

CULTIVATING CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

by

Ron G. Christian

An Indepth Devotional Study

of

The Spirit-Filled Life

CULTIVATING CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

by

Ron G. Christian

An Indepth Devotional Study

of

The Spirit-Filled Life

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction i

Chap Page

PART I -- EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Understanding the Work of the Holy Spirit | 1 |
| 2 | Experiencing the Fullness of the Holy Spirit | 8 |
| 3 | Freedom From Self-Centeredness. | 16 |
| 4 | Where Is Your Heart, Head and Hands? | 31 |
| 5 | How Perfect Is 'Christian Perfection'? | 42 |
| 6 | Receiving Pentecostal Power For Living and Witnessing. | 57 |
| 7 | What About 'Speaking In Tongues'? | 74 |
| 8 | How to Maintain the Spirit-Filled Life | 89 |

PART II -- CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 9 | Cultivating the Fruit of Love | 100 |
| 10 | Cultivating the Fruit of Joy and Peace | 117 |
| 11 | Cultivating the Fruit of Patience and Kindness | 132 |
| 12 | Cultivating the Fruit of Goodness and Faithfulness | 143 |
| 13 | Cultivating the Fruit of Gentleness and Self-Control | 156 |

TO

GLENN AND INEZ WHITE

My beloved parents-in-law whose Godly lives
reveal the fact that they have been cultivating
Christlike character for several decades.

INTRODUCTION

"Cultivating Christlike Character" is the most important pursuit of life! To know Christ in all of His fullness is the goal of life. The prayer of Paul for the Ephesian believers (Ephesians 3:14-21) serves as a great and guiding prayer in the believer's pursuit for Christlikeness. "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (NIV)

If the Church is to fulfill its mission in the world--the mission of love resulting in reconciling the world to God--then the Church (and each individual believer in the Church) must be strengthened and empowered! A powerless Church cannot win the battle against a powerful enemy!

The Church is only as strong corporately as each believer is strong individually! Paul's prayer is that each believer will be 'strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man'.

The Holy Spirit is God's Agent to strengthen the Christian. The mighty Spirit of the God of heaven and earth is the same Spirit who breathed upon the chaotic void in creation to bring form and life. The Spirit came upon the prophets of old and they spoke words which brought conviction. It was the Spirit of God which came upon timorous Gideon and made him a bold leader of Israel. It was the Spirit that gave boldness to the one-time fearful Peter. Peter was enabled to preach a powerful sermon to the very people who had crucified Jesus! The result? "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: 'Bretheren, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. . .So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.'" (Acts 2:37,38,41)

What resources does the Father have available for the Church, when the Church is willing to bow its knees before the Father? Nothing less than the power of God's Spirit! "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses. . ." (Acts 1:8)

The Church needs nothing more, and God offers nothing less, than the mighty Holy Spirit!

God strengthens the Christian through his Spirit 'in the inner man'. The 'inner man' refers to man's reason, man's conscience, and man's will.

As believers, we need to be strengthened in our ability to know the difference between right and wrong. In a world of moral relativism, where the 'whites' and 'blacks' have been reduced to 'grays', where it is declared that there is nothing inherently right or wrong, the Christian needs to have a clear sense of moral distinctions. There are 'grays', but one can only discern the 'whites' and the 'blacks'--the areas of moral absolutes.

Some things are still right and some things are still wrong, regardless of all the changes that have come about in our twentieth century! We must not live at the mercy of our passions and instincts. We must rather have the 'mind of Christ' in order to know what is pure and what is impure.

A man once came into my office, disillusioned and discouraged. He had observed so much moral confusion and chaos in the world of his employment that he declared, "Sometimes I wonder what is right and what is wrong in the world today"!

When the Spirit strengthens you in the 'inner man', you will have a clearer moral sense of right and wrong.

To be strengthened in the 'inner man' is to be strengthened also in our Conscience. It is one thing to have a sense of right and wrong in our reason. It is an even greater thing to have a sensitivity personally to right and wrong in our conscience. Knowing right and wrong in our mind must result in feeling the pangs of wrong and the pleasures of right in our conscience. It is important that we allow the Holy Spirit to give us a tough mind to discern right from wrong; it is also important to feel right and wrong in our conscience (heart).

The life of love is a life issuing from a good conscience. Paul writes that the "aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith". (I Timothy 1:5)

Paul wrote also that "by rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith". (I Timothy 1:19)

To be strengthened in the 'inner man' by the Holy Spirit, is to allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen the conscience, in order that the conscience may be a reliable guide to determine the rightness and wrongness of actions and attitudes.

The conscience, by itself, is not always a reliable guide to determine right or wrong actions and attitudes. The conscience simply stands guard over the values one puts into his moral nature.

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 believer's mind by the Holy Spirit!

"From thee that I no more may stray,
No more thy goodness grieve,
Grant me the filial awe I pray,
The tender conscience give;
Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake."

('I Want A Principle Within' by Charles Wesley)

To be strengthened in the 'inner man' is to be strengthened also in our will. It is one thing to have a sense of right and wrong in our minds. It is even a greater thing to have a sensitivity to right and wrong in our heart (conscience). It is greater yet to have power to deny the wrong and to do the right with our will.

It is not he who knows what is right, but he who does what is right that is approved by God. The mind (reason) needs to know right from wrong. The heart (conscience) needs to have moral sensitivity to feel right and wrong. But most important of all, the will needs empowerment to do the right and to shun the wrong.

Paul described the dilemma between knowing the right and the inability to do the right! "It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned, but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind I want to be God's willing servant, but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin. . . Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free." (Romans 7:21-25, Living Bible)

"It is essential weakness of life that so often we know what is right, and we mean to do it, but our will is not strong enough to back our knowledge and to carry out our intentions. As John Drinkwater wrote:

"Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.
Knowledge we ask not, knowledge Thou hast lent,
But, Lord, the will--there lies our deepest need,
Grant us the power to build, above the high intent.
The deed, the deed!
(Daily Study Bible; Ephesians; Barclay, p. 154)

How can the Resource of the Father best be described? The greatest resource of the Father, available to humble Christians, is the Holy Spirit who strengthens us with might in the 'inner man', i.e., in the reason (mind), in the conscience (heart), and in the will.

How should believers who bow before the Father respond to the Father's offer of spiritual resources? Ephesians 3:17 describes our response to the Father in terms of allowing Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith.

To respond to the Father properly is to receive the Son fully! The resources of the Father are imparted to us through the mighty Holy Spirit. When we respond to the work of the Spirit in our lives (in our 'inner man'), then the result is the enjoyment of the indwelling Christ in our lives.

The Holy Spirit's work is never separate from, but always preparatory to, the work of Christ in our lives. To the extent that we respond to the work of the Holy Spirit (who is God's Agent to quicken the reason and to sensitize the conscience and to empower the will), to that same extent will we enjoy the presence of the indwelling Christ! The Holy Spirit is the Instrument of God's work in our lives ("strengthened with might through his Spirit" v. 16), but it is Christ who is the Substance of God's glory in our lives. The Holy Spirit came, not to glorify Himself, but to glorify Christ in our lives. Jesus spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit when he said, "He (the Holy Spirit) shall praise me and bring me great honor by showing you my glory". (John 16:14, Living Bible)

One cannot adequately respond to the Father without receiving the Son. No one comes to the Father except through the Son. To receive the resources of God, given through the Spirit, is to respond in faith to Christ. Only he, in whose heart Christ is abiding, is enjoying the benefits and blessings of the Father.

The resources of the father are great--strength in the 'inner man' (reason, conscience, will) through the mighty Holy Spirit!

The only proper response to these divine resources is the response of faith, by which Christ dwells in our hearts (v. 17). "Without faith it is impossible to please him (God)." (Hebrews 11:6)

What is the outcome or realization when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith? Ephesians 3:19 tells us that, when Christ dwells in our hearts, we will know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.

Love present in our lives and increasing in our lives is the greatest evidence that we have received Christ into our hearts by faith. A faith response to the Father is best evidenced by a love increase in our lives!

This love surpasses knowledge (v. 19). I Corinthians 13:2 says, "If I have. . .all knowledge. . .but have not love, I am nothing".

This love is not theoretical, intellectual or abstract, but this love is practical, personal and concrete. It is possible to know about God's love, but never personally to experience God's love, just as it is possible for persons to know about marriage without ever experiencing marriage love.

This love of God is comprehended or experienced 'with all the saints' (v. 18). "Where is that love to be experienced? How are we to grasp it and find it and enter into it? We find it and we experience it with all God's consecrated people. That is to say, we find it in the fellowship of the Church. John Wesley's saying was true, 'God knows nothing of solitary religion'. 'No man,' he said, 'ever went to heaven alone.' The Church may have its faults; the Church members may be very far from being the people they ought to be; but in the fellowship of the Church we find the love of God." (Daily Study Bible; Ephesians; Barclay, p. 156)

This love, personally experienced by those who respond in faith to receive Christ, has infinite potential for growth. Note Ephesians 3:17-19 (Living Bible): "And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself".

The greatest realization in life is the realization of God's love in our lives. Life, as it was meant to be lived, is life that is indwelt by Christ, and Christ's indwelling presence is manifested through growth in love! Our little lives can be filled with love. When our lives are filled with love, we can be said to be filled with the fullness of God, for 'God is love'. (v. 19)

"Can we contain God's fullness? No. Can we receive it--up to the full measure of our always limited, yet ever enlarging capacity? Yes." (Prayer and Life's Highest; Paul Rees, p. 26)

Are you tempted to doubt that God the Father can give you the kind of love that we have been describing? Then remember Ephesians 3:20: "He is able to do!" "He is able to do exceeding abundantly!" "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us!" When we are loving, we are doing the very thing that can turn a hurting world into a healed world, that can turn a divided world into a united world, that can turn an alienated world into a reconciled world!

"There are three things that remain--faith, hope, and love--and the greatest of these is love." (I Corinthians 13:13, Living Bible)

This is a book on the Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, and love-saturated life. This book can be used in several ways. It can be used as a daily devotional guidebook, with the reader reading one page each day for approximately five months.

Each page includes, along with the practical-oriented devotional reading, an appropriate Scriptural reference, a written Prayer For The Day, and a written Affirmation For The Day. Because the book is divided into thirteen chapters, the layout of the book is designed in such a way that it can easily be used for an adult Sunday School course. The individual chapters contain enough content, and yet are short enough in length, that they could also well serve as material for small midweek study groups within a local church. There are thought provoking questions listed at the end of each chapter, to provide class participants an opportunity to review and to discuss the main content of each chapter. Because there is a developing theme throughout the book it can also be used and read like any other 'regular' book.

It is my hope that, through the reading of this book, believers may better understand the person and the work of the precious Holy Spirit and may hunger and thirst for that deeper experience of 'perfect love' (or as it is sometimes referred to 'entire sanctification'). It matters not what term we use to describe the the 'deeper life'--whether it is termed 'sanctification', 'full surrender', 'Spirit baptism', 'the second blessing', 'perfect love', 'holiness of heart', 'the exchanged life', 'the crucified life', 'the fullness of the Holy Ghost'--the important thing is that we experience all that God expects us, as believers, to experience. But we are talking about more than an initial experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. As important as the initial experience is, it is just as important to understand and to experience the reality of daily 'walking in the Spirit'. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God for the believer. In fact, no greater gift could be given! But this precious gift is not given indiscriminately or unconditionally. The condition for receiving the gift of the Spirit in His fullness is total surrender and wholehearted faith. The believer obtains the fullness of the Spirit through faith, and further, the believer maintains the fullness of the Spirit through faith. The result of obtaining and maintaining the fullness of the Spirit is increase in Christlikeness. While it is true that only the Holy Spirit can create Christlike attitudes and actions within the life of the believer, it is also true that the Holy Spirit cannot accomplish this noble goal without the cooperation of the believer. Hence the title of this book is meant to 'throw some of the weight of the responsibility on the shoulders' of the sincere believer. 'Cultivating Christlike Character' is only possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit--but not independent of the believer's initial faith response, and the believer's daily volitional surrender, and the believer's daily appropriation of God's grace resources. 'Cultivation' depends upon human effort!

One purpose of this book is to shed some 'light' on some rather 'deep' truths regarding the experience and the life of holiness. But, beyond gaining mere intellectual knowledge, it is my hope, as author, that this book will guide earnest believers in their daily cultivation of Christlike character. "Then, when that happens, we are able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and we feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." (Romans 5:5, Living Bible)

Ronald G. Christian

Fort Collins, Colorado

PART I

EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE CONVICTING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The apostle Paul one time asked certain disciples, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed"? (Acts 19:2,3, NIV) Many today are just as ignorant regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit!

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.

In considering the work of the Holy Spirit during the next several days, consider several words, each of which describes one of the many different ministries of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts, convinces, cleanses, comforts, counsels, and communicates.

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." (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 always has this idea of cross-examining a man until he sees and admits his errors, or acknowledge 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; William Barclay)

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict a 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 for 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)

"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 CONVINCING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convince the world of true righteousness, as it is supremely exemplified and personified in Jesus. Comparing other men with Jesus is like comparing coal dust with freshly fallen snow. All others appear unclean and unrighteous in the sight of the sinless and immaculate Son of God.

It is a strange characteristic of sin to reverse values and to change moral standards until right can be called evil, and evil goodness. It is a realistic commentary on the deceitfulness of man's heart, that the Jews who performed the most religious practices in Jesus' day were the same Jews who defamed and rejected the very Son of God! It was the Jewish religious leaders who accused Jesus of keeping bad company with publicans and sinners (Matthew 9:11). It was the religious leaders who accused Jesus of gluttony and intemperance (Matthew 11:19). It was the Jewish High Priest who accused Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65). Jesus' own family on one occasion accused Jesus of insanity (Mark 3:21). The spiritually-blinded Jewish leaders even accused Jesus of being possessed with devils (John 7:20). The hardened, calloused Jewish legalists accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath (John 9:16). The spotless Son of God was accused of treason (John 19:12).

Who would dare say to His fellowman, as Jesus said, "Which of you convinceth me of sin"? Jesus was sinless and to men he declared His sinlessness without giving any evidence of pride. Only the Son of God could do this.

Jesus' disciples spent many months with Jesus under all circumstances. They saw Jesus when He was overcome with weariness or hunger, when the crowds pressed upon Him and the diseased people thronged around him, when the repentant ones cried out to Him, and when the hypocritical challenged Him with subtle questions. The disciples saw Jesus when He was filled with sorrow, following the beheading of John the Baptist. They saw Him when He was sore pressed in His spirit and when He experienced the agony of the Garden. And yet those who knew Christ best declared that He was sinless and pure. Peter, a devout Jew who believed with all Jews in the universality of sin, declared that Christ "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth". (I Peter 2:22)

"The world denied Christ's claim to righteousness, disputed His profession of Messiahship, declared Him to be an execrable imposter, and finally seemed to have triumphed in its attempted demonstration of His unrighteousness, by His crucifixion. . . But just when it seemed that the world had triumphed, and had demonstrated the falsity of Christ's profession, thus putting an end to the religion He had sought to establish, the grandest demonstration of his holiness and of His Messiahship was given to the world by His resurrection from the dead." (The Holy Spirit, A Study, p. 173; Hogue)

"Father, your Son of righteousness shines more brightly than the noonday sun. No sooner can sinful man deny the righteousness of the Son than can man quench the flames of the sun with the waters of earth. His righteousness is from everlasting to everlasting."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Just as Christ's righteousness was demonstrated conclusively through the Resurrection, I will allow the Holy Spirit to demonstrate Christ's righteousness through my new life today!

THE CLEANSING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit cleanses the sinner from the guilt of his sins. The Holy Spirit is the agent in resolving guilt and imparting new life. "But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love toward man appeared, he saved us in his mercy--not by virtue of any moral achievements of ours, but by the cleansing power of a new birth and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he gave us so generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. The result is that we are acquitted by his grace, and can look forward to inheriting life for evermore." (Titus 3:4-7, Phillips)

The Holy Spirit is also the agent in cleansing the believer from the pollution of sin. Man is not only a sinner in practice who needs forgiveness, but man is also a sinner by nature who needs inner cleansing. David acknowledged his need for inner cleansing. "Behold, I was brought forth in (a state of) iniquity; my mother was sinful who conceived me (and I, too, am sinful). . . Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean (ceremonially), wash me, and I shall (in reality) be whiter than snow. . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right, persevering, and steadfast spirit within me." (Psalms 51:5,7,10, Amplified Bible)

The fire which took the appearance of cloven tongues on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) symbolized cleansing. The disciples of Christ needed cleansing from carnal strife and selfish ambition. The Holy Spirit comes to consume the dross of sin and to purify the character of the Christian, enabling the believer to reflect the beauty of Christ's holiness. "He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers soap, and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi." (Malachi 3:2-3) "The illustration is that of a jeweler sitting before his crucible watching the fierce flame as it eliminates the dross leaving the silver so perfectly refined that at length he can see his image in the glowing metal." (To Tell The World, p. 76; Myron Boyd)

Cleansing is the work of the Holy Spirit. He works to refine Christian character and to cleanse away all defilement. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you." (Ezekiel 36:25-26a, NIV) One believer who read these verses found deliverance from sin. "I began to exercise faith, by believing 'I have the blessing now'. Just at that moment a heavenly influence filled the room; and no sooner had I spoken than refining fire went 'through my heart--illuminated my soul--scattered its life through every part, and sanctified the whole'. I then received the full witness of the Spirit that the blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed me from all sin." (Entire Sanctification; Studies in Christian Holiness, p. 73)

"Wash me and I shall be clean! Purge me and I shall be whiter than snow! Renew a right spirit within me and cleanse me from every guilty stain. In Jesus' name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God offers nothing less and I will settle for nothing less than a heart that is totally cleansed from the pollution of sin!

THE COMFORTING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit gives comfort in times of sorrow and loss, but, as Comforter, He does much more than this. The Holy Spirit gives courage to the faint-hearted, strength to the weak, and assurance to the doubter.

The Holy Spirit is man's helper. The Holy Spirit enables the Christian to cope with every circumstance of life. As helper, He is the strengthening and enabling presence of Jesus.

Dr. A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, discovered new strength to cope with life when he surrendered his life completely to the Spirit's control. His testimony is inspiring; "I shall never forget the morning that I spent in my church reading an old musty book I had discovered in my library on the subject THE HIGHER CHRISTIAN LIFE. I had struggled long and vainly with my own intense nature, my strong self-will, my peculiar temptations. My spiritual life had been a constant humiliation. I had talked to my people about the deeper things of the Spirit, but there was a hollow ring, and my heart was breaking to know the Lord Jesus as a living bright, reality. As I poured over that little volume, I saw a new light. The Lord Jesus revealed Himself as a living and all-sufficient presence, and I learned for the first time that Christ had not saved us from future peril, and left us to fight the battle of life as best we could; but He who had justified us was waiting to sanctify us, to enter into our spirit, and substitute His strength, His holiness, His life, His joy, His faith, His power, for all our worthlessness, helplessness and nothingness, and make it an actual living fact. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Across the threshold of my spirit there passed a Being as real as the Christ who came to John on Patmos, and from that moment a new secret has been the charm and glory and strength of my life and testimony. . . I have learned the secret, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me'." (Prayer and Life's Highest; Paul Rees, p. 83)

The Holy Spirit gives the Christian strength to accept trouble without defeat, and to accept success without pride. Take the latter idea. When life heaps honors and favors upon a man, there is the temptation to become spiritually proud. It is when one becomes esteemed in the eyes of the public that one can too easily forget that true greatness is measured in terms of service and not in terms of popularity. In a letter a few weeks before his death, the sainted F. B. Meyer wrote the following to a friend: "I am now 82, and in a nursing home. I want to tell you what the Spirit of God has been showing me lately. That I have acquired a reputation for sanctity by my books. This may grow upon me. It makes one want to creep into heaven unnoticed". (Aldersgate Studies in Christian Holiness, p. 109) The Holy Spirit enables a believer to accept success with humility.

"Father, because of your wonderful indwelling Spirit, I am able to cope with anything that life can hand me. I can accept sorrow without bitterness, trouble without despair, success without pride. During changing circumstances, I serve a changeless God! Glory!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Through Christ's indwelling Spirit I can be what God wants me to be, and do what God wants me to do!

THE COUNSELING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our Scripture reading for today indicates that the Holy Spirit guides the believer into all things. No greater or wiser Counsellor can be found than the Holy Spirit. God has promised to guide the earnest seeker of Truth: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Psalms 32:8) Towards the end of George Muller's life, he said, "I never remember in all my Christian course, a period now of sixty-nine years and four months, that I ever sincerely and patiently sought to know the will of God by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of the Word of God, but I have always been directed rightly." (Prayer and Life's Highest, p. 120; Paul Rees) "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

The Christian life is not a static life; rather, it is a dynamic life with new depths to reach, new horizons to find, and new capacities to develop. It is the Holy Spirit who helps the open minded Christian to find truth, to recall truth, to understand truth, to defend truth, and to spread truth. A stubborn will and a closed mind destroy all receptive powers and make it impossible to receive God's communications.

There are several ways by which the Holy Spirit communicates God's will to the believer.

There is the counsel of others. Consulting a wise, experienced, and tested friend and counsellor will oftentimes save one from many a pitfall and from many a heartache. Read Proverbs 11:14 and Proverbs 12:15.

The Holy Spirit often works through circumstances to reveal God's will to the sensitive Christian. Because God is sovereign, the Christian knows that God controls nature with its laws and history with its events. If the Christian knows that God is big enough and powerful enough to control the laws of nature and the events of history, the Christian also knows that God is loving enough and Fatherly enough to control the circumstances of life which determine personal destiny.

There is prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who enables the true believer to pray effectively. "The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." (Romans 8:26, NIV)

The Bible is another means that the Holy Spirit uses to give guidance and counsel to the Christian. The Psalmist looked to the Word for guidance, and so can every modern-day believer. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. . . The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Psalms 119:105,130)

"Father, help me to be open-minded to receive your truth, tender-hearted to experience your love, and strong-willed to obey your commands. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Easy guidance comes to those who are easily controlled by the Holy Spirit. I will keep the reins of my life in the hands of the Holy Spirit today!

