things. What he is taught is the folly of trusting in riches and worshiping what money can buy. "The fact is that the Christian faith is the most materialistic of religions, the only one that really takes the material seriously. It starts out by saying that when God created the material universe, He 'saw it was good' - the material was God-made and God-approved." (Word Became Flesh; E.S. Jones; pg. 54)

"Dr. John Oman says: 'The test of a true religion is the extent to which that religion is secular.' Startling, but true. The Christian faith is secular without being secularized. It is the spiritual working in and through the material. The sacred is secular and the secular is sacred. Unless our religion functions in material terms, it does not function. We are not ghosts, we are embodied beings and we must function in and through the body or we do not function." (Ibid.; pg. 56)

"When the disciples said to Jesus: 'Send the multitudes away so they can buy bread for they are hungry', Jesus replied: 'They need not go away, give ye them to eat.' The disciples thought that religion dealt only with the spiritual - let them go to others for the material. But Jesus said to them, and through them to the world: 'Religion does have to go with the material - don't wash your hands of the material needs of people, they need not go away, give ye them to eat.'" (Ibid.; pg. 58)

"Father, help me not to set my affections on material things but instead to use material things to serve the purpose of spiritual goals. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The value of money is determined by the use of money. I will use all my money to bring glory to God and benefit to my fellow man.

THE LIMITATION OF MONEY

We noted yesterday that man is physical with physical needs, and therefore, the Kingdom of God must express itself in physical terms if it is to be meaningful at all. Any good missionary knows that he can't minister effectively to the spiritual needs of pagans if those pagans have empty stomachs. Filling the stomachs of men is a prerequisite to filling the souls of men.

There was no crime in the rich man (Luke 12:15-21) having large possessions. In fact, some of the great characters of the Bible were very wealthy (Abraham, Job, Solomon, etc.). The rich man which we looked at yesterday had great opportunity of providing for the physical and spiritual needs of his fellowmen, but he failed in his opportunity. Instead of transforming his money into things which last forever, he used his money to satisfy his selfish desires and to inflate his ego.

Money is not to be despised, but it is to be used for the good of man and the glory of God. This the rich man failed to do. The Christian is to make his money work for things which last forever. Giving money to the work of God is changing money from the tangible to the intangible, from the material to the spiritual, from the temporal to the eternal.

The rich man in Jesus' parable was called a fool for he reasoned that everything had its price tag. He failed to realize the limitation of money. Like many others, he failed to realize that there are many things in life that money cannot buy. Jesus called few persons fools, but this man was called a fool! He tried to find his security in money and in material, temporal things.

Money cannot buy health. In fact, the striving after wealth sometimes robs one of health.

Money cannot buy love or personal acceptance. There have been those who have had an abundance of money, but who have died a suicide death for lack of personal love and acceptance.

Money cannot buy personal peace of mind. Saith the Scriptures, "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the fullness of the rich will not let him sleep." (Ecclesiastes 5:12)

Money cannot buy national peace. The country which is biggest and strongest militarily may still lack peace.

The Christian must not fall into the trap of the Rich Fool, thinking that all things have monetary value. Rather, the Christian must clearly see the limitations of money and things.

"Father, I realize that man cannot live without 'bread', but neither can man live by 'bread' alone. Let me never despise material things, for 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness therein.' Yet, help me never to fall down and worship material things. May I always see your purpose in giving me things - to use things as a means to the end of advancing the Kingdom of Heaven!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I shall not be the slave of 'things'; I shall live masterfully for I will always use 'things' to serve eternal purposes!

"I'M THE HAPPIEST MAN ON THE ISLAND"

We noted yesterday that, while money is not to be despised, money has its great limitations. For instance, money cannot buy character. Money, on the other hand, sometimes destroys character. Money "can buy a soul, bargain for and take integrity, corrupt the decencies, rot a whole community from within." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 117) Money cannot produce character and a price tag cannot be put on character. "In the Franklin County Court House in Virginia is preserved the will of the man who owned Booker T. Washington. Since most of his property was in slaves, the owner had listed them and set down the price of each one. Opposite the name of Booker Washington he had marked '\$200'. Was this a fair estimate of that youngster's worth? Hardly, for he turned out to be one of America's great men and an educator who inspired his people to seek knowledge." (The Parables; Gerald Kennedy; pgy. 102)

Money cannot buy eternal life. The rich man in Jesus' parable (Luke 12:15-21) is called a fool because he failed to realize that his money could not purchase eternal life for him. The Scripture is only stating an obvious, and well-known, but little-acknowledged fact when it says, "We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." (I Timothy 6:7) "As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil, which he may carry away in his hand." (Ecclesiastes 5:15) "There is a story of a conversation between a young and ambitious lad and an older man who knew life. 'I will set up in business.' 'And then?' 'I will make my fortune.' 'And then?' 'I suppose that I shall grow old and retire and live on my money.' 'And then?' 'Well, I suppose that some day I will die.' 'And then?' came the last stabbing question. The man who never remembers that there is another world is destined some day for the grimmest of grim shocks." (Daily Study Bible; Luke; pg. 168,169; Barclay)

Billy Graham relates an interesting experience which he had. "My wife and I, with Cliff Barrows and his wife, were on an island in the beautiful Caribbean. We visited a very wealthy man, 70 years of age. He was terribly depressed, lonely, uncertain; all the assurance in his life was gone. I watched him in his depression. I felt sorry for him, tried to help him, prayed with him. Two hours later we met a happy little preacher who was the same age - 70 years. He cared for two invalid sisters. He did all the washing and all the cooking. He had a tiny church, with hardly any income at all. Yet he was jumping about and exclaiming, 'I'm the happiest man on the island.' Now I want to ask you, Who was the richer? Which one would you rather be at the age of 70 - the man who had lived for God and invested his life for God, or the man who had spent his lifetime building a fortune but without much time for God? Who was the richer? (Decision magazine; July 1970; pg. 14)

"Father, help me to know true contentment - a contentment based not on my financial standings before men, but based on my personal relationship with Christ! Help me to be rich in good works, giving generously of myself to those in any need. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I brought nothing into this world, and I can take nothing out of this world - except a Christlike character which shall live forever!

Matthew 6:19-21; 16:24-26; James 5:1-3

LAYING UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN

E. Stanley Jones significantly says, "There are two ways to be wealthy - one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants." (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 300) The latter type of wealth is much greater. "There is a story of a poor man who had just enough money to support life in its simplest way and who spent his days enjoying modest pleasures and helping other people. He was once in the company of a very wealthy man who was completely immersed in business, working all the hours he was awake, and enslaved to acquisition. 'I am richer than you are', said the poor man. 'How can you say that?', the millionaire inquired. 'Well', he said, 'I have as much money as I want and you haven't.'" (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 114)

Accumulated wealth - instead of giving happiness as many think - oftentimes robs one of happiness. "Hard as some people will find it to receive, it is a fact that material things are regarded as the chief good in life only by those who do not have them." (Ibid; pg. 114)

"In 1923, a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were nine of the world's most successful financiers." Let me tell you who they were and what happened to them twenty-five years later. "Charles Schwab, the president of the largest independent steel company, died a bankrupt and lived on borrowed money; Samuel Insull, the president of the largest utility company, died a fugitive from justice and penniless; Howard Hopson, the president of the largest gas company, went insane; Arthur Sutton, the greatest wheat speculator, died abroad, insolvent; Richard Whitney, the president of the New York Stock Exchange, was finally released from prison; Albert Fall, a member of the President's Cabinet, pardoned from prison so he could die at home; Jesse Livermore, the greatest 'bear' in Wall Street, died a suicide; Ivar Kruegar, head of the world's greatest monopoly, died a suicide; Leon Fraser, president of the Bank of International Settlements, died a suicide!" (A Challenge to Men From Proverbs; Foster; pg. 11)

The strange thing about wealth is that the accumulation of it calls for the accumulation of more wealth. "The Romans had a proverb which said that money was like sea-water; the more a man drank the thirstier he became." (Daily Study Bible; Luke; pg. 168; Sangster) John Camden Neild was a miser. "He inherited a quarter of a million from his father, and for thirty years he toiled and starved to double the sum. He never brushed his clothes, his shoes were down at the heel, and when he visited his great estates, he lived with his poor tenants and shared their frugal meals. When he was over seventy he died and left all the money so meanly accumulated to the richest woman in the land - to Queen Victoria." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; pg. 114)

"Father, you are my satisfaction and my joy. Without you, all the wealth of the world would leave my soul starving. With you, none of life's adversities can rob me of my wealthy standing in Christ. Thank you. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Contentment is finding as many reasons for not owning something as reasons for owning something (Hebrews 13:5)

LADDER FOR MASTERY OVER MONEY

In his devotional classic 'Abundant Living', E. Stanley Jones offers a 'ladder for mastery over money'. It is so helpful that it is worth summarizing the steps which he suggests. The following are his points:

1. Hold in mind that money is a good servant, but a terrible master.
2. Reject the philosophy that you may hold vast accumulations as a trustee for the poor.
3. Nothing that you can do for your children will be more harmful than to leave so much to them that they will not have to struggle and work.
4. There are two ways to be wealthy - one is in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants.
5. Put in a stop where your needs end. After that all you make belongs to other people's needs.
6. Keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs.
7. Settle the level of need in the full light of the needs of others, of your enlightened conscience, and of the judgment of a disciplined group.
8. While you are lifting your economic level to the level of need, give a tithe of what you earn. After you have reached that level, give everything you earn.
9. Work for a co-operative order in which each will think and work for all, and all will think and work for each. (Abundant Living; pg. 300-302)

John Wesley had a three-fold principle to guide his life in regards to money and material possessions: (1) Gain all you can, (2) Save all you can, (3) Give all you can. Wesley gave a personal testimony as to how he applied this principle. "Permit me to speak as freely of myself, as I would of another man. I gain all I can, (namely, by writing) without hurting either my soul or body. I save all I can, not willingly wasting any thing, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water, I do not lay out any things, not a shilling, unless as a sacrifice to God. Yet by giving all I can, I am effectually secured from 'laying up treasures upon earth'... I do not say, Be a good Jew; giving a tenth of all you possess. I do not say, Be a good Pharisee; giving a fifth of all your substance. I dare not advise you, to give half of what you have; no, nor three quarters; but all!" (Wesley's Sermons; pg. 254)

It would be good to remind ourselves occasionally that life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesseth (Luke 12:15). Therefore, while we are never to dispise money, let us not put our trust in uncertain riches. Let us remember that the only things that last are spiritual and that it is only the spiritual which we can take with us out of this present life!