THE COMMUNICATING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus, just before His ascension, spoke of the Holy Spirit's ministry: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses. . ." (Acts 1:8) The rushing mighty wind on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) symbolizes the power of the Holy Spirit--the power to witness. Throughout the Book of Acts, one can see the Holy Spirit's communication of the Gospel through the lives of the disciples.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with power, boldness, and greater love, enabling one to witness effectively to his fellowmen, whether that witness is in word or in deed. Says Bill Bright, "It should be made clear that to be 'filled with the Spirit' does not mean that we receive more of the Holy Spirit, but that we give Him more of ourselves. As we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit and are filled with His presence, He has greater freedom to work in and through our lives, to control us in order to better exalt and glorify Christ". (Ye shall Receive Power, p. 13)

Every Christian needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to be an effective witness. Says Dr. R. A. Torrey, "I have gone through my Bible time and time again checking this subject and I make this statement without the slightest fear of successful contradiction that there is not one single passage in the Old Testament or the New Testament where the Baptism (or filling) with the Holy Spirit is spoken of where it is not connected with testimony for service". (Ibid, p. 18) Says Dr. Oswald J. Smith, "Read the biographies of God's men and you will discover that each one sought and obtained the Enduement of Power from on High". (Ibid, p. 9)

Believers are called to be dead to self-centeredness and alive to Christ (Galatians 2:20). "The Christian's body now becomes Christ's body to use as He wills; the mind becomes His to think His thoughts; the will is now controlled by His will, the total personality, time, and talents are now completely His." (Ye Shall Receive Power, p. 10; Bill Bright)

The Holy Spirit wants to communicate God's love to the world through the instrumentality of the Christian. As Barclay points out, "Jesus Christ is no longer in this world in the body; and therefore, if He wants a task done for Him within the world He has to find a man to do it. If He wants a child taught, He has to find a teacher to teach him. If He wants a sick person cured, He has to find a physician or surgeon to do His work. If he wants His story told, He has to find a man to tell it. Literally, we have to be the body of Christ, hands to do His work, feet to run upon His errands, a voice to speak for Him". (Daily Study Bible; Corinthians, p. 126)

"Father, empower me through the sanctifying work of thy Holy Spirit, that I might witness fearlessly, live peacefully, work tirelessly, give generously, fellowship warmly, and live expectantly. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will use my head (intellect), my heart (affections), and my hands (will) to serve the Lord wholeheartedly in my world today!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

UNDERSTANDING THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. What is the meaning of the Greek word which is translated 'Convict', as this word applies to the work of the Holy Spirit among sinners?
2. How does the convicting work of the Holy Spirit differ from the conviction which results from the application of civil laws in society?
3. What moral realities in our world today make necessary the Convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit?
4. How do the negative reactions of some of Jesus' contemporaries reveal the depth of human depravity and self-deception?
5. Why are the testimonies of the disciples of Jesus, regarding the sinlessness of Jesus, so convincing?
6. What is the grandest demonstration of Jesus' holiness and Messiahship?
7. How does the Cleansing work of the Holy Spirit apply both to the sinner and to the Christian?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Man is not only a sinner in practice who needs forgiveness, but man is also a sinner by nature who need inner cleansing". (Give Scriptural support for your answer.)
9. Share various ways in which the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work as Comforter.
10. From your own personal experience or from your observation of others, illustrate the truth of the following statement: "The Holy Spirit gives the Christian strength to accept trouble without defeat, and to accept success without pride".
11. What relationship does the Holy Spirit have to the Word of God, as regards to the Spirit's ministry of providing guidance and counsel.
12. List and describe several ways by which the Holy Spirit communicates God's will to the believer.
13. According to Bill Bright, what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
14. Based upon a thorough knowledge of the Bible, what does R. A. Torrey say is the manifestation or evidence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life?
15. Through what instrumentality does God accomplish His work in His world today?

CHAPTER 2

EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

HOW "CHRISTIAN" ARE CHRISTIANS?

I have a friend with whom on several occasions I have been involved in rather deep and engrossing conversations about the serious issues of life. He is full of questions about God, about personal and social morality, about the meaning and purpose of personal existence. He is a deep and perceptive thinker and his questions are challenging to answer. He is seeking for truth and reality, but is experiencing many struggles in trying to live the Christian life. During a two hour dialogue together, our discussion soon passed the merely theoretical and abstract and became very concrete and personal. We found ourselves confiding in one another and even confessing our needs and problems to one another. Then my dear friend said something like this to me: "I am a poor representative of Christianity. I wouldn't want anyone to judge Christianity by my life! I may possess many of the skills that would make me a good Church worker, but what I most lack is what is most important, and that is Christian character!"

So many Christians today know the mechanics of Christianity, but lack the power of Christ. Many know intellectually the content of Christian truth, but lack the volitional ability to live the Christian life. There are far too many Christians who are living defeated Christian lives. Many, like my analytically-minded friend, find it easier to analyze Christianity than to live the Christian life.

Notes Dr. Stanley Walters, "In America, religion has not penetrated to the depths of life and its motivation, and as a consequence, the religious boom in many ways has been apparent rather than real. Another way of putting it is to say that in many places our people and our churches are nominally, but not really Christian". (Christianizing the Christian; article by Stan Walters)

What is the cause for the religious boom being apparent rather than real? Is it because Christians have stopped short of experiencing the Spirit-filled life? The "Christian soon finds that his personality is not fully united around the will of God. He has a bent to evil which he must fight against constantly. Flesh and spirit war against each other. . .He has made a start, but he needs a further work of divine grace if he is to fulfill the whole will of God". (Entire Sanctification: Studies In Christian Holiness, p. 30)

When asked about the spiritual state of a certain woman, back came the reply, "Well, she's in a very bad state of mind. She's got just enough Christianity to make her miserable when she's doing wrong, but not enough to make her happy in a prayer meeting".

"Father, what I need most, you are most ready to give--Christlike character. More than skills, I need the Saviour; more than gifts I need the Giver; more than knowledge I need wisdom; more than diamonds I need resources. Make me thoroughly, not nominally, Christian! In Christ's name!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Christ has come into my life that He may sit on the throne of my life. I will gladly allow Him to reign in my life today!

SOMETHING ALIEN IN THE CELLAR OF LIFE!

Writes E. Stanley Jones, "The soul gets on by a series of crises. I've found it so. In conversion there is the sudden or gradual rise to a new level of life, a life as different from the ordinary man as the ordinary man is different from the animal. Then after the rise, life is on a permanently higher level. But on that new level there usually ensues an experience of ups and downs, of alternate encouragement and discouragement, of victory and defeat. It was so with me. For a year I lived under cloudless skies. The sun of my happiness seemed to have risen in the heavens to stay there forever. But after a year of unalloyed joy I found something alien began to rise from the cellar of my life. I felt there was something down there not in alignment with this new life I had found--ugly tempers, moodiness, deep-down conflicts. The general tenor of life was victory, but there were disturbing intrusions from the depths. I was becoming a house divided against itself. I was puzzled, confused, hurt with a tinge of disappointment. Was this the best that Christianity could do--to leave me wrestling with myself, or with something alien to myself? What was this dark something within?" (Song of Ascents, p. 51)

Many Christians are living 'Roller Coaster' lives, regularly experiencing the lows of defeat and guilt. James writes that the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, like the waves of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Unpredictable, unsteady, unfaithful, wrestling with a dark something within.

Some Christians have lost their 'first love' (Revelation 2:4-5). They are luke-warm and unexciting and unexcitable. The fire of holy love on their heart's alter is burning very low. "God's Word, God's house, and God's people are all sources where the spiritual desires can be satisfied. And yet these are not the objective of many of today's Christians. In such a person the affectional system is out of kilter--it is carnal because instead of evidencing spiritual traits it gives evidences of a disturbing anti-spiritual trait--a distaste for spiritual things." (Entire Sanctification: Studies in Christian Holiness)

What is the source of such serious problems in the lives of believers? The carnal mind is the source of the problem! The carnal mind has various manifestations--pride, self-will, self-seeking, putting worldly things before spiritual things, desire for man's approval at almost any cost, fear of man's criticism and fear of being different, shallowness in spiritual insight, double-mindedness, considerable wavering in faith.

"Father, search me and try me and see if there is within me the wickedness of a divided heart. Go into the cellar of my life and cleanse me from the defilement of sin."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Where my sins abound, God's grace superabounds. God has not only promised to give me a new nature, but also to get rid of my old nature.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR DRASTIC ACTION

Wrote Paul, "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24, RSV) The verb tense for putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature is the Greek Aorist which refers to an action in a point of time--a decisive action in contrast to an action that is a continuous process. There must come a point of time in which the Christian puts off his old carnal nature and puts on the new nature of true holiness. The old nature must be destroyed or crucified. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans 6:6) The Christian must die to sin and to selfishness with all of its envy, resentment, wranglings, contentions, divisions, covetousness, anger, and uncharitableness. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians: "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 4:31-32, Phillips)

The consuming passion of Christians must be for the fruit of the Spirit--love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) Paul Rees, in one of his books, says it so well: "True, all Christians have these qualities of Christlikeness more or less in their lives. True, also, these plants of spiritual beauty take time for full growth. But every gardner knows that if his soil is being taken by weeds, or if his plants are not healthy, he needs something besides time to produce a lovely garden. Something drastic, like weeding or spraying, needs to be done. Then luxuriant growth and fragrant loveliness will follow in due course".

The putting off of the old nature and the putting on of the new nature involves a decisive surrender of the will of the believer to the total lordship of Christ. "The surrender of the self is a once-and-for-all business, even when a daily surrender is involved. The daily surrender is not really a surrender of the self, but an unfolding of the once-and-for-all surrender. It is an application to a specific thing of a surrender once made." (Christian Maturity, p. 272; E. Stanley Jones)

It was Francis Havergal who wrote: "It was on Advent Sunday, 1873, that I first saw the blessedness of true consecration. I saw it as a flash of electric light, and what you see you can never unsee. There must be full surrender before there can be full blessedness. God admits you to the one by the other". (Entire Sanctification: Studies in Christian Holiness, p. 52)

"Father, you have saved me from sinning, now save me from sin. You have made me a citizen of the Kingdom, now make me a soldier of the Cross. You have taken me out of the world of sin, now take the sin of the world out of me. You have sanctified me initially, now sanctify me fully. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who has called me to holiness will work His holiness within me!

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus demanded total surrender from His followers: "Then said Jesus to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it'." (Matthew 16:24-25, NIV)

Said Jesus regarding the conditions of discipleship: "Anyone who wants to be my follower must love Me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters--yes, more than his own life--otherwise he cannot be my disciple". (Luke 14:26, Living Bible)

Jesus demands absolute allegiance, unreserved commitment to Himself: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters" (Luke 11:23). No middle ground, no razor blade of non-committal upon which we may balance precariously!

Jesus asked nothing of His followers, but what He Himself practiced. Jesus' entire life was a life of self-giving. He came to save His creatures from their sins, and to do this He had to go to a Cross! Jesus forever showed the necessity of death to self-will when He prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will, but thine be done".

"When we come to God for forgiveness, our concern is with the guilty conscience, the sense of estrangement from God and from others, and we are asking, 'How can I enjoy the benefits of Christ's atonement in the forgiveness of sin?' In the later development of the Christian life, the focus is not on what I may receive from Christ, but what Christ may receive from me. The question becomes, 'Will Christ enjoy the benefits of my life, surrendered to do His will?'" (Christianizing the Christian; address by Stanley Walters)

"You can find plenty of people whose heart is like a tavern, where Christ finds no welcome, where evil plies its trade busily and brazenly. You can find others whose heart is like a hotel with rooms all parcelled out, and a rather nice one assigned to the Lord Jesus. You can find yet others whose heart is like a home, where Christ the Lord has been given not only the right of entry but the right of mastery. There's not a room He cannot occupy, not a corner He cannot inspect, not a piece of furniture he cannot either enjoy or remove!" (Prayer and Life's Highest, p. 23; Paul Rees)

"Before the believer makes the great commitment to God in entire consecration, it is necessary for him to sense his need of God for a further or deeper deliverance. He must sense something of the clash with the carnal mind and long for a better way. It is more of a conviction of want, need, or lack, than it is of actual wrongdoing or guilt. The conflict is within and the sighs and tears expressed rise eloquently before God who knows how to read our need better than we can express it." (Entire Sanctification: Studies in Christian Holiness, p. 51)

"Father, I sense that my life has been indwelt by the Spirit, but not controlled by the Spirit, that the Spirit has been resident in my heart, but not president of my heart. I have been more concerned in what you can do for me than in what I can do for you. Help me to be a true disciple--one whose life is totally disciplined to follow Christ!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who has created a holy desire in my heart to serve Christ will impart to me a holy power to serve Christ!

THE MEANING OF FULL CONSECRATION

It is important to distinguish between consecration and sanctification. Notes J. Paul Taylor, "Consecration is the work of man; entire sanctification is the work of God. Consecration is man's giving to God what he owes; entire sanctification is God's giving to man what He has promised. Consecration is placing oneself on the altar without reserve; entire sanctification is the descent of purging fire upon the offering. Consecration is laying oneself on the surgeon's table; entire sanctification is the removal of the cancer of sin. Consecration is human exposure to the cleansing action; entire sanctification is the expulsion of sin by the cleansing action of God". (Holiness, The Finished Foundation, p. 52)

Consecration to God involves all that we are and all that we have. A surrender of time, talents, money, relationships! A surrender of all! "Just as the canvas surrenders itself to the painter, the violin to the musician, the wire to the electricity, so you put yourself at the disposal of the Divine. You surrender for better or for worse, for riches or for poverty, in sickness and in health, in life and in death--you will keep yourself only unto Him. He has you. Are you thereby lost, or thereby found? You are lost just as the musician is, when he takes his violin, surrenders himself to the music, lets go, becomes a part of the music and is thereby lost. He is lost only to find himself a part of the universal harmony. You lose your petty, isolated, defeated self in the universal Self of God and are harmonized with the heart of reality. As Rufus Moseley says: 'I died and I died ungraciously, but I died to nothing but that which caused me to die'. You die, just as an engine dies to the thought and purpose of wandering free anywhere and surrenders itself to the rails--only to find its freedom there." (Abundant Living, p. 157; E. Stanley Jones)

John Wesley's prayer which he used at his covenant services should be the prayer with which each earnest believer should identify: "I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen".

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1, NIV)

"Father, save me from the tyranny of self-rule and help me to make an unconditional surrender to Christ's total rule. Help me to make a once-and-for-all surrender that results in a daily surrender to the lordship of Christ. Help me to see that in losing my all, I gain His all. I lose all that is petty in my little self to gain all that is powerful in Christ's big Self! Glory!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: 'Success' is failure outside of Christ, and 'failure' is success inside of Christ. I will follow Christ regardless of man's evaluation of my success and failure!

EXERCISING FAITH FOR A PURE HEART

Our Scripture reading today says that God gave the Holy Spirit to believers and "purified their hearts by faith".

A pure heart and empowerment for service--these are the needs in every believer's life!

The disciples before the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) had many ugly weeds growing in their lives. They needed to have their hearts purified by faith. Carnal ambition was manifested among the disciples. James and John thought Jesus' kingdom was to be a materialistic kingdom, founded upon military might. They were ambitious for special positions in that coming kingdom; they requested to sit on the right and on the left ^{side} of the King in His kingdom glory! The disciples strove between themselves, favorably comparing themselves to one another. The comparative, competitive, and contemptuous attitudes are what the disciples needed to be cleansed from. They fought for status, position, and honor. They loved to be served, but hated to serve one another. Their love for God and for their fellow disciples was obviously incomplete and inadequate.

There are too many weeds growing in the lives of Christians today: carnal ambition, resentments, striving after vain glory, peevish temper, stubborn self-will, mean stinginess, smug complacency, lukewarmness of spirit, crippling fears. What an ugly weed patch!

How different the disciples were after Pentecost! They were cleansed from carnal ambition and from striving for positions and honor. They became aglow with the warmth of fellowship and mutual care for one another. "Their hearts were purified by faith.

While it is true that consecration is a condition for full sanctification, it might be better stated that consecration is the outward manifestation of inner faith. Strictly speaking, faith is the only condition for receiving the Holy Spirit in His fullness. Notes Dr. A. F. Harper: "There is a sense in which faith is the only condition for receiving the Holy Spirit. Desire and consecration are necessary, but they are foundations for our faith". (Entire Sanctification: Studies in Christian Holiness, p. 59)

The Holy Spirit is God's gift for God's people; said Jesus, "If even sinful persons like yourselves give children what they need, don't you realize that your heavenly Father will do at least as much, and give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for Him?" (Luke 11:13, Living Bible)

E. Stanley Jones expresses the attitude of faith: "Having given yourself, you now have a right to take Himself. Then repeat to yourself: 'He comes--He comes. I let Him come. I welcome with open heart His coming. I am grateful for His coming. It is done. We belong to each other, forever'. Close the eternal bargain". (Abundant Living, p. 158)

"Father, decisively fill me today with your Holy Spirit. I surrender the controls of my heart to your total control. Cleanse me from all inward sin and shed abroad your love in my heart by your Holy Spirit. Enable me to live a consistently victorious life as I daily learn to affirm your lordship in all of my actions, attitudes, and relationships. Thank you. In Jesus' name."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who converted my conscious mind is now cleansing my subconscious mind.

VICTORY THROUGH SURRENDER

Surrendering to the Lordship of Christ leads one to unlimited freedom to commune with God for whom each person is made. Sin causes man to live in an alien environment; surrender to God enables men to find his natural habitat--the unhindered fellowship of God. Such fellowship frees the Spirit-filled believer from deep loneliness.

Surrendering totally to God results in a person receiving creative energy to cope with life's problems and changing circumstances. Wrote Paul, "This is my work, and I can do it only because Christ's mighty energy is at work within me" (Colossians 1:29). The strength, power, and energy of God can only flow effectively in and through the life channel which is unclogged of selfishness and self-centeredness.

Surrender to the lordship of Christ results in a new freedom to know, to love, and to accept yourself. "When you love Christ by self-surrender to Him, then you love others and you love your self. For the Christian faith teaches self-love: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'. You are to love yourself. to hate and reject and despise yourself is just as bad as to hate and reject and despise others. When you surrender to Christ, all self-hate, all self-loathing, all self-rejection drop away. How can you hate what He loves? How can you reject what He accepts? How can you look down on what He died for? You are no longer a person, you are 'a person for whom Christ died'. If He died for me, there must be something in me worth dying for. I am important, because I'm His. So I can accept myself." (Victory Through Surrender, p. 25-46; E. Stanley Jones)

Surrender to the lordship of Christ enables one to serve people without being in bondage to people. "You cannot serve people unless you are delivered from them. If you always wonder, 'What do they think of me' you are not free to serve people. Self-surrender delivers you from surrender to the herd, and that is a blessed deliverance." (Ibid, p. 54)

Surrender to the lordship of Christ enables one to be free to live in harmony with the basic law of the universe. When Jesus chose the way of self-giving--dying on a Cross and surrendering all of His own rights--he was openly revealing the nature of God--the nature of total self-giving. The cross on Mount Calvary was the revealing of the very cross that had been on the heart of God eternally. Taking the way of self-surrender is taking the way of God Himself, and results in living in harmony with the very nature of reality. The way of self-surrender is the way of God. Therefore, self-surrender leads to self-realization. Victory comes through total surrender to God!

"Unconditional surrender leads to unlimited freedom--freedom not to indulge the passions of the flesh, but freedom to serve the Lord passionately, freedom not to live a self-centered life, but freedom to live a self-giving life. Freedom to be the best self that you, O God, created me to be! A thousand 'thank yous' for such glorious freedom!

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I win by losing, I get by giving, I live by dying, I find victory through surrender--all because of Christ!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Tell why you believe (if you do) too many Christians are living defeated and frustrated Christian lives.
2. What are some of the manifestations of the alien elements in the souls of carnal Christians, and what is the source of such serious problems?
3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There must come a point of time in which the Christian puts off his old carnal nature and puts on the new nature of true holiness". (How does the Greek verbal tense in Ephesians 4:22-24 help in deciding the accuracy of the above statement?)
4. What is necessary, beyond mere Christian growth, if the problem of carnality in the believer's life is adequately to be dealt with?
5. What is the relationship between once-and-for-all surrender and daily surrender, as understood by E. Stanley Jones?
6. List some of the conditions for discipleship as Jesus stated them (with appropriate Scriptural references). Show how Jesus practiced what he taught, regarding discipleship, as demonstrated in His life.
7. What is the difference between the focus of the needy sinner when he initially comes to God, and the focus of the believer when he later comes to God seeking to serve God more fully?
8. What is meant by the statement that some people's hearts are like a 'tavern' and some like a 'hotel' and some like a 'home'?
9. How do you distinguish between 'consecration' and 'sanctification'?
10. Can a believer's full consecration and surrender to Christ best be described as an experience of 'dying' or of 'new life' or of both? Explain your answer. (Note Romans 12:1 and Galatians 2:20)
11. What are some of the 'ugly weeds' growing in the lives of carnal Christians, which need to be destroyed?
12. What are the specific conditions for being filled with the Holy Spirit?
13. List at least five benefits to be derived from full surrender to the Lordship of Christ.
14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Taking the way of self-surrender is taking the way of God Himself, and results in living in harmony with the very nature of reality".
15. Share from your personal experience the benefits which you, as a believer, have derived from making a full surrender of your life to Christ. (If you have not yet made that full surrender, are you presently willing to take that most important step?)

CHAPTER 3

FREEDOM FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS

THE PROBLEM OF DIVISION AND DISUNITY

In the ancient world of Paul's day, to say a person lived like a Corinthian, meant that he lived in drunken and immoral debauchery. Barclay notes that "if ever a Corinthian was shown upon the stage in a Greek play he was shown drunk". (Daily Study Bible, Corinthians, p. 3) On the hill of Acropolis stood the great temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and in that temple dwelt one thousand priestesses who were sacred prostitutes. When evening came, these priestesses descended from the Acropolis and went into the city of Corinth to carry on their wicked trade, in the name of the Greek religion. Corinth was a city of luxury, drunkenness, debauchery, and gross wickedness.

It was to the city of Corinth that Paul went as a missionary to convert the Greeks from their crude paganism to the purity of Christianity. Paul remained for eighteen months in the city of Corinth, preaching, teaching, and establishing a new Christian Church.

The letter of I Corinthians is very important, for it is in this letter that we see Paul dealing with particular problems that plagued a Christian congregation which had been recently converted from paganism. In this letter, and in especially the first four chapters, Paul deals with a problem which threatened to destroy the Corinthian Church. That problem was the problem of division. It would be disheartening to know the number of Churches which have failed throughout the centuries, simply because there was a spirit of division among the people of the Church.

Let us note this difficult problem and the way Paul dealt with it. Paul wrote, "Brothers, I urge you through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you should make up your differences and that you should see to it that there may be no divisions among you, but that you should be knit together in the same mind and the same opinion. . .What I mean is this--each of you is saying, 'I belong to Paul; I belong to Apollos; I belong to Cephas; I belong to Christ'" (I Corinthians 1:10,12, Barclay)

When the Corinthians manifested a spirit of division, contention, strife, and friction, Paul realized that they were acting as human nature does apart from God. To be controlled by the flesh is to be controlled by that part of man which gives sin its chance to work destruction. These Corinthians whom Paul addressed as 'brothers', had failed to become dominated by the Holy Spirit. They had received the gifts of the Spirit, but they had failed to surrender their complete selves to God. They had been delivered from the vagrant sins of the body (see I Corinthians 6:9-11), but they were failing to live the Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled life. They were controlled by selfish desires instead of Christlike desires. Their sin was the sin of self assertion which led to various kinds of divisions and dissensions.

"O God, what is the answer to the competitive, contentious, argumentative, quarrelsome spirit that is too often manifested in Christian groups? I see now that the answer is fixing our gaze on the Christ of God, for He is the personification of all loveliness, beauty, service, and unselfishness. Help me to fix my gaze on Christ--not on others!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To become intimately acquainted with Christ, is to know the joy of loving submission and helpful service to my fellow man!

CROSS-SECTION PICTURE OF CARNAL LIVING

The Corinthian believers to whom Paul wrote were carnal, contentious, competitive, and quarrelsome (I Corinthians 3:1-7). Their relationship to one another was a sad commentary on their relationship to God. Paul could tell how close these believers were living to God, by the way they were treating each other. Notes William Barclay, "If a man is at variance with his fellow men, if he is a quarrelsome, competitive, argumentative, trouble-making creature; he may be a diligent church attender, he may even be a church office-bearer; but he is not a man of God. But if a man is at one with his fellow men, if his relations with his fellow men are marked by love and unity and concord then that man is on the way to being a man of God". (Daily Study Bible, Corinthians, p. 34)

These Corinthians were of a double mind. With their mind they were sympathetic to Christianity, but with their heart they were breaking the basic principle of Christianity--'Brotherly Love'. With their mouths they were speaking about Christ, but with their lives they were manifesting the spirit of the world. They were going through religious acts, but were failing to perform loving actions. Pride is the source of all sins, including every sin which manifests itself in the church. The sins of the Corinthian Church have long been the sins of many other Churches. Those sins included (1) Division of loyalties [1:12], (2) Glorifying in men instead of unitedly praising God [3:4,21], (3) Carnality, jealousy, strife [3:3], (4) Puffed up one against another and glorying in self [4:6-7].

These Corinthians were critically-minded. They failed in the ability to remain silent ('to keep their mouths shut') and to listen sympathetically and lovingly to others. Each group of self-assertive, immature Christians sought to prove that their religious party was right and the others were wrong. None was willing to acknowledge that he was wrong, and another was right. Cromwell wrote many years ago to the Scots, "I beseech you by the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken". (Daily Study Bible, Corinthians, p. 39) Paul pleads with these believers to be humble enough to learn from one another. The ability to be corrected without offense, and to be taught without bitterness, is the sign of a mature Christian. Paul says that the man who thinks he is wise, is really a fool. What did he mean? Paul meant that the closed-minded person is the conceited and shallow-minded person. He who thinks he knows it all, really knows very little. The pathway of knowledge is found through the gateway of humility. The humble man acknowledges his ignorance; the conceited man vainly boasts of his knowledge. The humble man is a wise man with an open, inquiring mind; the conceited man is a fool with a closed, shallow mind. An ancient proverb says: "He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not is a fool; avoid him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not is a wise man; teach him". (Daily Study Bible, Corinthians, p. 39)

"O God, help me to be humble-hearted, teachable, and moldable. Deliver me from a carnal, competitive spirit, and make me a compassionate and caring person--one who speaks little and who listens much!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: If a man is sweet to his fellowman, it means he has a sweet relationship with Jesus. If he is distant from his fellowman, it means he is distant in his relationship to God. I will draw close to my Saviour!

DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS

The Corinthians to whom Paul lovingly wrote were self-centered, and this self-centeredness was manifesting itself in many ways. For one thing, they were boasting in worldly wisdom. Because of this, they were rendered weak, immature, and shallow in their spiritual understanding. Where there is a lack of love in the heart, there is created an atmosphere that easily breeds strife and contempt. Where there is no unity of goals and purpose, there is discord and dissension.

These Corinthians were passing judgment on one another. Paul reminds them that God alone is qualified to be Judge. "So then, make a practice of passing no judgment before the proper time--until the Lord comes--for He will light up the hidden things of darkness and he will bring to light the counsels of men's hearts; and then each man will receive his praise from God." (I Corinthians 4:5, Barclay) Man sees the exterior of one's life; God sees the interior of one's life. Man sees the actions; God sees the motives and intents. Man evaluates what he hears in the light of partial knowledge and fallible judgment. God evaluates all of man's actions and intents on the basis of his infinite knowledge and infallible judgment. Woe is the Christian or the Church that pronounces judgments on others or that seeks out the faults in others. Such a Christian or Church has overstepped its rights, and is attempting to play the part of God!

Paul knew the problem of the Corinthian Christians. Stated briefly, it was the problem of pride or self-centeredness. Pride had manifested itself in several ways--Church divisions, boastful attitudes, and critical judgment one towards another.

Paul says to the Corinthians: "And I, bretheren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (I Corinthians 3:1-4)

To Paul, division in the Church was a serious problem and must be stopped if the Church was to prosper. How did Paul attempt to solve the problem? It was not through bitter criticism or harsh treatment. Rather, Paul appealed to the Corinthians in the spirit of love. Love is always the best antidote for division and strife. Several times throughout his letter, Paul called the Corinthians 'Brothers'. Using this term softened Paul's rebuke. The true preacher never deals roughly with his erring parishioners, but always lovingly and compassionately. It was said of an old school teacher, that she never corrected her pupils without first putting her hand on one of the shoulders of the student whom she was correcting. Love melts the heart. Paul called the erring Corinthians 'Brothers'.

"Father, help me to love your children. How can I claim to love you truly if I do not love your children practically? Help me to be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker, in your Church. Help me to accept correction humbly and to give correction tenderly. Then I shall be a faithful child of my God!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I can only enjoy the Fatherhood of God as I experience the brotherhood of men!

A CALL TO UNITY IN CHRIST!

We noted in the last devotional that a true preacher never deals roughly with his erring parishioners, but always lovingly and compassionately. A shepherd seeks to rescue his straying sheep; and so the pastor of men's souls seeks to save the wandering ones. Paul addressed these carnal believers as 'Brothers'. By using the term 'Brothers', Paul showed the Corinthians the attitude that each of them should have had for one another--the attitude of brotherly love. Using the term 'Brothers' was a rebuke in disguise, and showed the Corinthians how far they had fallen from what Paul considered to be the normal standard. The one who calls a man 'Brother' in the Church, ought to treat him with brotherly love.

Paul believed that the secret to being a strong Christian or to being a strong Church was love. Love heals all breaches between brothers. Love humbly submits to others, and learns from the advice of others. Love makes a person pliable, understanding, and easy to get along with. Love restrains one from pronouncing judgments on others, and changes the critical look into the compassionate look. Love builds up the character of others, and gives the Church a unified front in order to meet the frown of the world. Love is the fragrance of the Church which attracts the spiritually destitute and gives hope to the despairing wayfarer.

To the divided Church at Corinth Paul writes, "Now I do beg you, my brothers, by all that our Lord Jesus Christ means to you, to speak with one voice, and not allow yourselves to be split up into parties, all together you should be achieving a unity in thought and judgment. For I know, from what some of Chloe's people have told me, that you are each making different claims". (I Corinthians 1:10-11, Phillips) Because of Christ's example, Paul urges Christians who feel strain between themselves because of differences of opinion, to make up their differences. Paul says that they should be knit together. Just as fractured bones need to be knitted together to restore the body to maximum usefulness, so fractured relationships between members of Christ's Church must be healed in order that Christ's body, the Church, can function in a healthy and efficient way.

Paul saw that there was a schism in the Church which was like a rent in a garment. How unsightly is a rent in a garment! How unbecoming is a rent, schismatic Church!

Paul says the Church is the Temple of God--the place where God dwells. When men introduce strife into the Church, God is hindered in His work, for men's hearts cannot be reached by God in the atmosphere of contention and strife. Says Barclay, "The very badge of the Church is love for the bretheren. We must always remember that he who destroys that love and fellowship destroys the Church and thereby destroys the Temple of God". (Daily Study Bible, Corinthians, p. 38)

"Father, help me never to be guilty of rending the fellowship of your Church, for you hate all who sow discord among the bretheren (Proverbs 6:19). Make me an instrument of peace and love--to reconcile relationships which have been destroyed and to strengthen the spiritual fellowship which has been threatened. Help me to "maintain the unity of the faith in the bond of peace". In the empowering name of Jesus. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To be a peacemaker is to do the work of God himself!

JESUS IS OUR WISDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul says that when every member of the Church will get his gaze fixed on Christ in all of His beauty and love, then divisions will be dissolved and strong relationships will be restored.

Christ is the all-sufficient answer to the life of the individual Christian and the life of the Church. Paul writes, "It is through Him that we are in Christ Jesus, who, for us, by God, was made wisdom and righteousness and consecration and deliverance". (I Corinthians 1:30, Barclay)

Jesus is our wisdom. The wisdom of God involved the Cross. The Jews considered the Cross to be a stumbling-block. The Jews expected a Conquering King as the Messiah; Jesus came as the Suffering Servant. Jesus did not meet the Jewish expectations, and therefore they rejected Him. Because they couldn't accept the Cross, they didn't accept God's plan of Salvation, and thus they missed out on God's Wisdom. To the Greek, the Cross was foolishness (see I Corinthians 1:21-25). To the Greek it was inconceivable for God to incarnate Himself in human flesh. That would make God subject to human limitations and sufferings. God was, to the Greek, a pure spirit which was aloof from the world and unconcerned with man's afflictions. But Paul says Jesus is wisdom. Wisdom is inseparably connected with the Cross and the Cross means suffering and sacrifice. The person who knows God's wisdom, knows the meaning of the suffering and self-surrender. The Corinthians had attempted to establish their own wisdom, and they had consequently become puffed up in their own self-estimation. Paul knew what it was to be dead to selfish interests, and what it was to be completely surrendered to Christ. He contrasts his attitude to the attitudes of the self-centered and conceited Corinthians who sadly lacked in their understanding of God's wisdom. Carefully note the contrast in I Corinthians 4:10-13.

Jesus is our righteousness. Righteousness means a right relationship with God. Jesus is the One through whom man finds a right relationship with God. Man cannot save himself; he must be saved. Man cannot buy his way to God and Heaven; man is bought with a price--a very costly price which no man can compute. Man is helpless and in need of a Helper. Out of the sheer love and grace of God, man is forgiven and transformed, and thus made right with God. When a man looks at his weak, degraded condition and then looks at the Almighty Saviour, man is humbled and belittled. God is the One who gives all; man is the one who receives all. Wrote Paul to the Corinthians: "Who sees anything special in you? What do you possess that you did not receive? And, if you did not receive it, why are you boasting as if you had acquired it yourself?" (I Corinthians 4:7, Barclay)

"O God, help me to be wise with your wisdom and to be righteous through your righteous Son. When I become captured by Christ's love, then my entire attitude toward life changes. When I become broken on the altar of surrender, than I am willing to help bear the burdens of my fellowmen, thus lightening the load of the world's suffering. Help me to live a Christ-centered life, rather than a self-centered life. Then I shall see aright and live aright!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To become infatuated with the love of God, is to be compelled to surrender everything to Christ!

JESUS IS OUR CONSECRATION AND DELIVERANCE

If Jesus is our Wisdom and Righteousness, He is also our Consecration and our Deliverance (I Corinthians 1:30). Jesus is our Consecration. The Cross of Christ is the powerful force in the Christian's life which compels him to consecrate his all to Christ. Barclay tells the story of two children who were given a toy Noah's Ark as a present. After listening to the Old Testament stories, the children decided to make a sacrifice of one of their toy animals. After examining the toy animals in the toy Ark, they made their choice of the animal they would sacrifice. It was a sheep with a broken leg. That is what some Christians are trying to do--offer an imperfect sacrifice to God. God demands total surrender and total consecration, and He will not accept the half-hearted sacrifice of a luke-warm 'believer'. God demands first place in a person's life, regardless of the cost:

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee."

Abraham was willing to offer to God the dearest possession of his life--his only son--and so must we! Jesus is our Deliverance. Jesus came to set men free from the bondage of guilt and sin. A drunkard was captured and converted by Christ. After the drunkard was converted, his workmates tried to undercut his confidence in Christ. They would say to him, "Surely a sensible man like you cannot believe in the miracles that the Bible tells about. You cannot, for instance, believe that this Jesus of yours turned water into wine". Said the converted man, "Whether He turned water into wine or not, I do not know; but in my own house I have seen Him turn beer into furniture". There is wonder-working power in the blood of Jesus!

Christ came not only to deliver man from the guilt of sin, but He came also to deliver man from the bondage of self-centeredness and pride. The Bible tells us that we should in honour prefer one another, and highly esteem one another in love. The problem of many Churches is this--too many people in the Church are trying to get their rights, even if it means being insensitive to other people. The people in the Churches have failed to realize that the Christian has no rights--that the Christian has only responsibilities and duties. The duty of every Christian is to serve his fellow believer and be willing to give the credit and praise to the other person. God will give credit and honor to whom credit and honor is due. Even though a believer has no inherent rights, he does enjoy many rights, given to him by God in the form of privileges.

"O God, when I get my gaze on the Christ of the Cross, I am humbled, for I then realize that I am merely on the receiving end of the Father's love. To be alive to Christ, is to be dead to sin and to be dead to self-centeredness. Let me die in order that I might truly live!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Christ is the all-sufficient answer to the life of the individual Christian and to the life of the Church!

DEVASTATING RESULTS OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Christ has come to deliver from self-centeredness--that universal human disease that manifest 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 borne 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 the 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 defying man.

Pride is a foul thing for 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, p. 66; William Sangster)

"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 to 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, p. 11-12; E. S. Jones)

"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, p. 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, p. 43; E. S. Jones)

"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, p. 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, p. 45; E. S. Jones) (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!

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 transfer 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, p. 196; E. S. Jones)

Third, full surrender to Christ sets up a right relationship to people. One 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 enclosing 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, but with a love intensified, you love others with his love." (A Song of Ascents, p. 54; E. S. Jones)

"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, p. 33; E. S. Jones)

"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!

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. 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 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, p. 109; E. S. Jones)

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-and-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 the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one other, and the blood of Jesus his Son 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, p. 109-110; E. S. Jones)

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:

FREEDOM FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS

1. What was the cause of the spirit of division, contention, strife, and competition which was very apparent among the Corinthian believers at Corinth?
2. Tell why you agree or disagree with William Barclay's following statement: "If a man is at variance with his fellowman, if he is a quarrelsome, competitive, argumentative, trouble-making creature; he may be a diligent church attender, he may even be a church office-bearer; but he is not a man of God". (Give Scriptural references to support your answer.)
3. What were some of the sins which were manifest in the Corinthian Church, and are these the same sins which are often manifest in local Churches today?
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If a man is sweet to his fellowman, it means he has a sweet relationship with Jesus. If he is distant from his fellowman, it means he is distant in his relationship to God". (Note I John 2:9-11, 4:16-21)
5. How was the pride of self-centeredness--the main problem in the Corinthian Church--manifesting itself?
6. What argument did Paul use (in I Corinthians 4:5) as an attempt to correct the problem of judgmentalism that existed in the Corinthian Church? Why is man incapable of judging his fellowmen?
7. In light of the serious carnal problem of lovelessness which was evident in the Corinthian Church, why did Paul choose to address the members of the Church as 'Brothers'? With what spirit did Paul (the leader) seek to correct the problems within this local Church? Is it possible for a Church leader (like a pastor) to take a stance of 'firm confrontation' with troublemakers and at the same time manifest a spirit of love and patience and forbearance? Do you agree with the following statement: "Love is always the best antidote for division and strife".
8. List several positive benefits that are derived when love is applied to the interpersonal relationships within a local Church.
9. Give Scriptural references to document the truth of the following statement: "The very badge of the Church is love for the brethren. We must always remember that he who destroys that love and fellowship destroys the Church and thereby destroys the temple of God". (Note John 13:34-35, Ephesians 4:1-6)
10. Contrast the worldly concept of 'wisdom' with the Christian concept of wisdom. (Note I Corinthians 1:16-31, 4:10-13)
11. Paul states that "Jesus is our righteousness". What attitude will be manifested in the life of the person who has exchanged his own self-righteousness for the righteousness of Christ?

12. What response is appropriate in the life of the sincere believer, in light of the fact that "Jesus is our Consecration" (I Corinthians 1:30)?
13. In light of the fact that "Jesus is our Deliverance" (I Corinthians 1:30), what did Jesus come to earth to deliver mankind from? What practical implications and applications does this idea (of Jesus as our Deliverance) have in the interpersonal relationships of Christians within a local Church?
14. List several reasons why pride is the foulest of all sins.
15. What are the destructive social affects as a result of the personal problem of pride and egocentricity?
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "'Self' in control rather than Christ in control is the cause of all real problems". (If you agree with this statement, give concrete illustrations to demonstrate the truth of this statement.)
17. What is the difference between self-esteem and pride?
18. 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?
19. What Biblical support can you show for the concept that 'self-surrender leads to self-realization'?
20. Is it realistic to say that pride is the 'hub' from which all other sins are simply the 'spokes'?
21. 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".
22. List and describe six different ways of dealing with the 'Self', all of which are ineffective.
23. What relationships are made right, through a full surrender of one's Self to Christ?
24. 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".
25. When God becomes your standard by which you grow and develop, instead of others, from what two bondages are you released?
26. List and describe the steps to 'Full Surrender'.
27. What is the relationship between the 'blanket once-and-for-all surrender' to God and the daily 'unfolding surrender' to God?
28. What experience have you had with implementing the principles of I John 1:7 as a 'working way to live'?

29. List several of the 'freedoms' one enjoys as a result of making a full surrender of his life to Christ.

30. Share from your personal experience some of the joys you have experienced as a result of making a full surrender of your life to Christ.

CHAPTER 4

WHERE IS YOUR HEART, HEAD, AND HANDS?

"WHERE IS YOUR HEART, HEAD, AND HANDS?"

Where is your heart, head, and hands? This question is not asked of a small child in hopes that he will be able to identify his body parts. Rather, this question is asked of intelligent adults. These three words--'heart', 'head', and 'hands'--represent the three important areas of human personality. When Jesus commands us to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, He is asking us to make a full surrender of our emotions, intellect, and will to Almighty God, in order that we may be wholehearted Christians. The heart represents man's emotions. The head represents man's intellect. The hand represent man's will. True surrender of ourselves to God includes surrender of the emotions, the intellect, and the will.

When one asks "Where is your heart, head, and hands?", he is really asking "To what or to whom have you surrendered your emotions (heart), your intellect (head), and your will (hands)?"

Note first that we are commanded to surrender our Heart to Christ. Christ has commanded us to love God with all of our heart. Our 'heart' is the center of emotions and affections, the vehicle of feeling. To love God with our heart is to respond to God with our affections, made possible because 'Christ is the Life'. Through His Holy Spirit, Christ is able to shed abroad God's love in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

You have often heard people say, "Come on, have a heart!" What they really says is: "Have feelings of compassion and understanding towards others!"

Only the true Christian can have deep feelings of love and concern for others. A Christian has been defined as a person who really cares. Genuine feelings of care and concern for others is the trademark of authentic Christian experience. Wrote Paul to his friends at Philippi: "Is there any such thing as Christians cheering each other up? Do you love me enough to want to help me? Does it mean anything to you that we are brothers in the Lord, sharing the same Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic at all? Then make me truly happy by loving each other and agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, working together with one heart and mind and purpose". (Philippians 2:1-2, Living Bible) The apostle Paul had a real 'heart' for fellow believers (note Philippians 2:25-30). (Look also at II Corinthians 11:9-12,28-29, Acts 20:32-38.)

A Christian must be a person with a tender heart, able to 'feel with' other people. There is a great song entitled 'Blest Be The Tie That Binds'. Here are some of the words: "We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain; But we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again".

"Father, your Son was a man who was touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He wept with those who wept, and rejoiced with those who rejoiced. He was a man of sorrows who was acquainted with mankind's grief. Make me a person for others, tender in my heart and emotionally warm in my concern for people's hurts. In Jesus' compassionate name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To be tender-hearted is to be Christ-like! Through God's grace, I will not allow my heart to become hardened!

BEING A MAN OF TENDER FEELINGS!

Some years ago a friend of mine said, "What we really need in the Church is a 'revival of feeling'". 'A Revival of Feeling!'--that would bring a new zeal in worship, a new warmth in devotion, a new concern for people. Does not the Scriptures tell us that believers are 'to bear one another's burdens'?

Jesus was a man of tender feelings. See Him as He weeps over unrepentant Jerusalem. See Jesus looking at Mary whose heart was breaking because of her brother's death: "Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her weeping also; his heart was touched, and he was deeply moved. . . Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him'". (John 11:33,35, Today's English Version)

"Does Jesus care when I've said 'good-by'
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks--
Is it aught to Him? Does he see?
O Yes, He cares; I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares."

"But when Jesus saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matthew 9:36) Notes Barclay, "The word which is used for 'moved with compassion' is the strongest word for compassionate pity in the Greek language . . . It describes the pity and the compassion which move a man to the very deepest depths of his being". (Daily study Bible, Matthew, p. 363)

Jesus was deeply moved when he saw the widow of Nain. (Read Luke 7:11-15.) The Book of Hebrews tells us that "Jesus is touched with the feelings of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and He yet feels the suffering of every man. "He is cold in the chilled bodies of the poor, He is lonely in the outcaste, is hurt in the guilt of the sinner, is part and parcel of every life." (Christ and Human Suffering, p. 161; E. S. Jones)

Following the example of his Master, the apostle Paul, too, was a man of great feeling and affection (note today's Scripture readings). "As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." (I Thessalonians 2:7-8, New International Version)

"Father, revive my feelings. Feelings lie buried in me that grace can restore. Help me to 'rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; weep over the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save'. Help me to follow the example of the loving Christ."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." (Psalms 126:5-6, NIV)

SURRENDERING YOUR MIND TO CHRIST!

In the last devotional we discussed the importance of having feelings of compassion, patterned after Christ's tenderness. Sometimes there is misunderstanding concerning the place of feelings in living the Christian life. It is important to distinguish between the deep feelings of the soul that can remain steadfast despite changing circumstances, and the surface feelings of mere emotion which are quite fluctuating and thus quite unreliable. Such latter feelings dare not be the foundation upon which we attempt to build a strong relationship with God.

Notes William Sangster, "Feelings can be very sweet, and never to know the rapture of religion would be dreadful, but feelings are too unsubstantial and too variable to be the guide to our praying. Feeling fluctuates with our health, our temperaments, the weather, the news; it fluctuates also with what we eat and whom we met last. . . Our commerce with Heaven cannot depend upon things so fortuitous as that". (Daily Readings from W. E. Sangster, p. 33)

Just as you may not always feel like praying, you may not always feel like witnessing. Some people say they will not witness unless they 'feel' an urging from the Holy Spirit. But we need not wait for the Holy Spirit to 'lead us' or to produce some special 'feeling' within us, before we attempt to witness. To pray or to witness only when we have surface 'feelings' is to pray and to witness spasmodically. It is clear that our Lord commanded us to go tell the good news to all men, whether or not we 'feel' always like doing it. Our praying and witnessing must be based upon the deep soul feelings of love for God and compassion for men. That deep soul feeling is the reliable motivation for compassionate involvement, not the surface feelings that are swayed by changing circumstances.