"Father, help me to trust, not in uncertain riches, but in your certain promises. If riches increase in my life, help me never to set my heart upon them, but to keep my heart fixed upon you. Sensitize me to wastefulness and extravagance in my life, and help me to practice a simple Christ-honoring lifestyle. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I purpose to live in relationship to all material things in such a way that I will be neither the object or the subject of coveteousness!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM GREED'

1. What is the 'common element' in both capitalism and communism?
2. What, according to the Bible, is the 'root of all evil'? (I Timothy 6:10)
3. Should one conclude from a study of Luke 12:15-21 that Christians are to despise material things? Why? or Why Not?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The fact is that the Christian faith is the most materialistic of religions, the only one that really takes the material seriously."
5. What is meant by the statement: "The Christian faith is secular without being secularized."
6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Unless our religion functions in material terms, it does not function."
7. Has the Gospel been fully expressed and fulfilled if we only save the soul without feeding the body?
8. Is there any Scriptural support for the idea that the more spiritual one becomes the more financially prosperous he will be?
9. From the Christian viewpoint, what is the proper use of money?
10. Why was the rich man in Jesus' parable called a 'fool'? (Luke 12:15-21)
11. List some of the limitations of money.
12. Are Christians meant to live like 'kings' or like 'the King'?
13. How can a sincere Christian distinguish between 'needs' and 'luxuries' in his life, and how many 'luxuries' can a Christian enjoy and still be committed to a 'simple life style'?
14. Is the accumulation of wealth sinful or is such a practice simply an act of wise saving?
15. List the nine steps on the ladder for mastery over money, and note those which you strongly agree with, those which you partly agree with, and those which you strongly disagree with.
16. Do you believe that Wesley's threefold principle to guide one in financial stewardship is Biblical and workable in our modern day? Why? or Why Not? What Scriptural backing can you give for your answer?
17. If, according to Luke 12:15, life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesses, what does life consist of?

CHAPTER 10

FREEDOM FROM DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT

I Corinthians 15:1-8; Colossians 3:1-4

TRUTHS THAT DARE NOT BE DOUBTED!

There are times when it is right to doubt and other times when it is wrong to doubt. There are some doubts, if exercised, that are always destructive. There are other doubts, if exercised, that are productive of belief. There is some doubting which dishonors the truthful character of God. There is other doubting which comes in the very process of discovering the exciting truths about the character of God.

What determines whether doubt is destructive or constructive? Doubting God's character and revealed nature is really a manifestation of dishonest moral rebellion. However, there is an honest intellectual doubting which is the shadow-side of belief. One cannot honestly believe unless he has honestly worked through his intellectual doubts. Thus, there are two types of doubting - one positive and one negative, one good and one evil, one constructive and one destructive, one motivated by basic submission and one motivated by basic rebellion.

To doubt the revelation of God's nature as given through the Cross and the Resurrection, is to bypass the road to eternal life (John 3:36).

Saving truths (truths concerning God's love, wisdom, power, justice, and mercy) are vividly revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ and are the very foundation of life.

Let us glance at the truths revealed by the cross and resurrection - truths that dare not be doubted!

What did the cross accomplish? The cross did at least three things: (1) Appeased God's wrath - because Jesus took God's wrath against sin upon Himself by becoming the perfect sacrifice for sin. (2) Satisfied God's justice - for God could not allow sin to go unpunished, and at the same time remain a just God. God is both just and the justifier of the ungodly, because of what Christ did on the cross. (3) Demonstrated God's love - for the cross on Mt. Calvary is the earthly revelation of the cross that has eternally been on the heart of God, and is thus the supreme demonstration of inherent divine love.

What did the resurrection accomplish? At least three things: (1) Vindicated God's righteousness - God had to raise His Son to life to show that the sinless Son of God could not be overcome by the sinful sons of the devil. (2) Proved God's promises - God is never slack in fulfilling His promises, as some men count slackness (II Peter 3:9a). The resurrection is the badge of Christ's authority to establish His long-predicted Messianic Kingdom in the hearts and lives of people. (3) Demonstrated God's Power - the power that raised Christ from the dead is the greatest of all powers (I Corinthians 15:55-57), and is the same power that is available for every believer to enable him to live victoriously and abundantly.

"Father, regardless of those happenings in my life which seem to defy reason, help me never to doubt the integrity of your person and purpose. Thank you for the revelation of yourself in the death and resurrection of your Son. Help me always to organize my life upon the foundational truths of that historic revelation."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: There are two kinds of doubters in the world - those who are honestly seeking the truth and those who are dishonestly running from the truth. My doubts will drive me to the Truth!

LEARNING TO COMBAT DESTRUCTIVE DOUBTS

Let us look at the personal application of the truths which were revealed by the cross and the resurrection - truths that dare not be doubted!

1. God's character of love - If God loved you so much that He died for you, surely God continues to love you so much that He will not allow anything to happen to you but what will accomplish good in your life.

2. God's character of wisdom - If God is wise enough providentially to make the wrath of men to praise Him, and wise enough to produce order out of disorder, surely He is wise enough to manage your life.

3. God's character of power - If God is powerful enough to vanquish death by raising Christ from the dead, thus using the greatest tragedy of history (the crucifixion) to accomplish the greatest triumph of history (redemption), then God is powerful enough to use all your circumstances to serve redemptive purposes in your life!

4. God's character of justice - If God vindicated His righteousness by raising His sinless Son from the grave on the third day, expressing His vengeance on sin, then God is able in due time to reward unrecognized good and to punish unchecked evil. Therefore you have no need to fret yourself because of evil doers (Psalms 37:1). Evil has already been defeated.

5. God's character of mercy - If God so loved you in that, while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you (Romans 5:8), will not that kind of God have mercy upon you when you confess your sins and shortcomings to Him? You can be assured that the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all unrighteousness (I John 1:7), and daily delivers you from the guilt and power of sin.

In light of the vital necessity never to doubt the great truths concerning God's revealed nature, let us look at specific steps which you can take to maintain faith and combat destructive doubts.

1. Keep surrendered to God daily. After the once-and-for-all surrender to God, allow the Spirit daily to impart the gift of faith to your heart.

2. Let Christ handle your doubts as they arise. Say to the Lord, "I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

3. Recall past mercies of God. Build faith, based on the faithfulness of God's past actions. Use a daily journal to recall His past mercies.

4. Reaffirm your present confidence in Christ's sufficiency for you.

5. Wait on God and don't try to reason out every problem. "The righteous shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4) is a statement of man's faith in the faithfulness of God, when facing a problem (of evil) which causes nagging doubt.

"Father, when I cannot understand with my mind, I will learn to trust with my heart. When my doubts assail and my fears annoy, I thank you that you are totally in charge of my world, and that you will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly. I am in safe keeping when I am in your mighty hands! Thank you! Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The God who performed miracles in days gone by is the same God who is ready to perform miracles in my life today!

CONSTRUCTIVE DOUBTING

Once you have staked your entire life on God and His will and His revealed nature, then, using this commitment as your stable center, go as far afield in doubt as you need to in seeking a satisfying intellectual and soul answer to your questions. Develop a reasoned faith. Struggle to understand. Ask any honest question. Fear not to probe. Develop a tough inquiring mind. Never be fearful to ask any question. Only as you question will the answers be forthcoming. God encourages this process: "Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord." (Isaiah 1:18)

Keep your mind alive and inquisitive. Honest doubts are compatible with an honest commitment to Christ, and in fact the degree of commitment to Christ will be reflected in the degree of serious thinking one does in finding a satisfying answer to the difficult questions of life. One will not find all the answers to life's questions, but not to find the answers is no sin. However, never to ask the questions is a sin against one's God-given intelligence, and is evidence of spiritual as well as intellectual sloth! The Christian is to out-think the sinner as well as to out-live him. One cannot fully live until he learns to accept the challenge of hard thinking.

Ask God for a tender heart and a tough mind - a heart tender in response to God's love and a mind tough to grapple with life's mysteries. We are not meant to understand all of God's ways or all of life's perplexities, but we would understand many more of them if we but had the courage to think and to ponder! Those mysteries that will never be unraveled by the reasoning process must be accepted by the tender heart of faith and receptivity.

"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (I Peter 3:15)

An intellectual understanding of Christianity is vital, for Jesus commanded us to love God with all our minds as well as with all our hearts. As one said, "My heart cannot rejoice in what my mind rejects."

An unexamined faith is not a faith worth having - and is indeed dangerous. One must know that his beliefs are based on objective truth, for it is the object of belief that determines the value of belief. To accept anything in an unthinking way is possibly to accept error. Also, to accept truth on the basis of dogmatic authority, without thinking it through yourself, is to accept a secondhand faith. A secondhand faith is a dying faith.

"Father, I see now that even doubting can be an ally rather than an enemy of my Christian faith. Help me to work out my salvation with the aid of honest doubts which will lead me to the outcome of honest beliefs."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I must have a 'reasoned' faith, for although Christianity goes beyond reason, it is not unreasonable. My honest intellectual doubting will lead me to the adequacy of the evidence which will result in the assurance of the heart!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM DESTRUCTIVE DOUBT'

1. What determines whether doubt is destructive or constructive?
2. What is meant by the statement: "There is an honest intellectual doubting which is the shadow-side of belief."
3. Do you agree or disagree with the statement: "One cannot honestly believe unless he has honestly worked through his intellectual doubts."
4. Discuss three things which the Cross of Jesus accomplished. How do the application of these things help one in coping with and overcoming destructive doubts?
5. What are some specific steps which you can take which will help you to maintain faith and to combat destructive doubts?
6. What does it mean to you to develop a 'reasoned faith'?
7. What is the relationship between the reason of the mind and the faith of the heart, as one seeks to live an effective Christian life?
8. Is it a good thing to cultivate at one and the same time a tough mind and a tender heart? Why? or Why Not? What does the Bible have to say about these two realities?
9. Why, according to I Peter 3:15, are Christians called upon to defend the Christian Faith? In what spirit are Christians to give such a defense?
10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "An unexamined faith is not a faith worth having - and is indeed dangerous."
11. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Honest doubts are compatible with an honest commitment to Christ, and in fact the degree of commitment to Christ will be reflected in the degree of serious thinking one does in finding a satisfying answer to the difficult questions of life."
12. How can one distinguish between 'honest doubts' and 'dishonest moral rebellions' which are disguised as honest doubts?
13. What is the difference between a 'firsthand' faith and a 'secondhand' faith, as these relate to rational understanding and intellectual doubts?

CHAPTER 11

FREEDOM FROM CARNAL ANGER

DESTRUCTIVENESS OF CARNAL ANGER

University studies show that a man will get angry, on the average, about 6 times a week, and a woman about three times a week under the same conditions. Men are more likely to get angry at inanimate objects, whereas women get angry at other people because of a real or imagined slight.

There is a right kind of anger and there is a wrong kind of anger. Most anger is carnal and motivated by basically selfish considerations. However, our two texts in today's Bible reading (Ephesians 4:26,31) show the possibility of exercising a righteous anger, but even this anger must be carefully controlled.

Declared the distinguished minister, Clarence E. Macartney, "Anger is one of the most common sins, yet one of the most dangerous and injurious to the peace and well-being of man. More than any other sins, it blasts the flower of friendship, turns men out of Eden, destroys peace and concord in the home, incites to crime and violence, and turns love and affection into hatred."

It has been shown by some scientists that anger can cause ulcers, arthrities, indigestion, partial blindness, and a variety of other physical problems.

The Bible speaks of at least two kinds of anger. There is the lightning-quick, agitated outburst of temper ('Thumos'), what we might call 'flying off the handle'. There is also the more subtle, abiding, revengeful type of anger that results in nursing grudges ('Orge'). It is more lasting and devastating in nature. Anger is dangerous because it can motivate one to dangerous action. Most anger is born out of deep insecurity and is evidence of an unsundered ego.

The answer to controlling anger is found in surrendering the anger to the Spirit's control. "Many of the forces which consume men - like anger - must themselves be consumed by something more powerful. Only the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit is capable of devouring the driving forces that devour us and waste our lives. There is only one answer - turn your anger and your life over to Christ." (Robert Andrews; quote from a sermon)

James and John were called sons of thunder in their early lives, for they apparently were often filled with anger. Even as followers of Christ they found themselves wanting God to exercise His divine powers to destroy God-rejectors (Luke 9:51-56). But Jesus cleansed and rechanneled their anger and the day came when they were love-filled disciples. John is now known, not as a 'son of thunder', but as the 'Beloved Disciple'!

"Father, many times I have felt the turmoil of inner anger, and have seen that anger either well up into outrage or harden into a bitter grudge. O God, cleanse me from all carnal anger. Rechannel my anger into constructive channels of expression, and may my anger be motivated by unselfish considerations and focused on righteous causes. Through the cleansing power of Christ. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My anger can be a powerful force for either good or evil causes. I will allow the Holy Spirit to use my anger for His holy cause!

CHARACTER OF RIGHTEOUS ANGER

"Our capacity to love the good, determines our capacity to hate the evil. But note that it is our virtue that is to be lashed into a rage - not our pride, our hurt egoism, our fears. There is all the difference in the world between the two: one is harnessed to higher ends, hence constructive; the other is harnessed to the ends of a wounded self, and hence destructive. The one is a righteous anger, and the other is unrighteous." (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 50)

Righteous anger is motivated by unselfish considerations. "Jesus Christ never spoke one angry word when he was personally mistreated - not even at Calvary, when he was unjustly put to an excruciating death as a common criminal. His indignation was aroused only over wrong done to others, particularly the weak and helpless." (How To Be Good - And Mad; Christianity Today; Muly 19, 1968; pg. 4)

Righteous anger is properly focused and directed. Righteous anger "is directed not against persons, wrong though they be, but against wrong deeds, things, institutions, and situations." (Ibid)

Righteous anger seeks positive and constructive action to end the wrong that occasioned the anger.

"We do not see the vital point,
That 'tis the eighth most deadly sin,
To wail, 'The world is out of joint',
And not attempt to put it in." (Ibid)

As Christians we are "duty bound, not merely to protest against whatever evils prevent human beings from reaching their full God-intended stature, but to do all in our power to end such evils... It is always characteristic of righteous anger that it not only protests but also proposes, that it not only raises its voice to object but also raises its hand to remedy." (Ibid)

Let's not forget that Jesus was angry with a holy indignation on occasion (Mark 3:1-6; John 2:14-16). The apostle Paul was angry on one occasion with the apostle Peter because the latter betrayed the basic principle of 'salvation by faith', and attempted to bind Gentile converts with Jewish law (Galatians 2:11-16).

When Abraham Lincoln, as a young man, saw "the slave market at New Orleans for the first time, he is reported to have said, 'Let's get out of this, boys. If I ever get any chance to hit this thing, I'll hit it hard.'" (Ibid)

Aristotle once said, "Anyone can become angry; it is easy. But to be angry with the right person to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not easy!"

"Father, help me not to sit back, passively observing wrong practices around me, inwardly seething with anger because of them, but actively doing nothing to rid society of evil institutions. Stimulate a holy anger within me, and harness that anger to high and holy causes. For the sake of Christ's kingdom. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: By God's grace, I will not only raise my voice to object to evil, but will raise my hand to help eliminate evil!

PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ANGER

All human beings experience anger, for it is a basic emotion with which we are born.

Perverted anger is stored in what can be called the 'slush fund' of our subconscious mind. I once heard a psychiatrist outline the following as inadequate ways of dealing with anger: (1) Putting it down - saying anger is really not there. (2) Putting it off - delayed response in dealing with anger. (3) Putting it on - 'Scapegoating' or using someone else to vent one's anger upon. (4) Diluting it - feeling anger but diluting it to make it less intense. (5) Freezing it - removing one's self from what he feels, attempting to freeze his feelings.

Anger is a basic emotion which must be dealt with, rather than denied. If one can't feel anger, then one cannot feel love intensely. One must feel all his emotions or none of them. To negate anger is to negate love.

It is true that anger varies in degrees of responses and in kinds. Anger many times is expressed towards people whom one considers important in his life.

There is what one might call 'cold anger' and 'warm anger'. Cold anger is sinful and ungodly and very hurtful, for it cares nothing for the person, and undermines and destroys relationships. Cold anger can be unexpressed and thus turned inwardly, resulting in bitterness and malice.

'Warm anger' is healthy and is the kind of anger God Himself expresses. Little time elapses between the stimulus (anger) and the expression (proper treatment with the subject). There is no vindictiveness, and there is a willingness to listen to the other person's responses and viewpoints. In this anger there is a warm emotional exchange in an atmosphere of self-control. There is no exchange of malicious words and there is no coercion. There is no grudge-carrying. This anger is short-lived, and it results in a cleansing effect in loving relationships. It is followed by forgetting and forgiving, and results in increased confidence between the parties involved. Warm anger builds relationships and is an expression of love. It is reaction against the bad things in a loved one, and it works for the removal of that which is hindering the fuller development of the loved one.

Jesus' anger was always a 'warm anger'; He was always seeking to bring conviction out of complacency; to bring insight out of spiritual blindness; to restore righteousness where evil was rampant!

"Heavenly Father, deliver me from oversensitivity and touchiness which oftentimes become the bridgehead for sin - the sin of carnal anger. Let me be so enraptured by your love that I will be oblivious to the hurts and insults others inflict upon me. Unleash my anger in defense of the weak and oppressed, not in defense of my own rights. In Jesus' name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who is able to control his anger is stronger than he who can control an entire city!