We must note next that we are commanded to surrender our Mind to Christ. Christ has commanded us to love God with all of our mind. Our 'mind' is the center of reason, the vehicle of thinking. To love God with our head is to respond to God with our intellect, made possible because 'Christ is the Truth'. Through His Holy Spirit, Christ enables the believer to 'have the mind of Christ within him". To love God with one's mind is to think God's thoughts after Him. A committed Christian is one whose life is being transformed by the daily renewing of his mind.

Wrote Paul, "Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about". (Philippians 4:8, Living Bible)

"Father, what gets my attention, gets me. So, let my attention be focused upon you. To see you is to see beauty and holiness and love and compassion and order. I want daily to be transformed by the renewing of my mind, in order that I might think your thoughts after you! In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Whatsoever a man thinks, so is he."
"Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny."

LEARNING TO FIX YOUR MIND ON CHRIST

The battle for thoughts is greater than the battle of guns! For temptation attacks the mind first, then the emotions, and finally the will. The Scripture exhorts us to guard our minds. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5) The Psalmist tells us to meditate upon God's word day and night. Isaiah 26:3 says, "You (God) will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you".

How can one fix his mind on God, thus enjoying daily renewal and perpetual peace? Following are a few suggestions.

First, be careful what you listen to. Research has shown that what one carefully and repeatedly listens to, becomes the personalized life value of the listener. There are some researchers who indicate that if one listens carefully to a spoken concept six consecutive times that one usually adopts the concept as his own!

Second, if one is to fix his mind on God, he must be careful what he sees. The mind's ideas are largely formed through the eyegate. That which we look at most, will become that which we value most. Be careful what you watch on television. "More Americans have television in their homes than have indoor plumbing or telephones. . .Not only do people watch shows with almost religious regularity, but they invest a great deal of emotion and empathy in them. They strongly identify with the heroes and heroines of film and television. Each weekday, for example, millions of housewives become emotionally engrossed in one or more soap operas. . .By the time the average child enters the first grade, Nicholas Johnson pointed out, he has received more hours of instruction from television than he will receive from professors during four years of college." (Politics, Americanism, and Christianity, p. 246-248; Cathorn)

Third, if one is to fix his mind on God, he must be careful what he reads. Someone said, "He who does not read is no better off than he who will not read". Wesley told his ministers that if they did not develop a love for reading, that they should get out of the ministry! Of course, reading the Bible is the most important pursuit. Need we be reminded how fortunate we are? Russian Christians are using portions of hand-written Bibles, which are worn and torn and very old.

Fourthly, if one is to fix his mind on God, he must guard his conversation. The quality of one's conversation reveals the quality of one's thinking. But it is also true that the disciplined control of one's conversation (whether one's words are positive or negative), helps shape one's thinking. We create our world by our words! Someone noted: 'A feeble mind thinks and talks only about people (gossip); a mediocre mind thinks and talks about people, and some about events; a superior mind thinks and talks lovingly about people, interestingly about events, and profoundly about ideas'.

"Father, help me to have a consecrated mind--one that is being renewed daily through regular meditation on Your Word. Help me to guard my mind against satanic attacks of temptation by guarding my eargate and my eyegate."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will steadfastly fix my mind upon Christ and His Word, in order that my thoughts and my words will be steadfastly positive!

SURRENDERING YOUR WILL TO CHRIST

Christ has commanded us to love Him with our hand (soul). The 'hand' is the expression of man's will, the vehicle of acting. To love God with our hand is to respond with our will, made possible because 'Christ is the Way'. Through His Holy Spirit, Christ is able to help believers "to do those things which are pleasing to God". "God is at work within you (believers), helping you want to obey him, and then helping you to do what he wants." (Philippians 2:13, Living Bible)

Thus far we have noted the importance of loving God with our heart and our head. The 'heart' response is the upward reach in prayer and in adoring worship. The Spirit gives the assurance to the heart. The 'head' response is the inward meditation of the mind in inquiry. The Spirit gives answers to the mind. We are now looking at the 'hand'. The 'hand' response is the outward movement of the will in practical service and witnessing. The Spirit gives power to the will.

The proper result of an emotional and intellectual response to God's love is a strong volitional commitment to God's will.

Jesus Christ gave Himself to us "to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds". (Titus 2:14, RSV)

We are not saved by works, but by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), but the result of man's salvation is good works: "For God has made us what we are, created in Christ Jesus to do those good deeds which he planned for us to do". (Ephesians 2:10, Phillips)

"Therefore, my beloved bretheren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58)

Wrote James (the brother of the Lord): "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou has faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. . .Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only". (James 2:17-18,24)

Said John Wesley: "Works do not give life to faith, but faith begets works, and then is perfected by them". Notes Bishop Marston concerning Wesley's understanding of the proper relationship between faith and works: "Wesley made much of the social direction of the Christian religion, insisting that good works must be the fruit of a living faith and a condition of one's continuing in saving relationship to God, but he protested forcefully against the teaching that works can yield merit for one's salvation". (From Age To Age A Living Witness, p. 108)

"Father, I see now that I can never earn your favor by the performance of good deeds. But I also see that, while I am not saved by good deeds, I am saved for good deeds. My faith is not real until it moves me to grateful actions--actions which are expressions of my eternal indebtedness to you for your unmerited favor and mercy towards me."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I may perform 'good' deeds without having true faith, but I cannot have a true faith without the natural expression of good deeds!

A SAVING FAITH IS A WORKING FAITH

Good works do not save us, but good works are pleasing to God, for they are expressions of love, loyalty, and obedience to God.

Some people falsely reason that if they are saved by grace alone, then they can relax their own efforts in the Christian life. Such thinking is dangerous however, for "we (Christians) must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad". (II Corinthians 5:10)

"What purpose, then, will the final judgment serve in the case of such believers? In the words of Paul, it will be the 'judgment seat of Christ', and the term indicates something of its purpose for believers. On that occasion, the Saviour will measure the quality of the life His followers have lived. Though their salvation is by faith, authentic faith reflects itself in works, and those works must be judged." (The Mature Church Member, p. 99; Donald Bastian)

We are not saved by good works, but we are saved to do good works. True saving faith is a working faith.

Jesus' parables teach the importance of loving Jesus with one's will (Heart). The Parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) teaches that fear to invest talents for God leads to uselessness and eventual disaster. The Master wants our lives to be invested to produce good fruit for Him.

Other parables which teach the importance of good deeds are as follows: (1) Parable of the two sons [Matthew 21:28-31]; (2) Parable of the Master's rejected offer (excuses) [Mark 14:16-24]; (3) Parable of the Good Samaritan [Luke 15:11-32].

Eternal life is gained, not just by believing, but also by doing (Matthew 25:31-46). Mere intellectual assent to a certain set of religious beliefs will not save anyone. Wrote James, "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God, Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder". (James 2:18-19)

Jesus commanded us to pray: "Pray the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers into His vineyard". (Matthew 9:37-38)

Someone said, "If everyone did one job in the Church, there would be no job vacancies and no overworked workers". One minister asked me why the Church where I pastor had so many involved in the Church's midweek program. He complained that far too many in the Church where he pastored were not as conscientious in their Church attendance and responsibilities as they should be. He said something like this to me: "There are too many in the Church who want great results without hard work".

"Father, help me to be a Doer of the Word and not a Hearer only. Help me to translate good feelings into good actions, dreams into realities, good intentions into fruitful labors. No farmer would store his grain seed in his barn, never to be planted, and then wonder why he did not get a good harvest. So help me to liberally sow the seeds of love and hard work, and then I shall ultimately reap a mighty harvest of souls for your kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." (II Corinthians 9:6)

"HERE AM I--SEND ME!"

A clear vision of God changes one from a complacent person to a caring person, from a polluted person to a cleansed person, from a passive person to an active and aggressive person. "Then I (Isaiah) heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'" A cleansed and Spirit-filled person is a person who is motivated to 'reach out in love' to others! A Spirit-filled person is a person of earnest prayer, but, in such a person's life, prayer never becomes a substitute for hard work, practical service, and outward witnessing. "It is said that Martin Luther was close friends with another monk. The other monk was as fully persuaded of the necessity of the Reformation as Luther was. So they made an arrangement. Luther would go down into the world and fight the battle there; the other monk would remain in his cell praying all the time for the success of Luther's labours. But one night the monk had a dream. In it he was a single reaper engaged on the impossible task of reaping an immense field unaided and alone. The lonely reaper turned his head and the monk saw his face, and it was the face of Martin Luther; and he knew that he must leave his cell and leave his prayers and go to help. It is, of course, true that there are some who, because of age or bodily weakness, can do nothing other than pray; and their prayers are indeed a strength and a support. But if any normal person thinks that prayer can be a substitute for effort, then his prayers are merely a way of escape. Prayer and effort must go hand in hand." (Daily Study Bible, James, p. 91; Barclay)

Someone said, "Prayer is work; prayer works; prayer leads to work!" Prayer is not a substitute for work; neither is work a substitute for prayer. It is not 'either/or'; it is 'both'. The following poem entitled 'Somebody Else' illustrates the importance of active involvement in God's work.

"There's a clever young gal named Somebody Else.
There is nothing this lady can't do.
She's busy from morning 'til way late at night,
Just substituting for you.

You're asked to do this, or asked to do that,
And what is your ready reply?
Get Somebody Else, Madam Chairman,
She'll do it much better than I.

There's so much to be done in our services,
So much, and the workers are few,
And Somebody Else is getting tired and worn
Just substituting for you."

No local Church can grow without the enthusiastic involvement of many willing workers. And it is not a matter of great capability, but rather of great availability; not 'Can You?' but 'Will You?'

"Father, 'take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love; take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee'. For Jesus' sake. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Only one life to live, it will soon be gone; only what's done for Christ will last!"

PARTNERS IN THE WORK OF THE LORD!

"Do you recall when Edmund Hillary and his native guide, Tenzing, made their historic climb of Mt. Everest? Coming down from the peak, Hillary suddenly lost his footing. Tenzing held the line taut and kept them both from falling by digging his ax into the ice. Later Tenzing refused any special credit for saving Hillary's life; he considered it a routine part of the job. As he put it: 'Mountain climbers always help each other.'" (John Maxwell; Church Leadership Clinic)

Should it not be said of Christians: "Christians always help each other". Paul often talked about his fellow workers. "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1:4-5) In Romans, chapter 16, Paul refers to over 30 different fellow workers and speaks of them with great affection and love and appreciation. No one can do the job by himself. We need one another!

What is one of the marks of a great Church? Christian workers who work together with a spirit of cooperation and interdependence, each working for all and all working for each in the spirit of Christ. The Church is like a team and the pastor is simply a 'playing coach'. None is seeking glory for Himself and all are seeking glory for the team Manager--Jesus Christ! Christ both owns and manages the team and all of us are fellow team players! The Church is not a spectator sport. The Church is a team of workers, all working hard together to win the game of life. No competition against each other, but all working for each other and for the Lord!

None of us, by ourselves, can win all the souls to Christ. We must all be doing witnessing and soul-winning. None of us can finance all the needs of the Church. All of us must be giving our tithes and offerings to the Lord. Someone said, "Many hands make the work easy".

We must all cooperate together to build the local Church. "There isn't a single person in the world who can make a pencil", insists News Week Columnist Milton Friedman as he opens his T.V. series, 'Free To Choose'. The wood may have come from a forest in Washington, the graphite from a mine in South America, the eraser from a Malaysian rubber plantation. "Thousands of people cooperate to make one pencil."

John F. Kennedy wrote in 'Profile's In Courage' that, "The way to get along is to go along". Whether in the sports arena or on the business scene, only through cooperation and team work will the job get done most efficiently and pennants for productivity awards be won. "All your strength is in union." Longfellow once said, "All your danger is in discord". Said one perceptive man, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success".

"Father, help me to work cooperatively with all of my fellow 'team members' in your Church. Let me do nothing out of envy or rivalry, but out of good will. Help me never to look only to my own interests, but also to the interests of others, never doing anything out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. (Philippians 2:1-4) In Jesus' loving name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To consider others better than myself (Philippians 2:3) is to better myself--for such an attitude of humble servanthood is the attitude of Christ Himself (Philippians 2:5-8)!

THE HELPLESSNESS OF GOD!

In this world there is an eternal battle being waged between sin and God. Both sin and God have their weapons for the battle. What are the weapons? Human beings! Every person is either a weapon in the hands of God or a weapon in the hands of sin!

Have you ever thought that both sin and God are helpless without human weapons? "Both God and sin are looking for weapons to use. God cannot work without men. If God wants a word spoken, he has to get a man to speak it. If God wants a deed done, He has to get a man to do it. If God wants a person cheered, encouraged, strengthened, helped, He has to get a man to do the lifting up. God, as it has been said, is everywhere looking for hands to use. And it is the same with sin. Every man has to be given the push into sin. The invitation to sin has to be offered to every man. Sin is looking for men who will by their words or example, seduce and invite others into sinning." (Daily Study Bible, Romans, p. 87-88; Barclay)

Every man can make a choice as to whether he will be a weapon for sin or a weapon for God. Every man has the power to exercise great influence for good or great influence for evil. Every man must choose to yield himself to either God or to sin. Both God and Satan are helpless unless they get men through whom they may work!

"We hear a great many sermons about might and majesty and power of God; we would be well sometimes to think of the helplessness of God, that without us and without what we can do God is quite and totally helpless. He has got to get a man! We are the Body of Christ, literally hands to do His work, feet to run His errands, a voice to speak for Him. This is the Church's task; to be the body, the hands, the feet, through whom Christ acts." (The Life of Jesus For Everyman, p. 94-95; William Barclay)

Every man must yield his members to sin as weapons for wickedness, or he must yield his members to God as weapons for righteousness. There is no neutral ground. He that is not for Christ is automatically against Christ! Have you yielded your heart, your head, and your hands to Christ?

God commands all to love Him with all the heart, head, and hands. The affections, the intellect, the will--all must be surrendered to Christ. In living the Christian life, let us not be unbalanced in our love response to God. The strength of mind plus the weakness of the emotions equals the 'Intellectualist' in religion--one who tends to be rather 'cold' and 'calculating'. The strength of the will plus the weakness of the emotions equals the unapproachable 'Moralist' in religion. The strength of the emotions plus the weakness of the mind equals the 'Sentimentalist' in religion. The balanced and mature believer must exercise the strength of his mind, the strength of his emotions, and the strength of his will--in his total love response to Christ.

"O God, I see that every person is mastered by someone or by something. I choose to be mastered by You. I place myself in Your hands to be used as a weapon for righteousness and holiness. I want to love You with my total mind, emotions, and will!

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God is so mighty that He has chosen to be 'helpless' without me! How humbling and yet how ennobling to me!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

WHERE IS YOUR HEART, HEAD, AND HANDS?

1. What do the 'heart', 'head', and 'hands' represent in terms of human personality?
2. What feature of Christ's personality is available as a resource to the believer to enable the believer to love God with all his 'Heart'?
4. Share experiences from the life of Jesus which demonstrate that He was a man of great compassion and 'feeling'.
5. Is the gentle treatment of people by pastors and leaders of Churches a sign of strength or a sign of sentimental weakness? (Give Scriptural support for your answer. Note I Thessalonians 2:7-8.)
6. How do you distinguish between deep feelings of the soul and surface feelings of mere emotion, and why is the latter type of feelings an unreliable basis for living the Christian life?
7. Should one involve himself in praying and in witnessing only when he 'feels' especially 'led' of the Holy Spirit, or should he pray and witness regularly, out of a sense of duty and discipline and obedience to Christ's commands in the Bible?
8. What feature of Christ's personality is available as a resource to the believer to enable the believer to love God with all his 'Mind'?
9. Give specific or personal illustration which demonstrates the truth of the following logic:

"Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny."
10. Why is control of the mind (with its thoughts) so important in the effective coping with temptation? What advice is given in Philippians 4:8 as an aid in effectively controlling one's thoughts?
11. List at least four suggestions that ought to be followed in the process of learning to fix one's mind on God.
12. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We create our world by our words."
13. What feature of Christ's personality is available as a resource to the believer to enable the believer to love God with his 'Hands' (Will)?
14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We are not saved by works, but by grace alone, but the result of man's salvation is good works". (Note Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:14, James 2:17-18,24.) Is the performance of 'good works' in the life of a believer a condition of one's continuing in a saving relationship to God?

15. What is the nature and purpose of the 'judgment seat' before which all believers must come after they die (according to II Corinthians 5:10)? How does this judgment for believers differ from the judgment which unrepentant sinners must face (Revelations 20:11-15)?
16. What are some of the Parables of Jesus which teach the importance of 'good deeds'?
17. Is it accurate to say that "eternal life is gained, not just by believing, but also by doing"? (Note Matthew 25:31-46)
18. Describe the nature and qualities of that type of 'Belief' which results in true conversion and eternal life, in contrast to that type of belief in God which is not morally transforming. (Note John 1:12 and James 2:18-19.)
19. Do you believe that the following statement is a fair assessment of many people who are present-day members of modern-day Churches: "There are too many in the local Churches who want great results without hard work".
20. In light of Isaiah 6:1-8, do you believe the following statement is an accurate and realistic statement: "A clear vision of God changes one from a complacent person to a caring person, from a polluted person to a cleansed person, from a passive person to an active and aggressive person".
21. What is the proper relationship between hard work (human effort) and prayer?
22. What attitudes must the pastor and fellow members in a local Church have if great goals are to be reached and great results are to be accomplished, in terms of building the Kingdom of God?
23. Why is the shocking concept of 'the helplessness of God' such a helpful concept in seeking to understand the responsibility which believers have in accomplishing God's purpose in God's world?
24. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Every person must yield his members to sin as weapons for wickedness, or he must yield his members to God as weapons for righteousness. There is no neutral ground!"
25. Give illustrations of an 'unbalanced love response' in the lives of believers in their relationship to God.

CHAPTER 5

HOW PERFECT IS 'CHRISTIAN PERFECTION'?

ARE YOU ATTRACTED TO CHRISTIAN HOLINESS?

Notes Wilber T. Dayton, "Although there are no exact synonyms in any language, there is, for the most part, remarkable agreement in the use of a number of terms as somewhat synonymous and, at times, as almost interchangeable. This similarity, as well as the distinct connotation and symbolism, should be observed in such words as entire sanctification, Christian perfection, holiness, perfect love, gift of the Holy Spirit, purification, cleansing, and fullness of the Spirit." (A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology, vol. 1, p. 528)

In an earlier chapter of this devotional book, we discussed the meaning and application of the concept of 'Entire Sanctification'. This concept is almost synonymous with the concept of 'Christian Perfection' which we will look at in this chapter. Why does there seem to be so much prejudice against or even outright hostility to the concepts of 'Entire Sanctification' and 'Christian Perfection'?

J. A. Wood offers four reasons for this: "(1) The doctrine is misunderstood. Multitudes misapprehended its true nature. It is often taken to mean more than is intended, and more than is taught. (2) The doctrine and experience of entire sanctification has been prejudiced among common people by being frequently identified with culture, social refinement, and the highest finish; then of course it can be possessed only by the few who have the time, the means, and the opportunity to obtain the highest development and brightest polish, and cultivation. (3) Many of our ministers are at guilt in this matter, in not seeking this blessed experience themselves. For not studying and mastering the subject; and for not preaching it more clearly, strongly, and explicitly to the people. (4) Much of the prejudice and opposition to this doctrine comes from remaining depravity in unsanctified believers. Indwelling sin is an antagonism to holiness, and, in so far as any Christian has inbred sin, he has within him opposition to holiness". (Perfect Love, p. 23-24)

It is the purpose of this chapter to present clearly the meaning of the Biblical idea of Christian perfection. It is important to point out those misconceptions regarding perfection which have caused many to be prejudiced against this doctrine altogether. An attempt later will be made in this chapter to point out clearly the essential meaning of Christian perfection.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect". (Matthew 5:48) This is a Biblical command. What God commands, God provides. But, because of the misunderstanding concerning this subject, we must look at what Christian perfection is not, and then seek to understand what Christian perfection means, as it is taught within the context of Matthew 5:43-48.

"Father, create within me a hunger and a thirst for righteousness. Don't let me fall short of experiencing everything you have for me to experience and enjoy in life. Because you are a holy God, you have called your people to be a holy and a happy people. Give me a vision of the Holy One, and, as a result, I shall never be satisfied with anything less than a holy life. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The empowering Holy Spirit is powerful enough to remove the indwelling sin in my life and to replace it with the overflowing love of Christ!

HOW 'PERFECT' IS 'CHRISTIAN PERFECTION'?

It is probably not wise to use the phrase 'Christian Perfection' in popular preaching today, for most people have negative connotations when 'perfection' is used to describe fallible Christians. William Sangster, one of the greatest twentieth-century holiness preachers, wrote, "It is best to avoid the word 'perfect'. Though the term is biblical, it has been fruitful of such wide misunderstanding, and it so often misdirects the interest of people from sanctity that it is best to keep the Biblical use of the word 'saint'". (Daily Readings From W. E. Sangster, p. 124) Even John Wesley, whose emphasis on the holy life was perhaps the strongest in modern history, wrote, "I have no particular fondness for the term ('Christian Perfection'). It seldom occurs either in my preaching or writings. . . But I still think that perfection is only another term for holiness, or the image of God in man". (quoted in A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology, vol. 1, p. 521)

However, while the term may not be the most helpful term to use to describe the deeper life, it is a term used in the Bible. Jesus commanded believers: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". (Matthew 5:48)

Our perfectionist-oriented society does not negatively react when the word 'perfect' is used to describe technologically-created gadgets: "That is a perfectly running jet engine". "This computer is engineered to perfection". Also, in the life of Nature, we gladly use the word 'perfect': "Here is a perfectly formed rose!" "This is a perfect night to take a walk!" And, it is not uncommon for a man, who has been deeply in love with his wife for half a century, to say: "She has been a perfect wife to me!"

But, in applying the term to the life and experience of a Christian, we are generally very hesitant. To talk of 'Christian Perfection'; is to sound presumptuous, or spiritually-proud, or self righteous.

But the fact still remains that Jesus gave a command in Matthew 5:48-- "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". What could Jesus possibly mean? Is this not an impossible standard, an ideal that no one really realizes in his life?