POWER OF A RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

Although it must be admitted that most of our anger is carnal and self-centered, there is a great need for the expression of Spirit-controlled anger. Writes A. Powell Davies: "That is one of the truly serious things that has happened to the multitude of so-called ordinary people. They have forgotten how to be indignant. This is not because they are overflowing with human kindness, but because they are morally soft and compliant. When they see evil and injustice, they are pained but not revolted. They mutter and mumble, they never cry out. They commit the sin of not being angry. Yet their anger is the one thing above all others that would make them count. If they cannot lead crusades, or initiate reforms, they can at least create the conditions in which crusades can be effectual and reforms successful. The wrath of the multitude could bring back decency and integrity into public life; it could frighten the corrupt demagogue into silence and blast the rumormonger into oblivion. It could give honest leaders a chance to win." (Christianity Today; July 19, 1968; How To Be Good - And Mad; pg. 4)

Should we not, as believers, be angry against a situation that allows a liquor traffic which is taking thousands of lives and destroying thousands of homes?

Should we not, as believers, be angry because of millions of unborn babies being aborted, made possible because of the selfish agreements made between consenting women and consenting doctors - all in the name of 'personal rights'?

Should not Christians be angry because of violence and sexual exploitation on television?

Do not Christians have a right to be angry because of the widespread disregard for the Lord's Day, with so many today making Sunday a holiday instead of a holy day?

Jesus was both grieved and angry because of the hardness of men's hearts. Should not Christians be angry for the same reasons?

Frederick Robertson was one of the greatest preachers of the 19th century. His biographer writes of him: "The indignation with which he heard of a base act was so intense that it rendered him sleepless. His wrath was terrible, and it did not evaporate in words. But it was Christ-like indignation. With those who were weak, crushed with remorse, fallen, his compassion, long-suffering and tenderness were as beautiful as they were unfailing. But falsehood, hypocrisy, the sin of the strong against the weak, stirred him to the very depths of his being." (Ibid)

"Father, don't let me be complacent in a world where evil abounds. Help me to put in motion those movements which will result in healing society's wounds. Help me to exercise terrible anger against sin but a tender compassion towards sinners. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My vision of spiritual degradation will cause my heart to break with a tender compassion for sinners and my soul to kindle with a holy wrath against sin!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM CARNAL ANGER'

1. How do you distinguish between carnal anger and righteous anger?
2. What are some of the harmful effects of carnal anger, both socially and physically?
3. Describe and define the two kinds of anger of which the Bible speaks.
4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Most anger is born out of deep insecurity and is evidence of an unsundered ego."
5. What is one of the primary answers to controlling anger in one's life?
6. Will God destroy anger or simply rechannel and cleanse anger in the life of the believer when the Holy Spirit does His sanctifying work in the life of the believer?
7. List at least three characteristics of righteous anger.
8. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is always characteristic of righteous anger that it not only protests but also proposes, that it not only raises its voice to object but also raises its hand to remedy."
9. Give examples from the life of Christ when Christ manifested anger, and describe the distinguishing characteristics of his anger that made it righteous rather than carnal.
10. Do you agree with Aristotle's statement: "Anyone can become angry; that is easy. But to be angry with the right person to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not easy!"
11. Name and describe five inadequate ways, from a psychological viewpoint, to deal with anger.
12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Anger is a basic emotion which must be dealt with, rather than denied. If one can't feel anger, then one cannot feel love intensely."
13. What is the difference between 'cold anger' and 'warm anger' and describe the characteristics of both.
14. Why is oversensitivity oftentimes the bridgehead for sin - the sin of carnal anger?
15. What are some of the moral and social situations in our present world that ought to be the occasion for inciting righteous indignation in the hearts of sincere Christians?
16. Do you agree with the following statement: "Spiritual maturity can largely be measured by the degree that one's heart is able to break with a tender compassion for sinners while at the same time his soul is able to be kindled with a holy wrath against sin!"

CHAPTER 12

FREEDOM FROM RESENTMENT

KEEPING THE 'WALLS' DOWN!

The Church is to be a center of healing. The source of healing is God, but the context of healing is the fellowship of believers in the Church. James wrote, "Confess your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James 5:16)

"Bishop Herbert Spaugh, of The Moravian Church in the U.S.A., writes about four symbolic objects in a tray on his desk: a pincushion, a nail, a sprinkler head, and an oil can. 'First is the pincushion. The purpose of a pincushion is to receive the pins and needles stuck into it. So part of our task in maintaining emotional health is bearing the pin pricks of others who are frustrated and harassed. The purpose of the nail is to remind me that I must keep myself nailed to the Cross and keep Christ on the throne of my life. A sprinkler head is a part of a sprinkler system... This is a reminder to turn on the Bible promises and let them permeate my thinking and my emotions. Finally there is the oil can which is a reminder of my responsibility to be loving and appreciative in human relationships. This is the best lubricant.'" (Herald; pg. 15; May 16, 1973)

Notes Norman Grubb, "We can liken a man to a house. It has a roof and walls. So also man in his fallen state has a roof on top of his sins between him and God; and he also has walls up, between him and his neighbour. But at salvation, when broken at the Cross, not only does the roof come off through faith in Christ, but the walls fall down flat, and the man's true condition as a sinner saved by grace is confessed before all men. But the trouble soon begins again after conversion, and here lies the basic hindrance to continued revival. Continued revival is continued brokenness, but brokenness is two-way, and that means wells kept down as well as roof off. But man's most deep rooted and subtle sin is the subtle sin of pride. Though hardly realizing it, while we are careful to keep the roof off between ourselves and God through repentance and faith, we soon let those walls of respectability creep up again between ourselves and our brethren. We don't mind our brethren knowing about successes in our Christian living; they can know if we win a soul, if we lead a class, if we get a prayer answered, if we get good things from the Scriptures, because we too get a little reflected credit out of those things. But where we fail, in those many, many areas of our daily lives - that is a different question! If God has to deal with us over our impatience or temper in the home, over dishonesty in our business, over coldness or other sins, by no means do we easily bear testimony to our brethren of God's faithful and gracious dealings in such areas of failure. Why not? Just because of pride...The fact is we love the praise of men as well as of God, and that is exactly what the Scriptures say stops the flow of confession before men." (Continuous Revival; Norman Grubb; pg. 15-17)

"O God, I see that if the Church is to be what it was intended to be, it must recover and practice the warm and open fellowship of confession, sharing, and mutual dependence. The masks must come off and honest confiding must be practiced among Christians within the atmosphere of love. Help me to find the true freedom which comes through honest confession."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: With God's help I will keep the walls of alienation down, and keep the bridges of loving fellowship intact through intimate sharing, honest confession, and mutual burden-bearing!

Ephesians 4:30-32; James 3:2,3

FORBEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER

Every Christian is called to follow the example of Christ who was kind and compassionate and forgiving. Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers: "Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives." (Eph. 4:31 Living Bible)

One of the most important and essential qualities of the sincere Christian is the ability to confess his shortcomings and sins to his fellow men. Why say, 'I'm sorry'? Simply because I, as a believer, am only a "Christian-in-the-making"! I am subject to weaknesses in the body and mind, and I am subject to the possibility of sinning in the spirit. Both weaknesses and sins can adversely affect human relationships and Christian fellowship.

Even among fellow believers, there is a need to forgive and to be forgiven. Extending and receiving forgiveness is the 'oil in the machinery of human relationships'. No machine can run without oil and no human relationship can long be maintained without the ability to extend and to receive forgiveness.

During the next several days, let us together consider several reasons why Christians need to practice saying 'I'm sorry'.

Believers need to ask forgiveness because, even though their motives may be pure, their actions can at the same time be faulty and misunderstood. This can be illustrated with some common examples. A parent looks not only at a child's actions and performance as evidence of a child's love for the parent, but also at the child's motives. Does a mother despise the crude, child-like drawing which her small child gives to her on Mother's Day? Never! The good mother sees the love behind the act, and the drawing (be it ever so imperfect) is cherished because of the child's love. Also, a loving husband does not judge his wife's love for him on the basis of her perfect performance. The wife's devotion and love for the husband may be total and complete, but her actions and words may be very imperfect and at times even crude.

The same is true in any genuine human relationship. Fellow Christians ought to see behind every action and word, to the intention and the motive and the desire. However, because we Christians cannot always see 'below the surface' to the motives, but instead become preoccupied with the imperfect actions and words, we need to confess to each other when actions and words are misunderstood by our fellow Christians. One's actions and words do not always reflect the true motives of the heart, but when one realizes that his actions and words are misunderstood, he needs to communicate the true meaning and intention of his actions and words. "Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through. Don't quarrel with anyone. Be at peace with everyone, just as much as possible." (Romans 12:17-18 Living Bible)

"Lord, when I slip and unintentionally say the wrong thing, help me to have the humility, sensitivity, and courage to say 'I'm sorry' to the person whom I have hurt or offended. In Jesus' charitable name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I cannot claim perfect behavior or perfect words, but I can claim to serve a perfect God who can perfect my motives within and who can enable me to harmonize my relationships without!

TREASURES IN EARTHEN VESSELS

Why do we Christians need to ask forgiveness of each other, to say 'I'm sorry'? Because we are all subject to weaknesses, misunderstandings, and even sin. None of us is perfect (Gal. 6:5 Living Bible).

Because of the presence of strong-willed opinions among sincere Christians, there is sometimes misunderstandings and consequently a need for seeking forgiveness. Sharp differences in opinions sometimes sever strong-willed Christians. The contention between Paul and Barnabas was so great that they parted company (Acts 15:36-41). Christians oftentimes differ in outlook, tastes, and opinions, and from this alone, misunderstandings arise. It is quite easy to talk, but often hard to listen. It is easy to be so convinced that one is right in his views, that he becomes close-minded even to the suggestions or opinions of other Christians. The clash of strong-willed opinions oftentimes breeds misunderstanding. Someone said, "To be always right is to be always wrong." When strong differences of opinion on an important issue cause misunderstanding in relationships, believers need to extend forgiveness and receive forgiveness.

Because of the fact of God-given differences in temperaments, there is a need for understanding, forbearance, and even forgiveness. "We need to remember that each of us has inherited certain temperaments and that there are some things which are part of our physical nature...There is as much difference in the temperaments of people as there is in horses. Some horses are slow and easy going by breeding, while others are spirited and high-strung by breeding. They can both be broken and used in a great way, but their natures will never be changed. The same thing is true of people. Some people are by nature slow, placid and calm. They were born that way; they do not deserve any credit for being that way. It is just as much a part of them as the color of their eyes. Now their temptation may not be with temper and nervousness...On the other hand there are some people who are by nature high-strung and of a nervous temperament. Now when they get the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, all of that temperament is not taken away. If it were, they would be useless. It is a part of their make-up. They will have to guard at this point and cultivate the grace of patience and learn to be patient with other people who are slower than they are." (Earthen Vessels; John Church; pg. 52)

The Christian with an impulsive temperament may be misunderstood by the Christian whose temperament is passive. The cheerful temperament may have problems understanding the artistic temperament which is given more often to moodiness. The activistic temperament may have problems with the meditative temperament. The extrovertive temperament may grow impatient with the introvertive temperament. When different temperaments conflict and patience grows thin, there is need for the oil of forgiveness.

"Lord, help me to be patient with those who differ with me, and help me to overlook the personality flaws in others while I focus on their strengths and virtues. Make me slow to judge and quick to forgive."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When I feel I must disagree with another person, I will disagree agreeably, maintaining the 'unity of the faith in the bond of peace'.

A CALL TO DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ONE ANOTHER

There are many reasons why Christians need to learn to forgive one another. Another reason is this: Because of the fact of 'Repressed Complexes' among sincere Christians, the expressions of which may prove to be offensive and misunderstood. Dr. Mavis, former long-time professor at Asbury Seminary, explains and illustrates this point quite clearly. Notes Dr. Mavis, "The term 'repressed complexes' refers to emotionally toned feelings, memories, and ideas that were excluded from the conscious because they were stressful, humiliating, and painful. These feelings, memories, and ideas became buried in the unconscious beyond the reach of volitional recall, but they remained dynamic, being the source of many unconscious urges. Repressed complexes, representing some of the deep drives of human personality, exert an enormous influence upon human behavior...Repressed complexes are often rooted in unfulfilled personality needs, in situations in which one has been deprived of basic emotional satisfactions. There is an urge in every person to fulfill the basic needs of human personality, namely, a sense of security, of love, and of adequacy.

"An instance from the laboratory of life will illustrate the working of repressed urges. John Smith, a lay leader in a holiness congregation, is given to making frequent references concerning his achievements, and some of his fellow members say that he is ambitious in the matter of holding offices. He becomes depressed if he is criticized and downcast if his ideas are not accepted. At such times he finds it hard to be thoroughly cooperative.

"Smith has gone to the altar during every revival meeting for the last several years and has professed each time to be sanctified. His old problems have returned a few days following each altar victory. Smith told his pastor that he had sincerely believed at the time of each revival meeting that he had been really sanctified 'that time'. Most of Smith's fellow members believe that he has never been sanctified because he either will not consecrate himself or he cannot believe.

"A closer view of this earnest man reveals that he has a low sense of personal adequacy. He feels that he is not the equal of other people, whereas, as a matter of fact, he is more capable than most of the other lay officers. He longs fervently for a healthful sense of recognition which he was denied in his childhood. In desiring to view himself as a man among men, he makes frequent references to his achievements. The election to an office is the most tangible evidence that he is adequate. The acceptance of his ideas, which are usually sound, is the best certification that he is equal to others. Smith's deep urge for a sense of wholesome recognition and adequacy is the source of his acts that suggest self-enhancement." (The Word and The Doctrine; Chapter 23; Mavis; pg. 311,312)

"O God, I am increasingly seeing that there is always need for great charity and restraint in judging fellow Christians' actions, many of which can be wrongly interpreted. Help me to evidence a forgiving spirit, in light of the fact that the expressions of 'repressed complexes' can appear to be carnal, when in fact, they are not motivated by carnal desires at all.

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Helping others to discover and to fulfill their greater potentials is one of the greatest thrills of life!

Matthew 7:12; Galatians 6:9-10; James 4:17

CONFESSING OUR SINS OF OMISSION

Sins of commission (I John 3:4) need forgiveness. But what about sins of omission (James 4:17)? They too need forgiveness! Many pagan religions have an ethical standard of a negative prohibition:

Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."

Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

However, Jesus said, "Treat other people exactly as you would like to be treated by them - this is the essence of all true religion." (Matt. 7:12 Phillips) Jesus commanded us not to do evil - true! But far, far more than this! Jesus "gave a commission, not a prohibition...It's not a matter of not doing to others but of doing the thoughtful, considerate, sympathetic thing." (The Freedom of Forgiveness; David Augsburger; pg. 110)

How carefully should we apply this standard to our lives? "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10) When I have opportunity to do good and do it not, then I have sinned against God and man - and I need forgiveness. This means that I am constantly in need of mercy and forgiveness - from God and from my fellow men! When I have opportunity to do good to my neighbor and do it not - I have sinned. When I fail to pray for those that are my duty to pray for, I have sinned against them. It was Samuel who said to King Saul, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." When I cease to pray, I sin against God and against my fellowman. Have you ever asked anyone to forgive you for not praying more consistently or fervently for him?

When I have opportunity and fail to attend the House of God (Church) for public worship or for prayer, I have sinned against God, against myself, and against my fellow brother whom I should have helped through my presence at the public worship service or prayer meeting or Bible study group. Hebrews 10:25 says, "Let us not neglect our church meetings." When I neglect them, I sin against the fellowship group who are depending upon me. 'I am my brother's keeper'. To neglect the means of grace - prayer, Scripture reading, fellowship, witnessing - is to sin.

"Neglect is the greatest sin of all. To neglect God's offer of new life, to neglect God's free gift of salvation, to neglect God's power for living, to neglect doing God's work in our world, to neglect being God's people today - is the sin that damns a man forever. And by his own choice. 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation' (Hebrews 2:3)?" (The Freedom of Forgiveness; David Augsburger; pg. 108)

"O God, help me never to forget what a godly man once said to John Wesley when the latter was searching for spiritual fulfillment: 'Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.' In Jesus' name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To know God is to find myself, in order to give myself away to others.

I Corinthians 4:1-5; Matthew 7:1

CONFESSING OUR SINS OF 'JUDGMENTALISM'

Because the body is weak, temptation is strong, and Satan is subtle, it is possible for a Christian to stumble into sin and, as a result, seriously offend his brother. The Christian who falls into sin needs love, mercy, and forgiveness - not condemnation or criticism. "Dear brothers, if a Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help his back onto the right path, remembering that next time it might be one of you who is in the wrong. Share each other's troubles and problems, and so obey our Lord's command. If anyone thinks he is too great to stoop to this, he is fooling himself. He is really a nobody." (Galatians 6:1-3 Living Bible)

Matthew 7:1 says, "Judge not that ye be not judged." When I judge another Christian brother, I sin against him. Barclay suggests three reasons why no one is capable of judging another: (1) We never know the whole facts or the whole person. We cannot understand his circumstances or temptations. (2) It is almost impossible for any man to be strictly impartial in his judgement. (3) No man is good enough to judge another man. Our own faults and our own inability to resolve them automatically disqualify us as fair critics.

Notes John Church, "This leads me to call your attention to the fact that in the Book of Leviticus, the 13th and 14th chapters, the truth is brought out in a very striking way, that sometimes there was brought to the High Priest a person who had an eruption which looked very much as if the person was a leper. However, the High Priest was not hasty in his judgement of that person, for it was a serious thing to pronounce him a leper. If there was any doubt at all in the mind of the Priest, he always gave the person involved the benefit of the doubt. He had him shut up for seven days and then he looked again. If he was still not sure, he withheld judgement and had the person shut up for seven more days. In some cases this was repeated until a period of twenty one days passed before he would pass final judgment on a person. I have often read this passage and thought of what a wonderful thing it would be if all Christian people would manifest the same patience in judging their fellow men about their sins and faults. Just suppose that we would be willing to wait twenty one days before we finally passed judgment upon the conduct of our brother. What a different world this would be! The trouble with us is that we condemn and pass judgment before all the evidence is in, and many people are condemned before they have a hearing. Too bad that this is true, for many lives have been hurt and reputations have been ruined by such hasty judgment. Let us be patient and wait until all the evidence is in; it may not be as bad as we think." (Earthen Vessels; pg. 16,17)

"Father, forgive me for my critical, judgmental attitude towards my fellow Christians in the church. Help me to be slow to speak and quick to listen, slow to judge and quick to forgive. In Jesus' charitable name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Jesus said 'Judge Not', and He also said 'Ye shall know them by their fruits'. Fruit-testing (I John 4:1-3)? Yes! Critical Judging (Matthew 7:1)? No!