'Christian Perfection' is not a popular phrase, but it is a Biblical concept. However, to understand what it means, we must spend considerable time in telling what it does not mean. If 'Christian Perfection'; is a realizeable goal, then let us pursue this goal with an open mind and an eager heart! "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection". (Hebrews 6:1) "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Philippians 3:15, KJV)

"Father, it matters little what term I use to describe the 'experience'--the experience of Your nature penetrating my nature; the experience of Your love replacing my indifference; the experience of Your purity replacing my pollution; the experience of Your power replacing my impotence. I am not much concerned in analyzing terms, but I am deeply concerned in personally experiencing the reality of Your indwelling Spirit in my inner spirit!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who commands me to be holy is the same One who will empower me to become holy!

WHAT 'CHRISTIAN PERFECTION' IS NOT

Because of the misunderstanding concerning this subject, let us first look at what 'Christian Perfection' is not. 'Christian Perfection' is not Absolute Perfection. One would be theologically insane to teach that mortal man can be absolutely perfect! Only God enjoys absolute perfection. God is eternal; man is subject to time. God is present everywhere at one time; man is confined to one place at a time. God knows all things; man knows only partially. God is all-powerful; man is very weak and subject to decay. God is invisible; man is tangible flesh and blood. God's wisdom is beyond measure; man's wisdom is incomplete and derivative. God is good altogether; man is corrupt and sinful. God is altogether just and righteous; man is biased and prejudiced. God possesses all facts and knows the whole truth; man possesses some of the facts and knows part of the truth. "God's moral perfections are like an infinite ocean, as boundless and fathomless as immensity. Up to this perfection, neither man, nor angel, nor seraph can ever come. Between the highest degree of human perfection, and the perfection of God, there is the difference between the finite and the infinite. Absolute perfection belongs to God alone." (Perfect Love, p. 24; J. A. Wood)

'Christian Perfection' is not Angelic Perfection. The angels are God's ministering spirits and as such perform perfect service to God and to man. God's ministering angels are unfallen angels, never having been polluted by sin. The angels enjoy a much higher order of intelligence than does moral man. The angels are not subject to bodily affliction or temptation. They are confirmed in righteousness and as such are free perfectly to obey God.

'Christian Perfection' is not Adamic Perfection. "There is a wide difference between a pure-hearted Christian saved by grace, and unfallen Adam in his Paradisical glory; a difference in range of powers, innocency, and grounds of justification. Adam was justified by works, and was free from the broken powers, and infirmities of fallen human nature." (Ibid, p. 24-25) Adam enjoyed blessed communion with his Creator. Innocence, uprightness, strength, and obedience characterized Adam's life. Adam's body was strong, his mind superb, and his spirit unblemished. Adam's perfection surpasses any perfection that a Christian enjoys.

'Christian Perfection' is not Legal Perfection. The Law cannot save, but God's grace can. No flesh shall be justified by the Law. The Law is God's perfect standard but man in his fallen state is not able to keep the Law. The perfection required of man is not a perfection that is based upon a standard that assumes man's righteousness.

"Father, allow me to see the possibilities of divine grace. Deliver me from 'perfectionism'--that tendency to deny my human limitations--and enable me to see the possibilities of 'perfect love'--that supernatural experience, lived out naturally and spontaneously in a world of practical human relationships."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The God who has begun his great work of perfecting holiness in my life will bring it to eventual completion!

TREASURE IN 'EARTHEN VESSELS'

We said in the last devotional that 'Christian Perfection' is not Legal Perfection. By this, we mean that the perfection of the Christian is not the perfection of works based upon an already righteous life, but it is the perfection of faith based upon a divinely-transformed life. The "righteousness which is of the law" "supposes him to whom it is given, to be already holy and happy, created in the image and enjoying the favour of God; and prescribes the condition whereon he may continue therein, in love and joy, life and immortality". The "righteousness which is of faith" "supposes him to whom it is given, to be now unholy and unhappy; fallen short of the glorious image of God, having the wrath of God abiding on him, and hastening through sin, whereby his soul is dead, to bodily death, and death everlasting. And to man in this state it prescribes the condition, whereon he may regain the pearl he has lost; may recover the favour and image of God; may retrieve the life of God in his soul, and be restored to the knowledge and the love of God, which is the beginning of life eternal." (John Wesley)

'Christian Perfection' is not Service Perfection. The most sanctified Christian performs imperfect service to God and man. God's treasures are contained in weak earthen vessels (II Corinthians 4:7). Because the flesh is weak, the service to God is very imperfect and incomplete. It is the Christian's desire to serve God perfectly, but the idea of perfect service is never quite realized. The Christian is plagued with awkwardness, clumsiness, flaws, and mistakes--and yet his motive is only to do God's will. One's attitudes can be pure, but his actions can and will be very imperfect. A new bride's love for her husband will be complete and total, but her actions are imperfect. Her heart can be perfectly fixed on her husband, but her actions can be very imperfect. She may desire to make 'perfect' biscuits for her husband, but, while her motives and desires are 'perfect', she may nevertheless make biscuits that are impossible to eat!

'Christian Perfection' is not Behavioral Perfection. Christians differ in their temperaments. Some have a fiery disposition; some have a very placid disposition. One's emotional make-up affects his behavior. The skeptically-minded person may appear to be a perpetual doubter. The strong-willed person may appear to be intolerant. The easy-going person may appear to be compromising. The affectionate person may appear to be too intimate. The systematic and ordered person may appear to be rigid and inflexible. The care-free person may appear to be too indulgent. The ambitious person may appear to be proud. The very forceful and expressive person may appear to be domineering. One's outward behavior is not a true gauge of spirituality. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.

"Father, my service for you is incomplete and my behavior before you is fallible, but, in spite of my imperfect motions and movements, cleanse my inner motives, that they may be pure and perfect and righteous. Thank you for accepting imperfect persons like me."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I may be a 'clay vessel', cracked and imperfect, but the Treasure within me is Christ--the Perfect One whose mission is to perfect me within and to strengthen me without!

'CHRISTIAN PERFECTION' IS NOT 'SINLESS PERFECTION'

We noted in the last devotional that 'Christian Perfection' does not guarantee perfection in one's behavior. Notes J. A. Wood, "Christian perfection does admit of numberless infirmities and imperfections, such as slowness of understanding, errors of judgment, mistakes in practice, erratic imaginations, a treacherous memory. . . They are not sins; they are innocent; and although they may be our misfortune, they are included in the 'all things' which, by the grace and blessing of God, shall work together for our good." (Perfect Love, p. 33; J. A. Wood) Notes a great evangelist, John R. Church, "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. They are not carnality, but they are part of our humanity. They are not de-destroyed in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but they are sanctified. 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 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. . . 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, p. 51-52; John R. Church)

'Christian Perfection' is not Sinless Perfection. 'Sinless Perfection' is an unBiblical phrase. Even the cleansed, Spirit-filled Christian is susceptible to involuntary transgressions. Says Wesley, "Therefore sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict my self. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not". 'Sinless Perfection' carries with it the notion that the sanctified Christian is beyond the ability and danger of sinning against God. There is no state of grace that removes a person from the possibility of sinning and backsliding. The Spirit-filled Christian is still tempted and he must resist the devil (James 4:7). "Does Christian holiness exclude a liability to apostasy?" Notes J. A. Wood, "It does not; but it renders apostasy much less probable. Perfect love makes a strong fortress of the heart; this fortress will be attacked, but is not as likely to be taken as without holiness. Holiness makes no one impeccable, although it possesses all the elements of strength and stability. A liability to sin is an essential condition of probation. Holiness serves the safest possible condition on earth." (Perfect Love, p. 32; J. A. Wood)

"Father, help me to know and accept my unique God-created temperament--a temperament that is twisted by sin but that is restorable through the transforming and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. Protect me in my vulnerabilities and don't allow sin to exploit my weaknesses. In Jesus' conquering name! Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will allow the Holy Spirit to use my unique temperament to uniquely contribute to the 'Body of Christ'.

WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF 'CHRISTIAN PERFECTION'?

Jesus said, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect". (Matthew 5:48) Immediately we ask, "How is it possible for men to be perfect? Is not only God perfect?" 'Perfect' in the Greek (teleios) does not mean abstract, philosophical, metaphysical perfection. This word is used in a special way. "A thing is perfect if it fully realizes the purpose for which it was planned, and designed, and made." (Daily Study Bible, Matthew, vol. 1, p. 176; Barclay) Thus, a screwdriver which is just the right length and which fits exactly into the groove of a screw, is a perfect screwdriver. A glove which fits exactly and comfortably in a hand, is a perfect glove. "It fully realizes the purpose for which it was planned." Thus, a perfect man is a man who fully realizes the purpose for which he was planned and created.

What was the purpose for which man was created? Man was created in the image of God, and His purpose is to be like God. The perfect man is the man who is like God in His love. What then is God's love like?

God loves all men, and the godlike man or perfect man will also love all men, regardless of their moral condition. This will involve an exercise of the will on the Christian's part and an impartation of divine love on God's part (Romans 5:5). Christian love is not mere sentimentality, but love that involves an exercise of the rational and volitional powers. God gives the Christian the power to love those whom he does not like and who do not like him. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." (Romans 5:5) The Christian's love must be like God's love--personal and remedial. God seeks the highest good for all men, and so must the true Christian, regardless of how he himself is treated by his fellow men. The Christian must look at every man as being infinitely important and of eternal value. Christ prayed for his persecutors and forgave them, and so must the true Spirit-filled Christian.

Notes William Barclay, "What then is the meaning of this agape (love)? The supreme passage for the interpretation of the meaning of agape is Matthew 5:43-48. We are there bidden to love our enemies. Why? In order that we should be like God. And what is the typical action of God that is cited? God sends his rain on the just and the unjust and on the evil and the good. That is to say--no matter what a man is like, God seeks nothing but his highest good. . . Agape is the spirit which says: 'No matter what any man does to me, I will never seek to do harm to him; I will never set out for revenge; I will always seek nothing but his highest good'. That is today, Christian love, agape, is unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will." (New Testament Words, p. 21-22)

"Father, shed abroad your kind of love in my heart by the Holy Spirit. Cleanse my mind from negativism, cleanse my emotions from resentments, and cleanse my will from willfulness and rebellion. Help me to love the loveless, to befriend the lonely, to comfort the sorrowing, and to seek nothing but the highest good for all persons. Through Jesus' loving nature. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Jesus will love His love into my loveless heart, in order that I might love others supernaturally!

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

'Christian Perfection' is perfection in love. 'Perfect Love' is perfect in quality. The man who is made perfect in love has no alloy in his love for God. His love is pure and unmixed, with no carnal strivings and no inferior motives. Perfect love "casteth out fear--all slavish, harmful fear, such as the guilty feel. It excludes all those warring elements from the unsanctified heart which excite distressing and slavish fear. It casts out the fear of man, of want, of death, of hell, and all slavish fear of God. 'He that feareth is not made perfect in love'. It does not cast out the fear of caution, or a loving, filial fear of God. It induces this kind of fear". (Perfect Love, p. 34; J. A. Wood) Perfect love is perfect in that love fills the whole heart. There is no room in the heart for any less affection than affection for God. The whole heart is the home of God. He occupies every room.

What is another name for Christian perfection? Says Paul Rees, "Let's call it affectional and dispositional perfection. It is God's own gift to totally committed children of His, who, renouncing self-pleasing and men-pleasing, are imbued with a passionate eagerness to please Him in all things". (Prayer and Life's Highest, p. 61; Paul Rees)

"Commander Brengle's witness will serve as an example. He begins his little book. . .with the startling sentence 'On January 9, 1885, at about nine o'clock in the morning, God sanctified my soul', and then goes on: 'It was a Heaven of love that came into my heart, I walked out over Boston Common before breakfast, weeping for joy and praising God. Oh, how I loved! In that hour I knew Jesus, and I loved Him till it seemed my heart would break in love. I loved the sparrows, I loved the dogs, I loved the horses, I loved the little urchins on the streets. . .I loved the whole world'.

"The heart of the experience is love--and love is a gift. When the moralist, in keen defense of ethical principle, asserts that holiness cannot be given, this is the reply. The heart of holiness so conceived is supernatural love--and love is a gift. Love is the key to holiness." (Daily Readings From W. E. Sangster, p. 53)

'Perfect Love' is constant love. By 'constant' is meant that there is a constant preference for God, even in times when God's leadership is difficult to follow or to understand. This is what it means to love God with all of one's heart, soul, strength, and mind. To love him in this way is to love Him, despite the cost in personal sacrifice or loss. The love of the spirit-filled Christian is not sporadic and subject to the circumstances about him. Love that is perfect is love that prefers God at all times--in times of loss or gain, sorrow or joy, success or failure, sickness or health.

"If a human father, fallible as he is, is desirous to give good gifts to his trusting children, how much more is the Heavenly Father, perfect as He is, eager to give the greatest of all gifts to His believing children--the gift of the blessed Holy Spirit in all of His fullness! Father, I invite the Holy Spirit into every part of my heart. I open my life to experience a 'heaven of love'."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I do not get more of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit gets more of me--when, as a believer, I surrender everything to Christ!

'PERFECT LOVE' IS 'PROGRESSIVE LOVE'

We noted yesterday that 'perfect love' is constant love--i.e., it is love that prefers God at all times, regardless of the circumstances. There are times of sorrow and grief and heaviness of spirit and times of severe temptation. Therefore, it is important to note that 'perfect love' does not mean a state of continual ecstasy. One can have a supreme preference and a deep loyalty towards God, even when his heart is breaking. Love for God is an exercise of the will, not simply an emotion of the heart. "The sea of perfect love is not always swept with a tempest of excitement. The life of the sanctified is often a sailing on a placid surface, beneath unclouded sun, where the gentle breezes of heaven produce motion without commotion". (Possibilities of Grace by Asbury Lowrey, p. 64)

'Perfect Love' is 'Progressive Love'. The question is asked, "How can holiness be perfect and yet progressive?" J. A. Wood clearly and logically answers this question: "Perfection in quality does not exclude increase in quantity. Beyond entire sanctification there is no increase in purity, as that which is pure cannot be more than pure; but there may be unlimited increase in expansion and quantity. After love is made perfect, it may abound more and yet more. Holiness in the entirely sanctified soul is exclusive, and is perfect in kind or in quality, but is limited in degree or quantity. The capacities of the soul are expansive and progressive, and holiness in measure can increase corresponding to increasing capacity. Faith, love, humility, and patience, may be perfect in kind, and yet increase in volume and power, or in measure harmonizing with increasing capacity. A tree may be perfectly sound, healthy, and vigorous in its branches, leaves, and fruit, and yet year by year increase perpetually its capacity and fruitfulness". (Perfect Love, p. 29; J. A. Wood)

Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians that they might grow more and more in their capacity of love. "And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, loving within you as you trust in Him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love". (Ephesians 3:17, Living Bible) There is opportunity for unlimited growth in love toward our fellowmen, as reflected in the following exhortation by William Law: "Let every day be a day of humility; condescend to all the weaknesses and infirmities of your fellow-creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind".

"Father, I see now that I can experience heart purity immediately at the time I surrender all to you, in faith, but that I can only experience life maturity to the extent that I grow daily in my capacity to love. May Christ feel more and more at home within my heart as I grow daily towards my greater maturity in love."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: There is no greater joy known to mankind than the 'joy of becoming'--the joy of becoming more loving and loveable, and thus becoming more Christlike!

THE REASONABLENESS OF 'CHRISTIAN PERFECTION'

The standard of Christian perfection is a Biblical standard. However, many have tried to repudiate perfection because of the connotations surrounding the word. It is important to understand what Christian perfection is not. Christian perfection is not absolute perfection, or angelic perfection, or Adamic perfection, or legal perfection, or service perfection, or behavioral perfection, or sinless perfection. When Christian perfection is properly understood, it becomes reasonable for a Christian to accept it as the normal standard for Christian living. Christian perfection is supreme and constant preference for God. Such love filling the heart of man must increase more and more throughout all of life.

"Coupled with cleansing is the Spirit's work of perfecting the believer's heart in love to God and to his neighbor. This is a perfection of quality, not of strength, or of intensity, or of ability to manifest perfectly that love. This is a perfection produced within the deepest ranges of human personality where the springs of affection, of ambition, of motivation take their rise. This is an elimination of all that God would call sin in the moral and spiritual nature of the appropriating believer. This properly is Christian perfection as it was heralded by the Wesleys and since proclaimed by a host of witnesses. Wesley defined many times the perfection that he taught. On one occasion he wrote: "By Christian perfection I mean:

1. Loving God with all our heart--Do you object to this?
2. A heart and life all devoted to God--Do you desire less?
3. Regaining the whole image of God--What objection is there to this?
4. Having all the mind that was in Christ--Is this going too far?
5. Walking uniformly as Christ walked--And to this surely no Christian will object.

If anyone means anything more or anything less by perfection; by perfection, I have no concern about it".

Anyone acquainted with the carnal mind cannot hold that the foregoing level of divine grace is livable unless he is liberated from that indwelling bent to evil. Continued Wesley, "A person may be sincere who has all his natural tempers, pride, wrath, self-will in some degree; but he is not perfect in love till his heart is cleansed from these and all other corruptions". (Insights Into Holiness, p. 121-122; compiled by Kenneth Geiger)

If love is the essence of Christian perfection, then we must recognize that supreme love for God and sincere love for our fellowmen must be our goal in life. "Life has one purpose above all others--to give love to God and to those near you and to allow yourself to be loved in turn. Any work that expresses this love is great work, any that does not is nothing." (A Way In The World, p. 91; Ernest Boyer, Jr.)

"Father, I cannot have a happy or a healthy life without your implanted holiness in my heart. Wash me and I shall be clean--clean from the deepest stains of inbred sin and selfishness! Fill me and I shall be full--full of your love and joy and peace and poise! I believe, but my faith often wavers. Heal me of my double-mindedness. Make me a single-minded and a Spirit-possessed man. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who rules all, will have my all, in order that I may enjoy His all!

CHRISTIAN LOVE--THE MOST "EXCELLENT WAY"!

Wrote Paul, "And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing". (I Corinthians 13:1-3, NIV)

"There is nothing we can do, not anything at all, that rivals this in importance. To have loved deeply, profoundly, fully, even one other human being, and to have welcomed his or her love in return, expresses the essence of all that life contains. . .Without love even those deeds that earn prestige, wealth, and power become hollow and empty. With life, the smallest, most ordinary of actions becomes sacred." (A Way In The World, p. 91-92; Ernest Boyer, Jr.)

If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but don't have love, I am no better than the heathen whose worship involved the clanging of cymbals and the braying of trumpets.

The carnal Corinthian Christians were contending and competing for the spectacular gifts, and were craving these gifts for selfish purposes rather than for the edification of the entire Church. Paul points out that no gift would be of value without the others, and therefore there should be no pride in a particular gift. Each gift must be used in service to every other person in the Church.

One of the gifts which was coveted at Corinth was the gift of speaking in tongues. It seems to have been one of the more spectacular, dramatic gifts, sometimes used in a way that led to confusion and disorder within the public services.

"The least edifying of the spiritual gifts was that of 'speaking in tongues' (glossolalia). During a service of worship first one and then another would fall into a trance and pour out, sometimes simultaneously, a flood of excited but unintelligible speech. When the ecstasy was past, someone with a kindred gift of interpretation explained the message, if he could. In order to prevent outsiders from concluding that the Corinthian Christians are mad (I Corinthians 14:23), Paul orders that in each service not more than two or three should speak in a tongue, and each in turn. If, however, no one is present to interpret, each is to 'keep silence in Church and speak to himself and to God' (I Corinthians 14:28)." (The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content, p. 227; Bruce M. Metzger)

"Father, it is not gifts I seek, but the Giver--the blessed Holy Spirit. It is not the ecstatic or the emotional or the dramatic experience that I need, but it is the ethical reality of a life of sanctity, issuing forth in practical acts of love, which I desperately need! Dearest Spirit, manifest your coming as you will--as the gentle breeze on a calm day or as the crashing thunder on a stormy day--but, above all else, come to me in all Your fullness!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: What God commands, my nature demands, and the blessed Spirit will supply--agape love!

PREACHING MOTIVATED BY LOVE!

Paul taught (in I Corinthians 13) that it is possible to exercise the various gifts selfishly, evidencing that one is not really filled with the Holy Spirit. The carnal Corinthians gloried in their gifts (eloquence, knowledge, speaking in 'tongues', etc.), and especially did they focus on the spectacular gift of speaking in 'tongues'. It was because of this wrong focus on the part of the Corinthian believers that Paul found it necessary to emphasize the importance of agape (love) as described in I Corinthians 13. What the tongues-speaking carnal Corinthians needed was a Baptism of love which would result in an inner cleansing from carnality and an outward redirecting of their particular gifts (including 'tongues') from selfish use to Christ-honoring use. Paul makes it clear that it is possible to have the gift of speaking with the tongues of men (actual languages) and with the tongues of angels (unknown tongues of ecstasy) without being baptized with love (I Corinthians 13:1). The Corinthians were too gift-oriented and not enough Giver-oriented. They had not yet experienced the Giver--the Holy Spirit--in all His fullness. They needed a baptism of love, as described in I Corinthians 13.

The gift of tongues must not only be guided by love, but the gift of prophecy (preaching) must also be guided by love. There are those who preach or pray for show, not for edification of the Church. The words one speaks in teaching, or preaching, or praying must be spoken with only one purpose in mind--to build up and to help the entire body of Christ. "Whether a man is speaking or praying or singing, he must do it not only with his spirit, but with his mind. He must know what is going on and others must be able to understand it. And so Paul reaches the blunt conclusion that in a Christian congregation it is better to speak a few intelligible sentences than to pour out a flood of unintelligible sounds in a tongue." (Daily Study Bible, I Corinthians, p. 143)

"The greatest test of any part of worship is, 'Will this help everyone?' It is not, 'Will this display my special gifts?' It is, 'Will this bring all who are here nearer to each other and nearer to God?'" (Ibid, p. 145)

Preaching without love brings terror and condemnation--not comfort, solace and strength. The ultimate aim of preaching must be to give joy for sorrow, hope for despair, forgiveness for condemnation, peace for turmoil, strength for weakness. I recently talked to a young man, in his twenties, and I encouraged him to come to worship services. He said something like this to me, "I and my whole family quit going to Church. It seemed that every time we went to Church, the preacher would yell at us and point his finger at us and act as if he were mad at the entire congregation, while he was preaching". Every preacher must ask himself, "Does love for God and love for others motivate my preaching, or do threats and fears characterize my preaching?"

"Heavenly Father, I confess that sometimes I have contended for the right issues but with the wrong spirit. Let me speak the truth--in love! Make me an encourager--treating others with the tenderness of a nurse caring for her patient and with the understanding of a mother caring for her faltering children."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Affirmation--not vindication--will be the goal of my life, in all of the relationships of my life!

THE TENDERNESS AND WISDOM OF LOVE

We noted in the last devotional that love must be the motivator for all preaching (I Corinthians 13:2). Writes Bruce Larson, "I have a quotation by Victor Hugo on the wall of my office which says, 'Man lives by affirmation even more than by bread'. Jesus Christ is God's great affirmation of man. He loves us in our sins, He wants to change us, but He is totally on our side while we are yet sinners, and He calls us to enter into His great love and acceptance. When we have done this, then we go out and become this affirmation for others. . . I've been making an experiment lately as I watch many TV preachers. The words are about the love of God and forgiveness for sinners, but if you turn off the sound and simply look at the gestures and the faces, or if you turn the sound low to listen to the tone of the voices, all you see and hear communicated is anger. Television preachers are not the only ones guilty of this. How often I relate to people in my home or office or in my circle of friends as a prophet who must straighten out, teach, correct, bring down wrath, point out faults. But people are not changed by the John the Baptist approach. Rather as God through one of his people affirms their strengths, they find hope for their failures". (Ask Me To Dance, p. 63; Bruce Larson)

Intellectual Knowledge without love equals snobbery and contempt for the less fortunate. A cool head without a warm heart can only result in destructive social relationships. The intellectually-acute sinner is potentially the most dangerous sinner. A trained head without a controlled heart can equal a destroyed world! He who knows much about gadgets but virtually nothing about God may claim great knowledge but cannot claim wisdom, and knowledge without wisdom can bring untold misery.

"All the education in the world cannot make up for the fundamental need of being born again. One can become an intellectual theologian without know-God." (Ibid, p. 28) I may have all knowledge, but if it is not controlled by love, I am nothing! Why? (1) For knowledge without love brings hurts, not helps, to mankind. Knowledge of atomic energy can be used to help to save mankind or to help destroy mankind, depending upon whether or not this knowledge of a great energy is guided by love.

"How empty learning,
How vain is art
But as it mends the life
And guides the heart."

(2) For knowledge will die when the person dies, but love lives on forever in human character and never-dying soul, upon which death has no power.

Wrote Paul, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God". (I Corinthians 8:1-3)

"Father, let me never despise knowledge, but with all my getting of knowledge, let me get wisdom and understanding. Let your love guide me in the wise application of knowledge, that I might always be a blessing and never a curse to my world! In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." I will be a love-possessed man so that I might be a builder of men and of nations, not a destroyer!

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

I Corinthians 13:2b says, "If I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing". Faith without love can be impersonal and unfeeling. There are those who strongly declare faith in God but who are intolerant and unloving in their judgments of others who differ from them. Strong personal convictions are, of course, important, but these convictions should be stated lovingly and kindly. There are those who are orthodox in belief and who often make faith-assertions, but who are cold and calculating and unresponsive in human relationships. There are those who claim faith but who essentially are critical and judgmental. A broken-hearted person would not feel welcome to use their shoulder to weep on.

"There was a man who visited his doctor and who was informed that his heart was tired and he must rest. He telephoned his employer, who was a notable Christian figure, and told him the news, only to receive the answer, 'I have an inward strength which enables me to carry on'. These are the words of faith, but they are the words of a faith which knew no love, and which was therefore a hurting and cutting thing." (Daily Study Bible, I Corinthians, p. 132; Barclay)

'Charity' or 'good works' can be performed without the presence and motivation of agape (love). "There is nothing in this world more humiliating than this so-called charity without love. To give as a grim duty, to give with a certain contempt, to stand on one's own little eminence and to throw scraps of charity as to a dog, to give and to accompany the giving with a smug moral lecture or a crushing rebuke, is not charity at all--it is pride, and pride is always cruel for pride knows no love." (Ibid, p. 132)

It is even possible to give one's body to be burned and yet not have Christian love. "If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." (I Corinthians 13:3) There are great feats of courage performed by unbelievers. One Russian Communist, "when imprisoned at a terrible prison camp in Siberia, sought to protest the flogging of the other men. He finally drenched himself in kerosene, set himself on fire and burned himself to death". (Ask Me To Dance, p. 40; Bruce Larson) In the time of Paul there was an Indian who had "burned himself in public on a funeral pyre and had caused to be engraved on the monument the boastful inscription: 'Zarmano-chegas, an Indian from Bargaosa, according to the traditional customs of the Indians, made himself immortal and lies here'." (Daily Study Bible, I Corinthians, p. 132; Barclay)

"If the motive which makes a man even give his life for Christ is the motive of pride and self-display and self-glory, then even martyrdom becomes valueless." (Ibid, p. 132)

"Love is supreme, and without love--God's love in me--everything else is ultimately worthless. Father, I see that this love is a gift, given to the humble, surrendered, responsive heart. Just now, I open my life to you. Fill me with your love. I receive it, as a small child trustingly receives a good gift from a generous father. I gladly surrender the total control of my life to the Holy Spirit. Thank you."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I feel this warm love everywhere within me because God has given me the Holy Spirit to fill my heart with his love (Romans 5:5, Living Bible).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

HOW PERFECT IS 'CHRISTIAN PERFECTION'?

1. Give at least four reasons (as stated by J. A. Wood) why there is so much prejudice against or even outright hostility to the concepts of 'Entire Sanctification' and 'Christian Perfection'?
2. Do you believe the phrase 'Christian Perfection' should be used regularly in modern-day teaching and preaching on the subject of Holiness? Why or why not? If not, what terms would better describe the 'deeper life' of Christian experience?
3. How would you concretely describe the positive dynamics in the experience of 'Christian Perfection'? In other words, what are the positive actions of God in the human heart at the time a believer experiences 'perfect love'?
4. List and describe at least seven various kinds of 'Perfection', and contrast each of these types of perfection with 'Christian Perfection'.
5. What does the word 'Perfect' in the Greek language mean, and how is an understanding of this Biblical meaning helpful in understanding the meaning of 'Christian Perfection'?
6. If the 'perfect' man, in the Biblical sense of the term, is the man who is like God in His love, what then is God's love like?
7. What are the characteristics of agape (divine-like) love, as taught in the Bible? (Note Matthew 5:43-48)
8. What fears are cast out and what fears are not cast out of a believer's heart when he is experiencing 'perfect love'? (Note I John 4:18)
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Perfect love is perfect in that love fills the whole heart. There is no room in the heart for any less affection than affection for God. The whole heart is the home of God. He occupies every room."
10. What, practically-speaking, is meant by the statement: "'Perfect Love' is constant love".
11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I do not get more of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit gets more of me--when, as a believer, I surrender everything to Christ!"
12. Should the one who professes to enjoy 'perfect love' be expected to live in a state of continual spiritual ecstasy?
13. How can holiness be 'perfect' and yet 'progressive'?

14. What is your personal response to the following statement, (by William Law which describes the unlimited possibilities for growth in 'perfect love'):
"Let every day be a day of humility; condescend to all the weaknesses and infirmities of your fellow-creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind".
15. What did John Wesley mean when he used the term 'Christian Perfection'?
16. What is your response to the following statement: "If love is the essence of Christian perfection, then we must recognize that supreme love for God and sincere love for our fellowmen must be our goal in love". What are your personal goals for life? Are they compatible with the Biblical command to love God supremely and to love your neighbors as yourself?
17. With what motivation and for what purpose should the various spiritual gifts be exercised within the context of the local Church?
18. What is your response to the following statement: "What God commands, my nature demands, and the blessed Spirit will supply--agape Love!"
19. Why is intellectual knowledge which is not motivated and controlled by love so futile and even dangerous? (Note I Corinthians 8:1-3,13:2,8)
20. What are the tragic results of having 'faith' which is not motivated and controlled by love?
21. What are the tragic results of performing 'good works' when such performance is not motivated by love?
22. Is it possible to make a great personal sacrifice which is not motivated by God's love in the human heart? (Note I Corinthians 13:3)

CHAPTER 6

RECEIVING PENTECOSTAL POWER FOR LIVING AND WITNESSING

JESUS' MANDATE TO THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ chose twelve men through whom to spread His teachings and to establish His Church in the world. He commanded His disciples to take the Gospel to all nations. This command primarily involved spreading the Gospel in lands which were under the rule of the Roman Empire. To obey Christ's command meant to endure harsh persecution, separation, and even death. Christ showed a tremendous trust in the disciples when He assigned such an immense task of world evangelization. Christ spent many months with His disciples, instructing, preparing, and encouraging them. He knew that He would soon be gone and the disciples must carry on his work and teachings. Christ chose the twelve to be His instruments through whom a world could be won for Him. Jesus said to the apostles, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you". (John 15:16)

The disciples which Jesus chose were ordinary men. They had no formal college education or special social distinction. It was to these men that Jesus commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". (Matthew 28:19) This is Jesus' mandate to the Church! A mandate is a command, an edict, a statute, a commission. The 'Great Commission' has become the 'Great Omission' of the Church too often! But the 'Great Commission' is not an option; it is a mandate to every Christian! Notes Trueblood, "The ministry of Christ must be universal. It must be universal in three specific ways. It must involve all places; it must involve all times; it must involve all Christian persons, male and female, lay and clerical, old and young". He further says, "The nonwitnessing follower of Christ is a contradiction in terms".

Every Christian has received the mandate to witness with the purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ! But Jesus does not give such a strong mandate without providing the resources of strength and power. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the driving motivation for carrying out Jesus' mandate. God has entrusted a special message--a saving message--to all believers, and it is the creative Holy Spirit who shows the creative believer the manners and the methods in spreading this important message.

Making disciples is the main task of the Church. Everything we do and everything we teach must be evaluated to determine if the activity we are involved in or the subject we are discussing are helping to carry out the Great Commission. It is our job in the Church to produce committed members of Christ's Church.

"O God, I am a person under orders! I gladly accept your mandate. Never allow the 'Great Commission' to become the 'Great Omission' in my life. Help me to go to people as a shepherd goes after his lost sheep. If I remain in my Church and wait for sinners to come to Church, it is like 'chaining Christ to the pulpit'."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: All who have placed their faith in the living Christ are called to do the work of Christ--to make disciples! I commit myself to become a disciple-maker!

MOTIVATION FOR WITNESSING

What is the motivation for heeding the mandate (command) of Christ to make disciples? Our motivation is the Holy Spirit who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5). Without that special love--a divine-like love--we will not have the desire or the power to witness. Said Jesus, shortly before He ascended: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:4-5,8) Our Scripture reading for today (Acts 2:1-4) records the fulfillment of this promise. The significant thing about this passage is not the tongues, or the flames of fire, or the mighty rushing wind. The all-important and lasting truth is this: Those who wait for and pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit shall surely be filled. Filled with love and power and boldness to witness.

Note the specific instructions which Christ gave to His disciples before He ascended: "Don't leave Jerusalem, wait for the Father's promise". (Acts 1:4) Before the disciple goes, he must wait. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength". (Isaiah 40:31) Says Barclay, "There are times when the Christian may seem to be wasting time, when he must wait in a wise passivity. Action without preparation must of necessity fail. There is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God". (Daily Study Bible, Luke, p. 312)

The disciples who waited were filled with the Spirit. The result? Great power in witnessing and in preaching. Peter, the very one who earlier had denied Jesus, was now Peter the Bold, preaching to the very ones who were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. The result of his preaching? Look again at Acts 2:38-41.

What explains the dynamic ministry of great soul-winners? Such power cannot be explained apart from the Spirit's baptism. This was the case with Dwight L. Moody. Says Moody, "One day in the city of New York--Oh, what a day! I cannot describe it. I seldom refer to it. It is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. When I began preaching again my sermons were not different. I did not present any new truths, yet hundreds were converted. I would not go back to where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world". Do you want to witness with power and boldness? Then allow the Holy Spirit to fill your life with God's dynamic love!

"Father, you have commanded me to witness; now, empower me to witness. Open my mouth to speak boldly and unashamedly for you and for your cause. Motivate me with your kind of love."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." (Romans 1:16, NIV)

WHAT IS THE CONTENT OR MESSAGE IN WITNESSING?

'The Acts of the Apostles' (the Book of Acts) is really the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit'! Notes Barclay on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts: "The Holy Spirit was the source of all guidance. . .All the leaders of the Church were men of the Spirit. . .The Spirit was the source of day to day courage and power. . .The Christian's courage to meet the dangerous situation; the Christian power to cope with life more than adequately; the Christian eloquence when eloquence was needed; the Christian joy which was independent of circumstances are all alike ascribed to the work of the Spirit. In the first 13 chapters of Acts there are more than 40 references to the Holy Spirit. The early Church was a Spirit-filled Church and precisely therein lay its power." (Daily Study Bible, Acts, p. 12-13)

Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit since you became a Christian? Here are the steps: (1) Confess all known sin in your life, (2) surrender all known areas of your life to Christ, (3) believe in the Father's promise to fill you with His precious Spirit, (4) obey every known command in God's Word, (5) initially receive, by faith, the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your heart, (6) daily receive resources from God to live the Spirit-filled life.

Jesus commanded His disciples to go forth and teach all nations. Throughout the Book of Acts we see the disciples beginning to carry out this commission. To understand the content of the disciples' teaching and preaching, one must go to the disciples' sermons as they are found in the Book of Acts. In summary form, we find the essence of preaching in the early Church. C. H. Dodd, a modern-day New Testament scholar, has pointed out the five main ideas that were communicated in the preaching of the early Church. Modern-day preaching which is patterned after New Testament preaching, has these same main ideas in it. William Barclay well summarizes these ideas.

(1) "The age of fulfillment has dawned; the Messianic age has begun. This is God's last word. A new order is being inaugurated, and the elect are summoned to join the new community." (Daily Study Bible, Peter, p. 167) For centuries, the Jewish people had awaited the coming of the Messiah. Christ, the 'Anointed One', came in fulfillment of this ancient dream. (Galatians 4:4-5) Christ the Messiah came, not only to redeem those who were under the Law--the Jews--but He came also to redeem those who were alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel--the Gentiles. Christ came, not to destroy Israel's earthly enemies, but to destroy man's universal enemy--Satan (Hebrews 2:14-15). Christ came to make provision whereby all can belong to His kingdom and community of love. The Messianic prophecies were perfectly fulfilled in Christ!

"O God, my witness for you is a Christ-centered witness. Your salvation of mankind is only made possible through the coming and the death of Christ. Pointing people to Christ, I point people to You! 'No one comes to the Father except through the Son--Jesus!'"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: As the Messiah, Jesus is the fulfillment of History's greatest dream--and Jesus is the fulfillment of my deepest aspirations!

THE 'NEW AGE' HAS DAWNED IN CHRIST!

We are looking at the content of Biblical preaching, as demonstrated in the preaching of the New Testament Church.

(2) "This new age has come through the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, all of which are in direct fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and are, therefore, the result of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Daily Study Bible, Peter, p. 167; Barclay) The new age which God inaugurated is the age of grace which is expressed through God's universal invitation to salvation. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13) "Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." (Romans 5:18) "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (I Timothy 2:4) "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11) "The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (II Peter 3:9, RSV)

Christ surrendered the glories of heaven to live a selfless life for mankind, through which he might inaugurate the new age of grace. Christ laid down his own life on his own accord, in order that he might become the perfect sacrifice for sin. Christ broke the bars of death through his resurrection in order to show his power over sin and Satan, and to demonstrate his power to make mankind victorious over sin. Jesus is the focal point of 'salvation history', through which all men can find life.

(3) "By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God, and is the Messianic head of the new Israel." (Daily Study Bible, Peter, p. 167; Barclay) Who are members of the new Israel? All those who are spiritual sons of Abraham, that is, all who truly believe in the object of Abraham's faith--God, who expressed Himself in the latter times in Christ. Those who believe in, adhere to, and rely upon Christ are members of the new Israel--the family of God. God's family is composed of all humanity--male and female--and of all ages--past centuries and present century--and of all classes--despised and honored. All who truly have experienced faith in the Christ of the Ages! It is this blessed Christ who has been exalted to the right hand of the Father!

Witnessing that is not Christ-centered is off-centered! If Christ came from God, if Christ lived a sacrificial life, if Christ died a substitutionary death, and if Christ arose from the dead and ascended to the Father's right hand where He experiences glory and honor--if all of these assertions are true, then should we not seek to persuade all persons everywhere to bow their knees to Christ and to confess with their lips that Jesus is Lord?

"O God, my witness can be powerful, for I serve a powerful God whose power was conclusively demonstrated when he raised Christ from the dead!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Witnessing for Christ is life's greatest responsibility and privilege!

ANCIENT DOCTRINE FOR A MODERN-DAY WITNESS

We are summarizing the core of apostolic preaching, as outlined in the sermons as recorded in the Book of Acts. These basic points serve as a guide and outline for effective and balanced witnessing today.

(4) "These Messianic events will shortly reach their consummation in the return of Christ in glory, and the judgment of the living and the dead." (Daily Study Bible, Peter, p. 167; Barclay) Christ came to earth the first time as the Lamb of God, meek, and lowly and submissive. When Christ returns to earth the second time, he will come as the Lion of Judah, creating terror in all who have rejected him. "For he (God) has fixed a day on which he will judge the whole world in justice by the standard of a man whom he has appointed." (Acts 17:31) The one by whom all men will be judged is Christ. Before him all men shall bow and to him all men shall confess that He is Lord of lords and King of kings. Before him all men will be judged according to the works done in the body. In this present age, right might go unrewarded, and wrong might go unpunished, but in the final age when God's plan for this earth will be consummated, God will judge righteously. The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be rewarded.

(5) "These facts are made the grounds for an appeal for repentance, and offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life." (Daily Study Bible, Peter, p. 168; Barclay) Because God through Christ has inaugurated a new age of grace and has established his community of love which encompasses all mankind, and because Christ has offered his gift of salvation and will judge each man according to whether he accepts or rejects that gift, in light of all the foregoing facts, it behooves man to repent of his sins. One who turns his back on his sins and receives Christ, is offered forgiveness and is promised the Holy Spirit and eternal life.

To summarize: (1) God's purpose in history is to establish a new order of grace to replace the order of law, (2) God has inaugurated that new order through Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection has made it possible for all to become members of the family of God, (3) because Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God, He is the Christ of the Ages, forever contemporary and a very present help in time of need. Christ is not a historical remembrance but He is the present reality and personal Comforter (through the Holy Spirit), (4) Christ is not only the Saviour of all mankind, but He is also the Judge of all humanity, before whom all must give an account of their lives; (5) because response to Christ determines personal eternal destiny, it is imperative that all persons repent of their sins, and accept Christ's standards for their lives. To do so, results in a rich reward--present forgiveness and new life, and future hope and eternal life.

"Almighty God, thou art both a God of mercy and a God of justice. Mercifully You have provided a plan for mankind's forgiveness and restoration. Justly You will evaluate every person in the end, to determine the degree of response to Your Son who is Your provision for man's salvation. Help me to respond only to Your offers of mercy, that I may never have to reap Your just judgment for rejection!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: 'It is finished'--God has, through Christ, fulfilled His plan for human salvation! 'It is finished'--I will personally no longer struggle to save myself, but will trust in Christ alone for my salvation!

CONTEMPORARY APPROACH IN PRESENTING THE GOSPEL

The content of our witness today must be based on the message of the Bible, as preached in the early Church. But the method and approach in presenting that message must be adapted to the modern-day thought patterns and forms. The following is a most simple 'plan' to use in presenting the Gospel to an unbeliever.

(1) Fact of Sin. Notes C. S. Lewis, "A sense of sin is almost totally lacking. Our situation is thus very different from that of the apostles. The pagans to whom they preached were haunted by a sense of guilt and to them the Gospel was, therefore, 'good news'. We address people who have been trained to believe that whatever goes wrong in the world is someone else's fault--the Capitalists', the Governments', the Nazis', The Generals', etc. They approach God Himself as His judges. They want to know, not whether they can be acquitted for sin, but whether He can be acquitted for creating such a world. I cannot offer you a water-tight technique for awakening the sense of sin. I can only say that, in my experience, if one begins from the sin that has been one's own chief problem during the last week, one is very often surprised at the way this shaft goes home. But whatever method we use, our continual effort must be to get their mind away from public affairs and 'crime' and bring them down to brass tacks--to the whole network of spite, greed, envy, unfairness and conceit in the lives of 'ordinary decent people' like themselves (and ourselves)." (God In The Dock, p. 95-96; C. S. Lewis) We, as witnesses, must identify with sinners; we are not to judge them, but only to share Christ with them. We must say something like this: "If Christ can save a sinner like me, He can save you too."

(2) Seriousness of Sin. So many make 'light' of sin; consider that all 'make mistakes'; 'no one is perfect'; 'I am as good as that hypocrite in the Church', etc. Some rationalize their sins or seek to justify their sinful behavior or blame someone else for their wrong behavior or attitudes. When there is a failure to take personal moral responsibility for one's actions, there is a failure in repentance.

(3) Insufficiency of Good Works. Even good actions are tainted with pride. "All of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6) Pride is the 'mother' of all sins. Our good works are not good enough to save us. If we could save ourselves, there would have been no need for the coming and death of Jesus on a cross. It is because we were helpless that Christ came to save us. It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but because of what Christ has done, that is the basis for God's acceptance of us.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want; More than all in Thee I find; Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, Heal the sick, and lead the blind. Just and holy is Thy name; I am all unrighteousness; False and full of sin I am, Thou art full of truth and grace." (From 'Jesus, Lover of My Soul' by Charles Wesley)

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I can only and always draw upon the exhaustless resources of heaven's 'Bank', if I always acknowledge my own personal moral bankruptcy!

ONE MESSAGE THROUGH VARIOUS METHODS

In the last devotional, we said that pride is the 'mother' of all sins. Notes Demarary, "Man commits no wrong which is not traceable to pride; to put it another way, every sin man commits is the product of a desire to protect the ego or self. Murder, adultery, stealing, falsifying, and any and every sin that man has ever committed or ever will commit is the result of pride. . .It is an amazing fact that every sin does, in fact, issue from pride. If man commits adultery he does so to gratify self; he is doing what selfish desire dictates rather than respecting personality. If we covet we are aggravating the temptation to take what is not rightfully ours but something we imagine will make us happy. If we tell an untruth we are really 'covering up' to prevent humiliation." (Basic Beliefs, p. 51-53) For man to think that he can save himself, independent of Jesus Christ, is the chiefest manifestation of pride.

(4) Jesus Christ alone can save sinners. Because Jesus is sinless; He is God in human form. Because He paid the penalty for our sins, thus satisfying God's justice. Because He loves us supremely and is not willing that any person perish.

The above four points regarding God's plan for man's salvation, call for a simple but direct response from sinners. Man's response can be outlined as simply as 'A, B, C'. Starting with the 'C' step: I John 1:9. This is 'Confess'. The 'B' step: Acts 16:31. This is Believing in Christ. The 'A' step: Revelation 3:20. This is Acceptance of Christ into one's life.