FORGIVENESS ASSURES CONTINUING HAPPINESS AND HEALTH

Forgiveness is important to assure one's continuing happiness and health. I am not built for hate and I am not built to carry grudges, but rather I am built for cultivating love. Anger has devastating effects upon the physical body. "Some doctors put a tube down through the nostrils of a man into his stomach. They tested the contents of his stomach according to the states of his mind. When he was in good humor, digestion went on normally; but after they had purposely made him angry, digestion completely stopped. Only when they brought him back into good humor would digestion start again. This fact was at the basis of a doctor's advice when he said: 'You ought to feel good-minded when you eat. If you don't feel good-minded, you'd better lay off from your eating.'" (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 52)

A doctor was baffled over the cause of sickness in a baby. One day in visiting the child he came into the home while the parents were quarrelling, and saw the mother suckling the baby meanwhile. The doctor threw up his hands and said, 'Now I know what is the matter with your baby-you are poisoning it by this ill will.' The poison was in the mother's milk, put there by anger. In two days the child was dead." (Ibid; pg. 52)

Says E. Stanley Jones, "Hate is sand in the machinery of life; love is oil - and life works better with oil than with sand. The lovers love others - and themselves; the haters hate others - and themselves." (Ibid; pg. 56)

There is a popular book that is entitled 'Love or Perish', and that precisely is man's choice. The man who refuses to receive God's love and who refuses to love others is perishing - gradually but surely - mentally, spiritually, and even physically!

"Let there be no more resentment, no more anger or temper, no more violent self-assertiveness, no more slander and no more malicious remarks. Be kind to one another; be understanding. Be as ready to forgive others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:30-32 Phillips)

"Never pay back evil for evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through. Don't quarrel with anyone. Be at peace with everyone, just as much as possible. Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for he has said that he will repay those who deserve it. Don't take the law into your own hands. Instead, feed your enemy if he is hungry. If he is thirsty give him something to drink and you will be 'heaping coals of fire on his head.' In other words, he will feel ashamed of himself for what he has done to you. Don't let evil get the upper hand but conquer evil by doing good." (Romans 12:17-21 Living Bible) There is a saying that goes: "Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging an injury makes you but even with him; forgiving it sets you above him!"

"Father, help me not to hold grudges. Help me hardly even notice when others do me wrong (I Cor. 13:5). Enable me to forgive forgetfully! May there never be room in my heart for the memory of a wrong. Release me from all bitterness and resentment! In Jesus' powerful name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will react positively to people's negative actions, never allowing the rude actions and the crude attitudes of senseless people to determine my behavior!

FORGIVE IN ORDER TO BE FORGIVEN!

"I never forgive", General James Oglethorpe said to John Wesley. "Then I hope, sir", replied Wesley, "you never sin!" Says David Augsburger: "If you intend to claim all your rights in life, to even all scores against you, to demand every penny ever owed you, then go ahead. But if you give no inch, expect no second chances; if you show no mercy, do not hope for mercy; if you extend no forgiveness you can expect none. Life, love, mercy, and forgiveness are all two-way streets. To receive, you must give. Humbly. Aware that you are constantly in need of the understanding and acceptance of others and the loving mercy of God. 'All that take the sword shall perish by the sword', said Jesus Christ. Is there any doubt?"

Said Jesus, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14,15)

When we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," we are making a proposition with God! We are proposing to God that He treat us in the same way we treat our fellowmen, in regards to offenses and sins. We are really asking God to forgive us in the very fashion as we forgive those who sin against us!

How do we want God to treat us? With justice or with mercy? With mercy! We want God to forgive us and to forgive us Immediately, Constantly, Finally, and Completely, and we want God to Forget as well as Forgive! And this is the way God does forgive, and this is the way we ought to forgive others. When God forgives us, we want Him to be on speaking terms with us - warmly communicating and fellowshiping with us again.

Notes Augsburger, "Beyond even forgetting, there is healing! Reconciliations! Forgiveness is not finally complete until the severed friendship is mended. And the new weld of depth-forgiveness should result in a deeper, stronger union afterward than ever existed before!"

Our Scripture for today teaches us that if we withhold forgiveness, then our own forgiveness from God is withheld or forfeited! In this story in Matthew 18:21-35, "Jesus teaches that the forgiveness of God, though fully and freely granted in pure mercy and grace to undeserving sinners, nevertheless remains conditional, according to the individual's subsequent response to the gracious forgiveness which he has received. This is the point of His parable. To deny this is to deny that the parable has meaning." (Life In The Son; Shank; pg. 39)

George Herbert once wrote, "He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven; for everyone has need to be forgiven."

"Father, when I am tempted to hold grudges and to 'lick my wounds', help me to remember that no one could inflict more hurt on me than what I have already inflicted on You when I helped crucify your Son through my sins! If you can forgive me the big sins I have sinned against you, how can I withhold forgiveness from those who have, either thoughtlessly or volitionally, sinned against me? Let me enjoy the freedom of forgiveness!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will forgive all, in order that I might know forgiveness of all!

LEARNING TO FORGIVE

Notes William Barclay, "If we are to forgive we must learn to understand. There is a proverb which says, 'To know all is to forgive all.'" (The King and the Kingdom; pg. 135)

We must seek to understand the motives for people's behavior. We must be slow to judge and quick to forgive. Impoliteness may be caused by worry or pain. Suspicion may be caused by misinformation. Impatience may be caused by bad nerves. To understand the cause for one's behavior is to be aided in developing the forgiving spirit. How much easier it would be to forbear with one another, if we sought to understand the personality make-up and the behavioral motives of those with whom we differ.

Not only must we learn to understand, but we must learn to forget. "Our memories are queer things; they have a bad habit of forgetting the things we ought to remember and remembering the thing we ought to forget... We must never say that we will never forget what someone has done to us; we must never allow our minds to think and brood about anything that has been done to us. It is difficult - only Jesus can make us able to do it, but we must learn to forget." (Ibid)

Barclay further notes, "If we are to forgive, we must learn to love others. That is what Jesus told us to do when he told us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). The word Jesus uses, 'to love', is a very interesting word. ...It is a word which means that no matter what the other person does to us we will never seek anything but his good. We will never do to him as he did to us; we will do to him as we would like him to do to us.

"Abraham Lincoln was blamed for being far too kind and courteous to those who were his opponents and his enemies. His friends told him that he was foolish to behave like that; that his duty was to destroy his enemies. His answer was, 'Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?'

"When we learn to love others then we win the greatest of all victories; we forgive them; and by loving them, by seeking nothing but their good, we change our enemies into our friends." (Ibid)

The need to forgive is apparent, even among sincere Christians: (1) Because of faulty judgment among sincere Christians, (2) Because of different degrees of spiritual 'light' among sincere Christians, making it easy for believers to judge each other, (3) Because of the presence of strong-willed opinions among sincere believers, (4) Because of the fact of God-given differences in Christians' temperaments, (5) Because of the fact of 'Repressed Complexes' among sincere Christians, the expressions of which may prove to be offensive and misunderstood, (6) Because fellow believers can sin against each other through neglect, (7) Because fellow Christians can willfully and hurtfully sin against each other.

"Father, I now realize that health and happiness come only when I constantly express good will towards all persons - even my offenders. I further realize that my enjoyment of forgiveness from You is maintained as I maintain a forgiving spirit towards others. Help me, therefore, to forgive others just as you, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven me!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Learning to understand, learning to forget, and learning to love with God's love, all lead to an abundant life here and eternal life hereafter!

UNUSUAL EXAMPLES OF FORGIVENESS

Said Jesus, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:44,45) An Armenian asked E. Stanley Jones one time, "How can I forgive the Turks?" Jones replied, "I could tell him only how one Armenian girl has been enabled to forgive a Turk. She and her brother had been attacked by Turks in a lane, and while she had escaped by climbing over a wall, her brother had been brutally killed before her eyes. She was a nurse, and later on while nursing in the hospital recognized one of her patients as the very Turkish soldier who had murdered her brother. Her first feeling was: Revenge! He was very ill, just hovering between life and death. The slightest neglect, and he would die. And no one would know. His life was absolutely in her hands. But instead of revenge she decided for Christ's sake to forgive him. She fought for his life and won, nursing him back to health. When he was convalescent, she told him who she was. The Turkish soldier looked at her in astonishment and said, "Then why didn't you let me die, when you had me in your power?" 'I couldn't', answered the girl. 'I just couldn't, for I am a Christian, and my own Master forgave His enemies who crucified Him. I must do the same, for His sake.' 'Well', said the hardened Turk in astonishment, 'If that is what it means to be a Christian, I want to be one.'" (Abundant Living; pg. 59)

In the heart of the African continent is the tiny land of Burundi, a country no bigger than the state of Delaware. Yet within this small area, several years ago, carnage and suffering took place on a gigantic scale. The trouble began when the Hutus made an attempt to overthrow the ruling tribe. The attack failed, and the Hutus launched a campaign of vicious reprisals that had all the appearance of racial genocide. Hundreds of thousands were brutally killed, an estimated 1 out of 8 people in the entire country! The reprisals in Burundi were not directed primarily against the Christians, but against the Hutus as a tribe. However, since many of the Hutus were Christians, the leadership of the Church became decimated. A Christian leader looked into the eyes of the frenzied soldier who loomed over him with a club, battering his bloody head. And the Christian said to his murderer, "I do not despise you. Satan do this through you. I forgive you." Many Christians died, forgiving their murderers.