Christ is the sole subject of witnessing. There are various ways to witness, however. Bishop Bastian notes four specific ways to witness effectively: (1) Informal and Spontaneous (Way of Life) Witnessing. Here are a couple of 'lead' questions to ask a person when you talk informally. "Do you presently have peace with God, or are you in the process of finding peace with God?" Or, "If you were to die tonight, would you know for sure that you were going to heaven?" Simply share honestly what Christ has done for you and how you found God. Don't preach. Don't judge. Point people to Christ, not to yourself or to your personal experience. (2) Organized Witnessing. This may be done through your local Church outreach programs. Some persons effectively use tracts--in letters, in restaurants, in motels, etc. One Church regularly hands out nearly 2000 devotional booklets, door-to-door in the neighborhood of the Church--on a quarterly basis. (3) Supplemental Witnessing. The witness of good deeds, demonstrating one's love for God and for people. (4) Unconscious Witnessing. "Undergirding spontaneous, organized, and supplemental witness. . .Holy people--saints--are never conscious of their own holiness, but their lives take on a quality which the world cannot help but notice." (Adventures In Belonging, p. 83; Bastian)

"Father, your 'plan of salvation' is both beautiful and profound. Help me to present that 'plan' to people both appealingly and simply. While adapting the methods, help me always to be true to the eternal Message--Christ!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: What the Holy Spirit has come to the world to do, I too will do--lift up Christ for all to see!

OBEYING THE COMMAND TO 'GO'!

In all the clang and clamour of the world's strife and chaos, the Christian can still hear the voice of Jesus echoing through the ages, saying, 'Go, teach, baptize, and make disciples in all nations'! Many earnest Christians are endeavoring to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Christianity has encircled the globe and many backward tribes now are even receiving the Gospel in their own tongue. Yet the world's population is expanding at geometric proportions. If every person is to be reached with the Gospel, every Christian must become an evangelist to herald forth the message of salvation.

The words of the Great Commission are repeated many times, both during the ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, and in the message of the apostles as recorded in the Epistles. The Great Commission is the commission to 'Go' to all people with the Gospel. During the next few days, let us note (1) the Command to 'Go', (2) the Preparation needed for going, (3) the positive Results from going.

Note first the Command to 'Go'. Even in the Old Testament, the command to 'Go' and speak to people about God is given. When Isaiah had a vision of God and was cleansed of sin, he heard the voice of God saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah immediately responded, "Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8) Ezekiel was commanded by God to warn sinners of the error of their ways, and to seek to persuade them to turn to God: "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he does not run from his way, he shall hide in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." (Ezekiel 33:7-9)

It is the will of Christ that every believer should go forth and bear fruit. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." (John 15:16) Fruitfulness depends partly upon our 'Going'.

Obedience at the point of Going is imperative, and good intentions without decisive action short-circuits God's will and could eventually bring outright condemnation. Read Matthew 21:28-31 carefully. The command of Jesus is serious and urgent: "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." (Luke 14:23)

"Father, I realize now that the vision that transforms me (Isaiah 6:1-8), is a three-fold vision. First, I must see your holiness. Next, I must see myself in contrast to your holiness, which experience drives me to your cleansing blood. Third, I must see the needy people around me and 'Go' with your redeeming message to share the Good News. Give me your vision, for without that vision the people around me perish!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The love of God compels me to share the forgiveness of Christ!

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR 'GOING'?

What should be the purpose of our 'Going'? The parable of the Good Samaritan gives us the answer (Luke 10:25-37). After telling about the compassionate actions of the Samaritan man, Jesus said, "Go, and do thou likewise." Expressing compassion is the purpose of going. Note the verbs of action--'Go' and 'Do'. Faith without works is dead. Faith demands expression. Right thinking and right doctrine are important, but both must culminate in right action, or good thinking and doctrine become barren. It is possible to contend for orthodox belief without involvement in practical redemptive action. Says Walter S. Kendall, "The Church with^{out} a passion for souls is not a Christian Church, regardless of what it believes". A Church must be a soul-winning Church if it is truly a Christian Church. Listen to what Royal Nelson says, "The heart of the divine program is soul-winning, and the Church that is not a soul-winning Church has no more weight in the balances of eternity than a secular club".

We need not go to another continent to tell the Good News. We can witness at our doorstep and in our neighborhood. After Jesus healed a demoniac, the demoniac wanted to leave his home and travel with Jesus. "But Jesus would not allow this, 'Go home to your own people', he told him, 'and tell them what the Lord has done for you, and how kind he has been to you!' So the man went off and began to spread throughout the Ten Towns the story of what Jesus had done for him. And they were all simply amazed." (Mark 5:19-20, Phillips)

The command of Jesus to Go is given to all Christians. "A decade ago one could hear people say, after a session on soul winning, 'That's what we pay our preacher for'. There are four weaknesses to this theory: (1) It is unScriptural. The Great Commission was to all Christians. (2) It is impossible to have an evangelistic Church without having evangelistic people. (3) It is a physical impossibility for clergy to accomplish all of the tasks of evangelization. In this day they are burdened with a multiplied program of administration plus the constant crisis resulting from social breakdowns about them. (4) It is the ordinary layman who holds the ideal position to contact society as a whole." (GO, by Delamarter and Kingsley, p. 27)

While the disciples were enjoying the Lord's presence in the Upper Room of Jerusalem, Christ said, "That the world may know. . . Arise, let us go hence". Delamarter imagines Peter thinking or saying something like this: "No, Master, let's stay here. Your words have blessed our souls tonight. Never has our fellowship been more precious. Speak on, tell us more; our souls are being fed. Besides, the hour is late and the streets of Jerusalem are dangerous tonight. Master, the Jews even seek thy life. Master stay here." (Ibid, p. 31)

"Father, I confess that so many times I have failed to 'Go' and share the Good News of Christ with needy people. Embolden me to share. Help me either to 'find' or to 'make' opportunities to witness. Broaden my 'circle of influence' for Christ. In order that others may know of Christ!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "It only takes a spark to get a fire going." I will be that 'spark' for Christ!

GOING OUT INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF LIFE

Christ has called us to leave our comfortable abodes and our beautiful Churches, and to go out into the highways and byways of life, to lift men out of the abyss of sin, and to share God's love with them.

"I said, 'Let me walk in the field'.
He said, 'No; walk in the town'.
I said, 'There are no flowers there'.
He said, 'No flowers, but a crown'.
I said, 'But the skies are black,
There is nothing but noise and din'.
And He wept as He sent me back.
'There is more', He said; 'there is sin'.
I said, 'but the air is thick
And fogs are veiling the sun'.
He answered, 'Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone'.
I said, 'I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say'.
He answered, 'Choose tonight
If I am to miss you, or they'.
I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, 'Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in Heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide'.
I cast one look at the fields,
Then set my face to the town;
He said: 'My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown?'
Then into His hand went mine;
And into my heart came He;
And I walk in a light divine,
The path I had feared to see."

(Christ And The Fine Arts, p. 714; George MacDonald)

David Livingstone, a Scot of lowly birth who was raised by humble but godly parents, went to work in a cotton mill at the age of ten, but, because of his love for learning, he went to night school and read such books as he could get a hold of. After a deep religious experience, he decided to become a medical missionary and received training in medicine and theology. Livingstone was challenged by a missionary to Africa, Robert Moffat, who said that from where he lived on any clear morning the smoke of a thousand villages could be seen where the name of Christ had never been heard. Livingstone went to Africa to evangelize in hundreds of native villages, some of which had never before been seen by a European. This great frontier missionary felt the heartbeat of Christ's love, and felt compelled to go and to tell of God's love.

"Father, help me to see myself as a 'missionary'--one who is commissioned to take the Gospel message to the lost around me."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I may be the only or the best Christian that someone knows! I will be a good witness for Christ!

PREPARATION FOR GOING

We have looked at Jesus' Command to Go; we must now look at the Preparation needed for going.

(1) Make Sure You Are A Christian. One cannot begin to be concerned genuinely in the salvation of others if he himself is not saved from sin. Make sure you have personally accepted the saviour into your life by faith. He who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

(2) Confess All Unconfessed Sins To God. The Psalmist wrote, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me". (Psalms 66:18) As a Christian, have you relapsed into sin or disobedience? What are some sins to which Christians are susceptible? Idle speaking, negligence in Church attendance, wastefulness in their use of time, indulgence in eating, negligence in daily devotions such as prayer and fasting, failure to pay the tithe to the Lord's Church, cooling off in zeal for the Lord's work. Each sin must be faced and confessed to God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins." (I John 1:9) "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (II Chronicles 7:14)

(3) Make Sure You Are Filled With The Holy Spirit. It is Bill Bright of Campus Crusade For Christ that writes, "From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled (controlled and empowered) by the Holy Spirit." A Christian is filled with the Spirit when the Christian surrenders completely to Christ and by faith appropriates the gift of love.

(4) Make a Prayer List. Pray specifically and daily for individuals whom you would like to help lead to Christ. We ask and receive not because we ask amiss. One way to ask amiss is to ask for nothing specifically and everything in general.

(5) Determine To Put First Things First. Establish priorities. Determine by the grace of God that soul-winning will take first place in your priorities. For what is the Cross of the Christian? The cross, to the Christian, is bearing reproach and risking danger for the sake of sharing Christ with a needy and sometimes hostile world. Said Jesus to His followers: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in the synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matthew 10:16-20)

"Father, you want to save all, and you want to use me as an instrument to save some. You want me to be a cleansed instrument--cleansed from all sin--and you want me to be an effective instrument--filled with your mighty Holy Spirit. Cleanse me and fill me, that I might be prepared to go!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: What God has commanded me to do--witness--He will prepare me to be--a Spirit-filled witness!

MAKING WITNESSING A PRIORITY IN YOUR LIFE

There are times when one feels a strong compulsion to witness. Said Jeremiah, "If I say, I will not make mention of the Lord, or speak any more in his name, there is in my mind and heart as if it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with enduring and holding it in; I cannot contain it longer." (Jeremiah 20:9) The disciples said to the authorities who tried to quiet their witness: "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard". (Acts 4:20)

It is important to witness, however, not simply on the basis of feelings or conscious desire, but systematically out of a sense of obedience, duty, and faith. This is not always easy, therefore one must decide that witnessing is so important that he will do it as a 'way of life', regardless of feeling or emotion. One may at times feel a definite leading of the Spirit to witness, but many times one will not feel that leading and therefore he must go ahead and witness out of a sense of mere obedience and faith.

Just as Paul prayed for courage to speak for Christ, so we too need to pray for courage to speak for Christ. "Pray also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." (Ephesians 6:19)

Witnessing as a way of life is not always easy because it requires consistency and persistency. I asked former Bishop Kendall one time how long I should take the initiative in going to people to speak to them concerning their relationship with God. The Bishop answered that I should go back and go back to people's homes, regularly and systematically, continuing to express concern over a long period of time. Jesus never gave up on people. Wrote Paul, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not". (Galatians 6:9) "Therefore, my beloved brethern, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58) I heard of one man who received a witness from Christians for 19 years before he became a believer. After his conversion, however, he became a Sunday School superintendent of a large Church. Persistency paid off!

Don't wait until you find time to witness and to visit, for you will find little time to do it. Rather, make time to witness. Make it a priority in your life. This may mean scheduling a certain time each week to visit and to witness. It may mean giving up some activities that rob you of time that should be spent in sharing Christ with others. Campus Crusade For Christ for years has been encouraging thousands to take the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Spirit, and then leave the results with God.

"Father, help me to know in my mind the 'plan of salvation', to feel in my heart a compassion for the lost, and to determine in my will to make witnessing a priority in my life. Lift my mind, my emotions, and my will above the drift of mediocrity, and motivate me to give myself to the greatest job in the world--soul-winning!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "He that winneth souls is wise!" I will begin today to 'reach out in love' to the lost around me!

THE CHALLENGE OF WITNESSING

We noted in the last devotional that witnessing as a way of life is not always easy. There are at least five reasons why this is so. (1) Witnessing sometimes is associated with cross-bearing and bearing reproach for Christ's sake. (2) Witnessing must be carried on consistently, out of a sense of obedience, both when we feel a strong desire to witness and when we don't feel any conscious desire or urgency to witness. (3) Witnessing must go on even when there is no quick, visible results. Man is trained to carry on activities only when there are immediate or quick results or rewards from his efforts. One however is successful in witnessing regardless of the tangible results. Notes Paul Rees, "Take the pioneer missionaries who were the trailblazers in world evangelism a century ago. Some of them, like the Moffatts and the Morrissions, went for years before they witnessed a single conversion among the pagan people to which they preached. Was theirs a stagnant, sterile life? Perish the thought! In them the fragrant graces that Paul calls the 'the fruit of the Spirit' were ripening. In them the intimacies which are possible between a redeemed soul and God were growing richer. In them a faith, which, to be sure, was sometimes drastically tested, was sinking deeper roots." (Prayer and Life's Highest, p. 67) (4) Witnessing is not always easy because it takes time, and therefore many Christians will have to give up less important activities to make time for witnessing. Although witnessing is a challenge, it is of utmost importance. Therefore, Christians must determine in their minds and wills to put witnessing first in their priorities, regardless of the cost. (5) You, as a witness, may not always see the results of your efforts. You may do the 'sowing' and someone else may do the 'reaping' of the soul. The 'sowing' is just as important as the 'reaping', even though the latter may bring greater excitement and 'credit' from onlookers--or from the person who was saved. You must continue to witness, however, even though you seldom have the joy of 'reaping'. "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building." (I Corinthians 3:7-9)

I have seen scores and scores pray to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. I have had the joy of 'reaping'. But most, if not all, of those whom I have led to Christ, were the results of someone else's prayers, labors, love, and 'watering'. All of us believers have a part in fulfilling the Great Commission. Some 'plant', some 'water', and some 'harvest'. But God alone gives the increase. I have led many to Christ, but I have never yet (and never will) 'save' one soul. Only Christ can do that!

"Give me the love that leads the way, The faith that nothing can dismay, The hope no disappointments tire, The passion that will burn like fire, Let me not sink to be a clod; Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God." (by Amy Carmichael)

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My priorities are revealed by the way I spend my time. I will show my priority in witnessing by spending more time in witnessing.

POSITIVE RESULTS FROM WITNESSING

We have looked at Jesus' command to 'Go' and witness. We have also considered the Preparation needed for 'Going'. We must now look at some of the positive Results of 'Going'.

(1) Bridges of Friendship Will Be Built. Many people are lonely and depressed and in need of friends. When you take time to visit with people, people are impressed that you are a person who really cares, and that you represent a Church that really cares. In being attracted to you, people will eventually be attracted to the Christ that you love and to the Church where you attend. When visiting people, relax and listen empathetically and converse enthusiastically. Try to read some Scripture and have prayer in every home you visit. Cultivate friendship.

(2) Souls Will Eventually Find Christ As Their Personal Saviour. If you consistently show concern for people, there will be many who will respond to the call of Christ and who will become genuine followers of Christ. The greatest privilege in life is to lead someone to a personal knowledge of Christ. "He that winneth souls is wise." Wrote James, "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner away from his error will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19-20, NIV)

(3) The Kingdom of God Will Be Expanded. The existence of a kingdom depends upon two factors--reign of a king and realm with subjects. God is the King. Christians are the subjects that compose the King's realm. Christ is very interested in the realm of God's kingdom being increased and expanded. This expansion comes when Christ receives the loyalty of another human heart. As Christians, we are given the ministry of reconciliation--influencing people to give their lives to Christ. To change the analogy, we are given the opportunity to be harvesters in the Lord's vineyard. When we go forth, we are going forth for an ultimate purpose--to harvest souls for Christ. We will not see this accomplished every time we go forth. Sometimes we will sow the seed of God's word. Sometimes we will water the seed with inner tears of intercessory prayer. Sometimes we will warm the soil of men's hearts through acts of thoughtful friendship. Sometimes we have the inexpressible joy of harvesting souls for the Saviour. "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I (Christ) say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." (John 4:35) "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Psalms 126:6)

"Father, just as there was 'great joy' in the city of Samaria when Phillip led people to Christ (Acts 8:8), so there will be 'joy unspeakable' when people find you as Saviour through my witness! 'Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee'. Then people who find You will rejoice exceedingly!"

AFFIRMATION FOR DAY: The results from my witnessing for Christ will be incalculably great! Only in eternity will I fully know of those results!

WITNESSING BRINGS SPIRITUAL AND NUMERICAL GROWTH

We are looking at the positive Results from witnessing.

(4) The Local Church Will Be Increased and Enlarged. A new Christian needs a place to fellowship and to worship. What more natural place is there for him to fellowship and to worship than in the local Church of the one who led him to Christ? As an outgrowth of visitation, and witnessing, and soul-winning, the local Church will grow spiritually and numerically.

Numerical growth in a local Church is desirable and is oftentimes a sign of spiritual growth. When one great pastor of a large Church (Dr. Lee Roberson) was once asked about numbers, he answered, "Sure I'm interested in numbers. One is a number. Too often ministers say they are interested in quality and not quantity. One soul is a number and I am interested in reaching as many souls for Jesus as possible." "Dr. Vick of Temple Baptist Church justified his emphasis on numbers by pointing to the Scriptures. He pointed to the fact that Jesus had twelve disciples, later in the Book of Acts there were 120 people, next an emphasis was made on 3,000 conversions and finally over 5,000 souls were added to the Church. Dr. Vick concluded, 'I place emphasis on numbers because the Bible does.' (Ten Largest Sunday Schools by Towns, p. 134)

The great preacher Spurgeon told young ministers, "The man who isn't interested in numbers won't have them." If God wants one Christian, He wants more Christians. If God does not want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9), then He wants our local Churches overflowing with new converts! Win as many to Christ and to your local Church as you can!

(5) Christians Will Be Fulfilled. Christianity is a "social religion", that is, it is a religion that can't be lived in a vacuum or aloof from people. During Wesley's search for spiritual reality, one counselor advised Wesley: "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."

A Christian who does not share becomes an ingrown, frustrated, static Christian. Nothing brings greater satisfaction and delight than sharing Christ with people, for such a person is investing not only in time but also in eternity. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30) Who are the wise ones? Soul-winners! What shall the wise--the soul-winners--enjoy? "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3) For even a small investment of time in witnessing, the benefits are so great! Will you determine at this moment that you will allow God to use you as His witness?

"Father, how can people call on you if they have not believed in you, and how can people believe in you unless they hear about you, and how can they hear about you unless someone witnesses to them? Send me to witness lovingly and convincingly to someone today!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:15)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

RECEIVING PENEOSTAL POWER FOR LIVING AND WITNESSING

1. What is meant by the 'Great Commission' of Jesus? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The 'Great Commission' has become the 'Great Omission' of the Church too often!"
2. What does Elton Trueblood mean when he says that "the ministry of Christ must be universal"?
3. Where is the 'driving motivation' for carrying out Jesus' 'Great Commission' to be found?
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Making disciples is the main task of the Church. Everything we do and everything we teach must be evaluated to determine if the activity we are involved in or the subject we are discussing are helping to carry out the Great Commission". Are there any activities (be they ever so 'good') which you are doing, either in your personal life or within the life of your local Church, which are not contributing to the fulfilling of the Great Commission, and therefore should be eliminated from your life?
5. What are the all-important and lasting truths which you learn from studying Acts 1:4-5,8,2:1-4, especially as these truths apply to your own personal life as a believer in Christ?
6. List the specific steps which a believer must take if he is to be 'filled' (and stay 'filled') with the Holy Spirit.
7. Describe the essence of the preaching of the apostles, as found in the Book of Acts.
8. What is a simple 'plan' that can effectively be used in presenting the Gospel to a modern-day unbeliever. (Share appropriate verses that can be used in presenting this 'plan' with unbelievers.)
9. Man's response to God's 'Plan of Salvation' can be described as simply as 'A, B, C'. What do each of these letters represent, and what Scriptures can you cite which accurately describe each of these three responses to God's 'Plan'?
10. What four specific ways can one effectively witness, according to Bishop Bastian?
11. Share Scriptures from both the Old Testament and the New Testament that show the Biblical imperative to all believers to go and share the Good News of salvation with the lost ones.
12. What, according to the example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), should be our purpose in 'Going'?
13. Tell why you agree or disagree with Walter S. Kendall's statement: "The Church without a passion for souls is not a Christian Church, regardless of what it believes".

14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by Royal Nelson: "The heart of the divine program is soul-winning, and the Church that is not a soul-winning Church has no more weight in the balances of eternity than a secular club".
15. List at least four weaknesses in the theory which says that the job of soul-winning is solely or primarily the job of hired professionals (preachers and evangelists).
16. How do you personally react to the following statement: "Christ has called us to leave our comfortable abodes and our beautiful Churches, and to go out into the highways and byways of life, to lift men out of the abyss of sin, and to share God's love with them".
17. What personal Preparation should one make before he attempts to go forth to share the Good News with others?
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is important to witness, not simply on the basis of feelings or conscious desire, but systematically out of a sense of obedience, duty, discipline, and faith."
19. What does Ephesians 6:19 teach the believer who desires to be an effective soul-winner, in terms of his seeking the prayer support of his fellow believers?
20. What is one of the perils in life of the person who regularly labors to influence unbelievers with the 'claims of Christ'? (Note Galatians 6:9 and I Corinthians 15:58)
21. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Don't wait until you find time to witness and to visit, for you will find little time to do it. Rather, make time to witness. Make it a priority in your life."
22. What is your response to the following definition of witnessing (as taught by 'Campus Crusade For Christ'): "Witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Spirit, and then leaving the results with God". (Do you find it difficult to continue consistently to witness to unbelievers when, as a result of your earnest witnessing, you do not seem to see quick or visible results? According to the above definition of witnessing, can you consider yourself 'successful' in witnessing, even when you are 'turned down' or 'rejected' by unbelievers with whom you share a 'witness'?)
23. List at least five reasons why witnessing as a 'way of life' is not always easy.
24. Does the one who does the 'harvesting' of souls get more 'credit' or 'glory' than the one who does the 'planting of the seed' or the one who does the 'watering of the soil'? (Note I Corinthians 3:7-9)
25. List five positive results from 'going forth into the harvest field' to visit and to witness.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT ABOUT 'SPEAKING IN TONGUES'?

GOD'S CALL TO A HOLY LIFE

The Church's greatest need is holy preaching, holy living, and holy witnessing. Each of these depends upon the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wishes to baptize every believe with His presence, power, purity, and love. Every Christian needs to be delivered from inbred sin and empowered for service. The Holy Spirit is the answer to these needs.

Said John the Baptist to those to whom he preached, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire". (Matthew 3:11) Jesus Himself promised the Holy Spirit to His children, as the greatest of all gifts. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the Christian who openly asks. Said Jesus, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13) A short time before Jesus' death, He said, "I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7)

The Bible promises cleansing to the heart of every earnest believer: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all. . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". (I John 1:7,9) This is reminiscent of the Old Testament passage: "Come now, and let us reason together saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool". (Isaiah 1:18)

It is God's will that Christians be sanctified completely--made pure within. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for thy shall see God". (Matthew 5:8) Paul wrote, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification". (I Thessalonians 4:3a)

It is God's command that Christians be holy. "Sanctification is not the same with justification. Justification is a change of our state from guilt to pardon; sanctification is a change of nature from sin to holiness." (Binney's Theological Compend, p. 129) Peter wrote, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behaviour). Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (I Peter 1:15-16)

During the next few devotionals, let us look at the Christian in light of his greatest need--his need for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is God's promise, God's command, and God's will.