It is written concerning Jesus, "He never sinned, never told a lie, never answered back when insulted; when he suffered he did not threaten to get even; he left his case in the hands of God who always judges fairly." (I Peter 2:22,23 Living Bible) Jesus is our example to follow. Through the enabling grace of God, you can forgive those who have injured you!

"Father, your grace is all-sufficient. Help me never to condone wrong, but let me also never condemn the wrong-doer. Vengeance is Yours! You will repay. It is my duty to love and to forgive. Uproot the bitterness in my heart and shed abroad your love in my heart by your powerful Holy Spirit. Enable me to return good for evil, and thus fulfill the royal law of love!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God will enable me both to hate sin intensely and to love sinners unconditionally!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM RESENTMENT'

1. Do you agree with the following statement: "The source of healing is God, but the context of healing is the fellowship of believers in the local Church." (Note James 5:16)
2. Is it possible for a hurting believer to experience personal spiritual healing from God without that same believer openly confessing his sins to God and openly sharing his hurts with his fellow believers?
3. What is the symbolism behind each of the four objects which Bishop Spaugh had on his office desk?
4. What conditions does Norman Grubb say must be maintained if the Church is to enjoy continued revival?
5. Why is it so important for fellow believers, within the context of the local church, to understand the motives and the desires and the intentions behind each others actions and words? Is it necessary for a believer to acknowledge his faulty actions, if behind his faulty actions there are pure motives? Why or why not?
6. What kinds of challenges sometimes arise in the fellowship of the local church because of the presence of many different strong-willed Christians and because of the fact of many different temperaments?
7. What are "Repressed Complexes", and how does an understanding of this psychological phenomenon help in dealing with personality conflicts and relationship problems within the context of the local church?
8. How does the "Golden Rule" as taught by Jesus differ from the ethical standards for conduct taught by other religions?
9. Give illustrations and examples of 'sins of omission'.
10. Why does David Augsburger consider 'Neglect' as the greatest sin of all?
11. Give three reasons why no one is really qualified to judge another person (Matt. 7:1).
12. What does Leviticus, chapters 13 and 14, teach us concerning the attitude of judgmentalism?
13. What attitude should a Christian express towards a fellow Christian who has fallen into sin, according to Galatians 6:1-3?
14. What evidence is there that health and happiness can be maintained only as long as one maintains charitable attitudes towards his fellowmen?
15. What does Romans 12:17-21 teach us regarding vengeance? What is the difference between seeking to punish wrongdoers in the name of 'justice', and seeking vindictively to repay those who have mistreated you? What is the difference between redemptive rehabilitation of criminals and vindictive punishment of criminals?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM RESENTMENT' (Con't)

16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: If we withhold forgiveness, then our own forgiveness from God is withheld or forfeited." (Note Matthew 66:14,15; 18:21-35). Is God's forgiveness conditional or unconditional? Is it possible for a one-time believer to become so bitter and hardened and unforgiving in his spirit, that he not only forfeits God's forgiveness but also severs his own relationship with God, thus jeopardizing his personal salvation which could result in ultimate eternal death?

CHAPTER 13

FREEDOM FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS

THE BENEFITS OF SELF-SURRENDER

There is only one way adequately to deal with self-centeredness and pride. That way is the way of self-surrender. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 16:24,25)

Surrender to Christ leads to a right relationship with God, with yourself, and with others.

First, you are freed from the bondage of self-worship to worship of God alone. The irony is this: the more you worship yourself, the more you loath yourself, for you are not made to worship yourself. You are made to worship God alone. Self-worship leads to self-loathing!

Second, when you transfere your worship from self to God alone, you automatically find that you have a new love for yourself. Loving God supremely, you find that you love yourself subordinately. So surrender to Christ gives you a freedom from self-despising and enables you wholesomely to love yourself. "Since you are able to live with God, you are able to live with yourself, to be at home with yourself and rather like yourself. For loving Someone beyond yourself, and more than yourself, you are now free to love yourself." (How To Be A Transformed Person; E.S. Jones; pg. 196)

Third, full surrender to Christ sets up a right relationship to people. On the one hand you are delivered from self-preoccupation. On the other hand, you are delivered from herd bondage - bondage to the group. You are delivered from yourself, in order that you may serve God. You are delivered from peer pressure in order that you may serve people. "The herd urge, hitherto fastened on the futilities of allegiance to society around, is now cleansed from that enslaving bondage and fastened on the fruitfulness of the Kingdom of God. You do not become unsocial, but loving God supremely you can love others subordinately, subordinately, but with a love intensified, you love others with his love." (A Song of Ascents; E.S. Jones; pg. 54)

"The surrender which seems downward, laying down your arms, is actually a surrender upwards. It is a surrender to creative love... It is a paradox, but you are never so much your own than when you are most His. Bound to Him you walk the earth free. Low at His feet you stand straight before everything else. You suddenly realize that you have aligned yourself with the creative forces of the universe so you are free - free to create and free to love, free to live at your maximum, free to be, to be all He wills you to be." (Victory Through Surrender; E.S. Jones; pg. 33)

"Father, as the loose wire surrenders itself to the dynamo, as the paint surrenders itself to the artist, as the marble surrenders itself to the sculptor, and as the ink surrenders itself to the writer, so enable me, a mere man to surrender myself to the almighty Christ. Then I shall find myself throbbing with divine energy, creating love movements wherever I go!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Surrendering the 'title deed' of my life to Christ makes me feel truly 'at home' with myself!

DEVASTATING RESULTS OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Christ has come to deliver from self-centeredness - that universal human disease that manifests itself in a perverted misplacement of self on the throne of life rather than God on the human throne. Self-centeredness and pride are close kinsmen! Pride is the foulest of all sins, and yet the sin that is often disguised as a mere human weakness, of little consequence.

Why is pride the foulest of all sins? For several reasons, some of which we can identify.

Pride results in the dethroning of God! Pride is foul because pride puts oneself in the center of life - the place reserved for God alone! Pride exalts self and causes self-worship rather than worship of God.

Pride is foul because it makes persons into things to be manipulated. Pride relegates every other person to a minor role in the world, resulting in the exploitation of others, the thingification of persons, using others as a means to the end for selfish advancement. Others are seen as small-part actors with oneself as the main actor on the stage of life.

Pride is foul because it constructs barriers in society. All racism and wars and hatred and bitterness is born out of pride. Pride robs men and nations of peace. Pride builds walls between Germans and Frenchmen, between Russians and Poles, between male and female, between blacks and whites, between educated and the illiterate.

Pride is a foul sin because pride builds barriers between man and God. Pride separated the most beautiful angel from God, and made the greatest of all angels into the lowest of all demons. Pride not only changed Lucifer into Satan, but pride causes man the creature to usurp the place of God the Creator. 'Glory to man in the highest' is the motto of modern-day man. Pride makes man self-sufficient. Instead of glorifying God, man glorifies himself! The humanist philosophy is totally centered on man - even deifying man.

Pride is a foul thing because pride, ruling in one's heart, makes forgiveness impossible. "We remember insults long after we have forgotten sorrows. We bridle if someone treats us with contempt and recall the experience with inward anger twenty years after. We are touchy about our birth, our status, our ability... All these are marks of pride." (The Secret of Radiant Living; William Sangster; pg. 66)

"Father, all other enemies can be conquered if my greatest enemy can be conquered - the enemy of an unsundered 'self'. Crucify my arrogant, thrustful, debased, and dominating self, and resurrect me to live an unselfish, Christ-centered life. By Christ's power. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To love myself wholesomely is to die to all self-centeredness!

EGOCENTRICITY - THE CENTRAL PROBLEM

The central problem behind all problems is the problem of egocentricity - that is, putting oneself at the center of his universe.

"There's a Jewish legend about a group of people in a lifeboat. One of them began to saw a hole in the part of the boat directly below his seat. The others yelled at him to stop. He said, defiantly, 'This is my place; I can do what I want with it.' They answered, 'Yes, but if you do what you want, we'll all drown.'" (Canadian Free Methodist Herald; May, 1979; Donald Bastain)

That legend reminds one of the person who is living a self-centered life, oblivious to the needs and rights of others. The self-centered person, like the individual in the legend who wanted to saw a hole in the boat, is a person who is on a course of self-destruction. And while he destroys himself, he can destroy others who are depending upon him.

'Self' in control rather than Christ in control is the cause of all real problems. When several were asked what their greatest need was, here are the answers of several: "I am so full of needs. My greatest need is to surrender myself - lose myself in Christ. I take a handful of pills. I seem to be running away from something." A pastor said: "I'm a 'self-holic' - I'm addicted to myself." A Swedish woman: "I came here with a self I don't like, and yet I have to live with myself." A skeptic said: "I'm glad I don't believe in eternal life. I wouldn't want to live with myself forever." (Victory Through Surrender; E.S. Jones; pg. 11,12)

"Someone asked the head of a mental institution: 'I suppose these people in here are beside themselves?' 'Oh no,' he replied, 'they are very much themselves. They don't think of a thing except themselves. They are pickled in themselves. That's why they are here.'" (Ibid; pg. 14)

"Whether you center upon yourself for artistic, for religious, for financial, or for just purely selfish reasons, the result is the same - the self goes to pieces." (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 43)

"Just as my fingers are rooted in the palm of my hand, so all these outer sins are rooted in the unsundered self. Why do we get angry and 'blow our top'? Because someone has crossed the self. Why do we lie? Because we think it will be some advantage to the self. Why are we dishonest? Same reason. Why are we impure? Because we think it will be some pleasure to the self. Why are we jealous and envious? Because someone is getting ahead of the self. All these outer sins are only fruit - the unsundered self is the disease." (Victory Through Surrender; pg. 30,31)

"Father, to center on myself is to lose myself; to lose myself in your person and plans is to find myself. Help me to make a complete surrender, barring nothing! In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: If I surrender all to the Lord of life, I will receive all from the Lord of life, for self-surrender leads to self-realization!

VARIOUS METHODS IN DEALING WITH 'SELF'

There are many ways to deal with the 'Self'. Depending upon the way we deal with the 'self', we will get either negative consequences or positive results.

There are many inadequate ways to deal with the 'self'. (1) Eliminate the 'self'. But this is impossible, for to eliminate self would be to extinguish personal existence. (2) Know Thyself. But only through knowledge of Christ can one have knowledge of himself. There is a great identity crisis in modern times - people trying to know themselves. Some use drugs as a means of unlocking their inner self. Who is able to reveal the inner identity of man but the Creator of man? (3) Accept Thyself. But how can you accept an unacceptable self, one that is full of conflicts, guilts, frustrations, inferiorities, inhibitions, cynicism, self-loathing? To accept that kind of self is to become unacceptable to one's self. Many feel that they are one big bundle of contradictions, and to ask someone to accept that kind of self is to ask one to become a contradictory person - frustrated completely. Most don't like a lot of things about themselves. (4) Express Thyself. This is not satisfactory, for when many persons are expressing themselves they are expressing carnal, competitive, unconverted, self-centered selves. This sets the stage for clash, confusion, jealousy, and strife. Hell can be defined as a group of self-centered people, all expressing themselves! One cannot cure the disease of self-centeredness by advising all to express their unconverted selves! (5) Center Upon Thyself. To center on self is to frustrate man's altruistic capacity. Man is made to center on Christ and others; to center primarily on self is to be off-center, hence deep frustration. The frustrated self is a self which is alienated from others, alienated because people don't like self-centered persons. People who center upon self, "Start out to draw life to themselves - its joys, its thrills - and all they succeed in drawing to themselves is sadness and disillusionment and sickness - spiritual, mental, and physical." (Abundant Living; E.S. Jones; pg. 45) (6) Defend Thyself. But constantly to be guarding and defending oneself is to dissipate energy which should be spent relating redemptively to others. Such a person is oversensitive, and oversensitive people are critical people and unproductive and non-creative.

Each of these six methods which the world offers, leaves the 'Self' in the center, a 'Self' that is divided and frustrated. They all lead to bondage, not freedom.

"Father, there are ways that seem right unto the world, but the end of those ways is spiritual death. Surrendering my 'Self' to you totally enables me to know myself truly, to accept myself gladly, to express myself lovingly. To center on myself is to lose myself inevitably. I choose to make you the Lord of my 'Self'. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: A purified 'Self' is a 'Self' set free to realize its fullest potential in Christ!

STEPS TO FULL SURRENDER

First, recognize that God is the Center and not you. The humanistic mood of our day puts man at the center of life, with a consequent denial or neglect of God Almighty. You must remember that you are creature, not Creator; son, not Father; subject, not Master; steward, not Lord; man, not God! You must determine that God shall have the same place in your life as He has everywhere else in His vast universe - Center!

Second, draw near to God, and determine with your will to make a full surrender of yourself to God, in spite of your hesitation and fears. Remember, when you surrender to God you are surrendering to a Christlike God. You are surrendering to a God who is all-loving, that is to a God who wants what is best for you. You are surrendering to a God who is all-wise, that is, to a God who knows what is best for you. You are surrendering to a God who is all-powerful, that is, to a God who is able to give what is best for you. Such a God can be trusted, and such a God is worthy of being your Master. You have nothing to fear when you place yourself in the care and keeping of a loving Master!

Third, surrender yourself fully to God's cleansing and creative love. Your 'self' has been frustrated because you have tried to accept an unacceptable self. Now accept yourself as a cleansed self - cleansed of guilts, frustrations, inferiorities, cynicism, fears, etc. Your self is cleansed by Jesus! There is power in the blood of Christ - power to cleanse the deepest stains of self-centeredness from your soul! You can accept a new self which increasingly is becoming Christlike!

Your 'self' has been frustrated because you have expressed your 'self' in a social setting which has been competitive and comparative. This has led to jealousy and strife. Now accept yourself, no longer in horizontal competition with your peers, but as a self which is in the process of vertical development - upward and onward toward the unique standard which God has designed for you. You no longer need to compare and to compete with others - outwardly. God is now your standard, not others. Now you grow and develop with God - upwardly. The fact that God is your standard, releases you, on the one hand, from the contentious and contemptuous atmosphere of peer competition and stress. The fact that God is your standard releases you, on the other hand, from the complacent attitude of self-sufficiency and easy contentment with your present attainments. You are delivered from the stress of carnal competitions, and delivered to the creative pursuits of divinely-given goals.

"Father, cleanse me from all self-centered living, in order that I may be creative in God-centered living. Cleanse me from the negative in my carnal selfhood, in order that I may be creative in your consecrated selfhood. Release me from all horizontal competition and give me your energy to pursue God-given goals. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: What Christ cleanses, He also fills. Cleanses from sin, and fills with Himself!

A WORKING WAY TO LIVE

We continue with the steps to full surrender.

Fourth, after you have given yourself fully to Christ, be bold to take Christ fully as the Lord of your entire life. When you surrender all, the Spirit of God cleanses all. When you surrender all, the Spirit begins creatively to work through you to glorify God, to benefit others, and to bless you. "God will take you as you are and begin to make you what you ought to be... Through identification with him you now begin to learn to take from Him. You are strong in His strength, pure in His purity, loving in His love, victorious in His victory... You live no longer on the unit principle, but on the cooperative plan. You supply willingness and He supplies power." (Victory Through Surrender; E.S. Jones; pg. 109)

Fifth, surrender daily to Christ's love, and allow Him to work in you as He wills. "You have said 'All' to Him and He has said 'All' to you. But there are a lot of little 'alls' under the big 'All'. They will come up day by day and little surrenders will have to be made, made about things and issues you did not realize would be involved. So the surrender is a blanket once-for-all surrender, but also an unfolding surrender. As you have given all you know and all you don't know, the 'don't knows' have to be dealt with as they arise. How? By a continual surrender. You do not fight or suppress the issue, you turn it over to Him and say: 'I am Yours and this thing concerns me, so this is Yours, too. I surrender it. Tell me what to do about it.' That keeps problems and issues from piling up and making you tense and burdened. It is a continual catharsis. You are saved from the tension that comes from suppressing things and driving them into the subconscious sphere where they fester, and also from evading the issues in which case they nag us from the margin of consciousness. You are fulfilling that verse, 'But if we walk in light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Sin cleanses us from all sin'. (I John 1:7) By walking in the light, holding nothing back, you have a continuous fellowship with Christ and a continuous cleansing of your problems and sins. It is a working way to live." (Victory Through Surrender; E.S. Jones; pg. 110)

Surrendering to the lordship of Christ leads to unlimited freedom - freedom to be your true self, freedom to be fulfilled, freedom from fear, freedom to serve people without being in bondage to people, freedom to be creative, freedom to live in harmony with the Universe!

"Father, I see that I have only one true freedom in life - the freedom to choose the Master of my life. How I exercise that freedom determines my destiny - for time and eternity! If I refuse to surrender to You, I choose to surrender to pessimism, to hopelessness, to negativism, to futility, to self-destruction!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I choose to make a once-and-for-all 'blanket' surrender to Christ, and then to learn daily to surrender every new detail of my life to the lordship of Christ!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'FREEDOM FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS'

1. How can the universal human disease of self-centeredness best be described, in terms of its practical manifestations?
2. What is the difference between self-esteem and pride?
3. Why is 'pride' considered to be such a foul sin?
4. If it is true to say that humiliation is a perversion of humility, is it also true to say that pride is a perversion of self-esteem?
5. What Biblical support can you show for the concept that 'Self-surrender leads to self-realization'?
6. Is it realistic to say that pride is the 'hub' from which all other sins are simply the 'spokes'?
7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Just as my fingers are rooted in the palm of my hand, so all these outer sins are rooted in the unsundered self."
8. List and describe six different ways of dealing with the 'Self', all of which are ineffective.
9. What relationships are made right, through a full surrender of one's Self to Christ?
10. List and describe the benefits that derive from a full surrender of one's Self to Christ.
11. Do you agree with the following statement: "It is a paradox, but you are never so much your own than when you are most His. Bound to Him you walk the earth free. Low at His feet you stand straight before everything else."
12. When God becomes your standard by which you grow and develop, instead of others, from what two bondages are you released?
13. List and describe the steps to 'Full Surrender'.
14. What is the relationship between the 'blanket once-for-all surrender' to God and the daily 'unfolding surrender' to God?
15. What experience have you had with implementing the principles of I John 1:7 as a 'working way to live'?
16. List several of the 'freedoms' one enjoys as a result of making a full surrender of his life to Christ.