"Father, thou art holy and thou hast called me to live a holy life. Now make me holy through the cleansing blood of Christ! Cleanse me from all carnal acts and attitudes. Enable me to have a sincere love for my fellow men. Through Jesus' empowering name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: What I need, He will supply; what I ask, He will give--holiness of heart and life! What I receive--God's love--I will share openly and gladly!

EXAMPLES OF SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVERS IN ACTS

Recorded in the Book of Acts are several specific examples of believers who received the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth". (John 17:16-17) Jesus was not praying for their conversion or justification; He was praying for their sanctification. They were already sanctified in the sense that they were initially converted, and thus set apart for special service. They, however, were not sanctified in the deeper sense of the term. They needed the sanctification which would result in cleansing from inbred sin.

Later, just before His ascension, Christ told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem. "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Acts 1:4-5)

Jesus fulfilled this promise on the Day of Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. . . And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:1,4a)

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached with great power. Peter's message was definite--justification and sanctification. "Then Peter said unto them (the crowd), "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38-39)

Another example of believers who experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit is the Samaritan believers. In Acts 8:5-8, we have described a great revival with many turning to God and finding new joy. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many the were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:5-8)

However, a few verses later we read: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). The laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:14-17) Thus, we find that these new Christians received the fullness of God's Spirit in their hearts.

"Father, you promised to pour out your Holy Spirit upon your people in the last days. So, as in the days of old (Psalms 51:6), create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon me today."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who began a good work in me--justification--will bring His work in my life to completion--sanctification!

THE 'ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT' IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

We must continue to look at examples of believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit, in the Book of Acts.

Saul, who later became the great apostle Paul, was known to be a terrible persecutor of Christians in his earlier life. However, the day came, as is well known, when Saul was dramatically converted. "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who are thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:3-6)

Later in the account we find that God sent Ananias to Paul for a specific purpose: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9:17)

Paul became a flaming evangelist and often spoke of the Spirit's ministry to the Christian. Paul wrote the greatest of all descriptions of perfect love in I Corinthians 13, which is in reality the essence of holiness.

In the tenth chapter of Acts we have a description of a godly Gentile Christian, Cornelius. "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter." (Acts 10:1-5)

Cornelius was a devoutly religious man who feared and respected God. He was a man of prayer and liberality. But yet God wanted to lead Cornelius into a closer walk with Him.

God sent Peter to minister unto Cornelius. Peter spoke about Christ, His life, death, and resurrection. Says the Scripture, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 10:44-45)

"O God, your ways are past finding out, and yet I see your footsteps on the sands of time as you pursue mankind with your eternal love. You pursued a hot-tempered Saul and turned him into a love-filled Paul. You pursued a devoutly religious Cornelius and turned him unto a spirit-filled believer. Act dynamically in my life to make me a tender and receptive and Spirit-controlled believer!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Written Word (Bible) will lead me to the Living Word (Christ) whose life will be imparted to me through the Dynamic Spirit!

KNOWING THE WAY OF GOD MORE ACCURATELY

In the eighteenth chapter of Acts, there is an account of a mighty preacher of God who was shown "the way of God more accurately". "Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. It is noted that Apollos knew only of "the baptism of John". This I believe means that Apollos knew only the doctrine of repentance and justification. To know the way more perfectly or accurately is to know not only the baptism of repentance (as John the Baptist taught) but also to know personally the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There is a most interesting account of twelve Ephesian disciples learning about and experiencing the fullness of the Spirit in their lives. "While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed'? They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit'. So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive'? 'John's baptism', they replied. Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus'. On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all." (Acts 19:1-7, NIV) Repentance is important and essential before one is ready to receive the baptism of God's Spirit. However, a Christian must not stop short of going on to the experience of the Spirit's fullness.

As a child, I was raised in a Christian environment, for which I will always be deeply grateful. As a child of eleven, I became subject to deep conviction for sin, and in simple faith accepted Christ as Saviour at that age. That was March 12, 1956. A few months later I first became aware of my need for Spirit-filling, under the preaching of this subject. After that sermon, I went forward to an altar where my godly grandmother earnestly prayed with and for me. I felt God helped me that night, but I did not receive the witness of the Spirit's fullness until a few days later, in a cabin on the Free Methodist campground in Cannon City, where my minister talked to me and prayed with me. God seemed to flood my soul with His love, and I witnessed to others immediately following this experience. It was a glorious experience--it seemed that God opened the gates of heaven and poured out upon me a holy and tender love. I wanted to put my arms around the whole world and tell them I loved them--and that God loved them and wanted to save them!

"O thou Giver of all good and perfect gifts, I thank you for the gift of your precious Spirit, and for your love which you shed abroad in my heart through your Spirit!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love. The more of me that the Spirit controls, the more love for people I will express!

WHAT ABOUT 'SPEAKING IN TONGUES'?

Notes John T. Seamands, in his excellent little booklet 'The Gift of The Spirit', "There is much confusion among God's people these days concerning the significance of the gift of tongues. Many insist that unless persons have received this gift, they have not received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We need to search the Scriptures diligently for the truth.

"The Book of Acts records six instances where people were filled with the Spirit of God. (1) On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (2:1-4). Three outer manifestations are mentioned: a sound like wind, tongues like fire, and 'speaking in other tongues'. (2) Later in Jerusalem (4:31). Here it is only recorded that 'the place in which they were gathered together was shaken'. (3) At Samaria (8:14-17). This time there were no external accompaniments. (4) Paul's experience at Damascus (9:17). Again there was no special manifestation, except that he regained his sight. (5) In the household of Cornelius at Caesarea (10:44-48). Here it is recorded that 'they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God'. (6) Ephesus (19:1-7). On this occasion the group 'spoke with tongues and prophesied'.

"In three instances there were outer manifestations, and in three cases there were none. When manifestations did occur, they varied in number and in type. Only on three occasions did the group speak in tongues. But in every instance the central fact was the same--'they were all filled with the Holy Spirit'." (The Gift of the Spirit, p. 41; John T. Seamands)

What is 'Tongues' all about? How should I react to this strange phenomenon? What really is the meaning and the value of tongues? Is there really any benefit derived from speaking in tongues? Is it essential, from the Scriptural viewpoint, that all believers speak in tongues? Is tongues merely a first-century phenomenon that lost its purpose long ago or is it a present day reality? Why is there so much resistance against tongues-speaking people? Why do some tongues-speaking Christians 'insist' on all Christians needing to speak in 'Tongues' if they claim to be 'baptized in the Spirit'?

During the next few days we must look at this important, but controversial, subject. Sincere Christians will probably continue for a long time to disagree on their interpretations regarding the purpose and place of Tongues, but we must nevertheless attempt to gain a clearer understanding (and hopefully a more balanced understanding) of this difficult subject. A charitable spirit among sincere believers who strongly disagree on this subject, is called for! "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. . . And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (I Corinthians 13:1,13)

"Father, I am glad that in the end, when all persons will be judged by Jesus Christ, that all will be judged solely on the basis of the love response of the heart and not on the basis of the perfect understanding of the mind. Help me to have an open mind as I approach a controversial subject, but, above all, give me a deep love for my fellow Christians who differ from me, both in their understanding and in their practices. In Jesus' charitable Name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I must always "agree to disagree agreeably" with those fellow Christians who, like me, love the Lord deeply but who hold different convictions and interpretations than what I hold."

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT'S FULLNESS?

What is the primary and universal evidence of the Spirit's fullness in a believer's life? The primary evidence is increased love for God and man. Jesus made it clear that the life that the Christian is intended to live is the life of love. When asked what was the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. That is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets". (Matthew 22:37-40) It is a universal expectation and even imperative that every Christian possess the gift of God's love as outlined in I Corinthians 13. Love is the "more excellent way". The importance of love is emphasized time and time again in the New Testament epistles: (1) Love is the Spirit's gift to believers--Romans 5:5, (2) Love is the Fruit of the Spirit--Galatians 5:22, (3) Love is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament Law--Romans 13:10, (4) The fullness of God is evidenced by the fullness of Love--Ephesians 3:19, (5) Holiness means abounding in love--I Thessalonians 3:10-13, (6) Purity of soul and sincere love exist together--I Peter 1:22.

The Spirit's baptism is the baptism of love. This baptism of love gives inner purity, as symbolized by fire. John the Baptist predicted the Spirit's Baptism: "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". (Matthew 3:11) On the Day of Pentecost, tongues of fire appeared to those who were Spirit-baptized, inwardly cleansing them from all sin. (Acts 2:3)

This baptism of love gives outward power to witness, as symbolized by the mighty rushing wind on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). This is one sign that will always follow the Spirit's Baptism of love--outward expression of love in witnessing. Jesus foretold this just before he ascended: "But you shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you". (Acts 1:8, RSV)

Said one man upon receiving the Spirit's fullness, "At the actual moment of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, there was one overwhelming impression: I was bathed in, surrounded by, washed through with love. I don't know why more hadn't been made of this in the things I had read on the subject. Perhaps because we are so concerned with the power aspect of the Holy Spirit. But the nature of that power, I am convinced, is love." This is the testimony of a man who claimed to speak in 'Tongues' following his Baptism in the Spirit. It was not 'Tongues', but love, that most described the experience of Spirit-Baptism in the life of this man. In fact, he concludes: "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the gift of love such as we have never known it."

"By this shall all men know that I am a true follower of thee, O God, and by this shall I personally have evidence that I am truly a Spirit-filled person--because I love Christ supremely, because I love others sincerely, because I love myself subordinately. Flood my life with your holy love!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Baptism with water is an outward sign of an inward work of God's justifying grace in my life. Baptism in love is an inward sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, enabling me more effectively to perform outward works of compassion and service.

THE SPIRIT'S FULLNESS AND THE 'ACTIVATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS'

Increased love (giving inner purity and outward power to witness) is the universal and primary sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. What place does 'Tongues' have then in relationship to being Baptized with the Spirit? Tongues is valuable as a secondary evidence (not primary or universal evidence) of being Baptized by the Spirit. What is meant by 'Tongues' being a secondary evidence of the Spirit's fullness? To answer that question, 'Tongues' must be looked at in terms of a gift.

'Tongues' is one out of several God-given gifts to be used, as all gifts are to be used, to glorify Christ, to do a God-given task better, and to edify the Church of Jesus Christ. "Why is it that He gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God's people will be equipped to do better work for Him, building up the Church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity." (Ephesians 4:12, Living Bible)

Each gift is God-selected and God-given to individual believers, and each gift is for helping the entire Church. (Read I Corinthians 12:7-11 in the Living Bible.) Each gift is to be used as an expression of the believer's supreme love for Christ.

A study of the Book of Acts seems to show that one affect of the Spirit's Baptism is the activation of the God-given gifts. 'Tongues' is one of the gifts and therefore when the Spirit Baptizes a large group of believers at one time, those believers who possess the gift of 'Tongues' can expect that their gift will be activated. Those believers who possess some other (less spectacular) gift can expect that their particular gift will also be activated.

Does this principle of the 'activation of gifts', due to the Spirit's Baptism, appear to be valid from a study of Acts? It appears so. Several of the gifts which Paul mentions (I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11) were activated in the lives of those who possessed them, following the Spirit's Baptism. The gift of miracle working was activated by the Spirit's Baptism (Acts 2:43,5:12-16,6:8); the gift of healing (Acts 3:6-7); the gift of preaching (Acts 2:14,41); the gift of teaching doctrine (Acts 2:43); the gift of ministering or helping other in special ways (Acts 2:45,4:34-37); the gift of business administration and organization (Acts 6:3); the gift of speaking in languages that had never been learned by the speaker (Acts 2:4,10:46,19:6); The gift of discerning good and evil spirits (Acts 5:1-6,8:23).

The activation of the gift of tongues, following the Spirit's Baptism was no more a sign of being filled with the Spirit than the activation of one of the other gifts, for example, the gift of healing, or the gift of preaching, or the gift of administration. The evidence to the man who is Spirit Baptized is always an increase in love which results in inward purity and greater outward power for witnessing.

"Father, to know you fully, I must experience the Holy Spirit intimately. Because the spirit has come into the world to glorify Christ, I too, as a Spirit-filled believer, will glorify Christ--by my loving words and by my compassionate works!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will use the Spirit-wrought activation of my spiritual gifts to glorify Christ and to edify fellow believers!

MUST EVERY BELIEVER 'SPEAK IN TONGUES'?

What about the viewpoint of the Pentecostals who say that the two chapters in I Corinthians (chapters 12,14) refer to 'tongues' as a gift only while the 'tongues' discussed in Acts² refer to the initial sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? The Pentecostals "believe that everyone does speak in tongues, however briefly, at the moment of his Baptism, whether or not he is subsequently given the gift of tongues for use in his daily Christian life." (They Speak With Other Tongues, p. 76)

One thing is clear from the Corinthian passage: The gift of unknown tongues is not a universal gift and nothing is said in Corinthians that would give the idea that unknown tongues should be claimed as a sign of Spirit Baptism. Secondly, there is no conclusive evidence in the Book of Acts that all spoke in tongues at the time of the Spirit's Baptism. Consider the Samaritan believers--Acts 8:17, and Paul--Acts 9:17. Third, there is considerable evidence from studying those passages in Acts which describe people speaking in tongues following their Spirit Baptism, that the tongues refer to actual known languages (Acts 2 unquestionably means this and Acts 10:46 and 19:6 may also mean literal known languages). Those who claim the necessity of Tongues as evidence for Spirit Baptism, usually refer to the Acts passages for their argument (Acts 2 especially where, say they, all 120 in the Upper Room spoke in tongues). For the sake of consistency, if the Acts passages are the 'proof' passages, should not the tongues which are given as evidence for the Spirit's Baptism be actual languages, not unknown tongues? It was definitely actual languages in Acts 2 and there is strong grounds for believing that the passage on Cornelius (Acts 10:46) refers to an actual foreign language. Phillips translates this passage 'foreign tongues', although New English Bible translates this as 'tongues of ecstasy', and the Amplified says 'foreign languages'. In each of these passages, at least one of the translators believes the passages refer to actual languages. The only thing that we can conclude from these Acts passages is that we cannot be sure what all the passages on tongues in Acts mean. It is possible that all the references to 'tongues' may mean actual languages.

If the Pentecostals choose to use the Book of Acts as the grounds for establishing their belief in tongues as evidence of Spirit Baptism, then, if they are consistent, they must conclude that the tongues which they claim as the sign for Baptism will, more times than not, be actual languages rather than 'unknown tongues'. There is no undisputed passage in Acts that definitely establishes the 'tongues' as 'unknown tongues'. The passage on tongues most referred to by the Pentecostals (Acts 2) as 'proof' that 'tongues' is a sign of Spirit Baptism, refers to actual languages.

"Father, I do not seek for some spectacular or emotional or dramatic 'sign' of your Spirit's fullness in my life. Evidence your Spirit's presence in my life by enabling me to have a deeper love for you and a greater compassion for others. To be Spirit-filled is to be love-filled!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will never 'seek' for 'Tongues'; I will seek for Christ only, and, in seeking Christ, I will discover the fullness of the Spirit with the accompanying fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

THE PURPOSE OF 'TONGUES' IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

John T. Seamands, in his booklet 'The Gift of the Spirit' has some very helpful insights on the subject of 'Tongues' in the Book of Acts. Many other scholars would basically agree with his interpretation of those Acts passages which speak of 'Tongues'. Here is what Seamands says:

"It is very clear that the nature of 'tongues' mentioned in Acts was not that of an unintelligible language, but a temporary ability to proclaim the gospel in a foreign language. Note these words carefully: 'And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each one of us in his own native language?'" Then Luke goes on to list fifteen different places from which the people had come for the feast at Jerusalem.

"Now why was this gift necessary? Surely not because the disciples needed to speak a foreign language in order to communicate to the people, for they all spoke a common language, Aramaic and/or Greek. When Peter preached his sermon that day, he did not need a gift of language or an interpreter; he preached in a language the people understood. The purpose of God's gift was to provide supernatural evidence that this was not a Jewish but a universal religion, cutting across all national boundaries. It verified God's promise spoken through the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days. . .I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh'. So this was a special miracle for a special occasion with a special purpose. And it happened, rightly so, first at Jerusalem.

"The same linguistic miracle took place again at Caesarea to Cornelius and his group who were Roman Gentiles. Finally, it occurred in Ephesus, the center of Greek and pagan culture in Asia Minor. Now every last vestige of Jewish sectarianism was broken. The Good News was truly World News! So we see that at the three great centers of culture (Jewish in Jerusalem, Roman in Caesarea, and Graeco-pagan in Ephesus) a temporary gift of speaking in a foreign language was given when people were baptized with the Holy Spirit." (The Gift of The Spirit, p. 42; John T. Seamands)

Paul never speaks of 'unknown tongues' in terms of a 'sign' of being filled with the Holy Spirit, but he does refer to unknown tongues as being a 'gift' (I Corinthians 12:14). What about the thousands of believers who have never spoken in tongues, and yet who are living the life described in I Corinthians 13? Can one say that these persons have never been Baptized by the Spirit? If one concludes that these thousands of loving people have not been filled with the Spirit because they have not spoken in tongues, then speaking in tongues becomes the earmark of the Spirit Baptism rather than love. But Paul would be the first to refute this conclusion. Paul taught that love is the distinguishing evidence and mark of the Spirit-filled life.

"The universality of the Gospel message, and the general outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the world of all peoples of all races, are vividly demonstrated in the Book of Acts. Thank you, Father, that Jews, Romans, Greeks and pagans--all--are included in your great economy of grace and mercy! Glory!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Indiscriminately and universally the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon all people of all nations. I will personally open my life to the fullness of the Spirit!

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SANCTIFYING SPIRIT

Paul taught that it is possible to exercise the various gifts selfishly and at a time before one is Spirit Baptized. The carnal Corinthians gloried in 'Tongues' and in other gifts--such as eloquence, knowledge, etc. Because of their preoccupation with spiritual gifts, rather than with the Giver, Paul had to write to them about the 'more excellent way' (I Corinthians 13). What the tongues-speaking, carnal Corinthians needed was a Baptism of love which would result in an inner cleansing from carnality and an outward redirecting of their particular gifts ('Tongues' being one of the several gifts) from selfish use to Christ-honoring use. Paul well knew how carnally the Corinthians were using their gifts and how futile the exercise of a gift was without love (I Corinthians 13:1-3). It is the Holy Spirit's job to saturate the heart of the believer with love (Romans 5:5). The gift-oriented Corinthians needed to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The presence of love was in their lives by virtue of their initial conversion, but not the supremacy of love. The Holy Spirit was Resident in their lives but he was not yet President of their lives. The Corinthians were too gift-oriented and not enough Giver-oriented. They had not yet experienced the Giver--the Holy Spirit--in all His fullness.

The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit who justifies the sinner, but the Spirit is also the one who sanctifies the believer. It was sanctification that the carnal, gift-oriented Crointhains needed, and the life of sanctification is best described in I Corinthians 13. Arthur D. Zahniser clearly distinguishes between justification and sanctification. "Justification is pardon, sanctification is purity. Justification saves from sinning; sanctification saves from sin. . .Justification is citizenship in the kingdom of heaven; sanctification makes us soldiers of the Cross. . .Justification creates a desire to service; sanctification fits and equips for proficient service. By justification the love of God is shed abroad in the heart; by sanctification the love of God is perfected in the soul. . .Justification saves from the wrath of God; sanctification brings into full harmony with the nature of God. . .Justification takes the believer out of the world; sanctification takes the world out the of the believer. . .Justification admits us into the family of God on earth; sanctification fits us for the society of God in heaven. Justification is witnessed to by the Spirit; sanctification is attested by the baptism of the Holy Ghost."

"Father, you are a God of grace and of gifts. The greatest of all your gifts to the world is the blessed Holy Spirit, whose ministry includes conviction of sin, conversion of the sinner, and cleansing and empowerment of the believer. Cleanse me from all carnal attitudes, perfect my motives, and activate my gifts--all for the purpose of glorifying Christ, edifying the Church, and witnessing to the world! In Jesus' precious name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to be used in loving ways. I will allow the Spirit creatively and lovingly to use my gifts.

PERSONAL AND CONGREGATIONAL USE OF 'TONGUES'

In considering the use of tongues, let us look at the use in terms of personal use and congregational use. What about the personal use? The gift of 'Tongues' has several personal uses. The gift of tongues edifies the believer who speaks in 'tongues'. "So a person 'speaking in tongues' helps himself grow spiritually." (I Corinthians 14:4) Speaking in tongues is one method of prayer. "For if I pray in a language I don't understand, my spirit is praying, but I don't know what I am saying. Well, then, what shall I do? I will do both. I will pray in unknown tongues and also in ordinary language that everyone understands." (I Corinthians 14:14-14, Living Bible) Praying in tongues lets one pray, when with his own mind he has no idea what to ask for in a given situation. Paul also experienced singing in unknown tongues, for he had that particular gift. "I will sing in unknown tongues and also in ordinary language, so that I can understand the praise I am giving." (I Corinthians 14:15b, Living Bible) The gift of tongues is a gift of praise, as assumed in I Corinthians 14:16, but it is to be used in ones private devotions to God and not publicly, unless there is definitely an interpreter. "For if you praise and thank God with the spirit alone, speaking in another language, how can those who don't understand you be praising God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't know what you are saying? You will be giving thanks very nicely, no doubt, but the other people present won't be helped." (I Corinthians 14:16-17, Living Bible)

What about the congregational use of 'Tongues'? There are certain limitations which Paul gives for using this strange, yet wonderful, gift within a public service. The gift must not be used in the presence of unbelievers, for unbelievers would think the non-intelligible sounds were signs that the Church and the Church members were 'mad' (or 'crazy'). "If at a full Church meeting you are all speaking with 'tongues' and men come in who are both uninstructed and without faith; will they not say that you are insane?" (I Corinthians 14:23, Phillips)

Even amidst a totally Christian congregation, there must be an interpreter present who can intelligently interpret the unknown tongue. "If the question of speaking with a 'tongue' arises, confine the speaking to two or three at the most and have someone to interpret what is said. If you have no interpreter then let the speaker with a 'tongue' keep silent in the Church and speak only to himself and God." (I Corinthians 14:27-28, Phillips) It appears, for the sake of safeguarding public misuse of the gift, that he who has the gift of speaking in unknown tongues should also have the gift of interpretation. "He who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret." (I Corinthians 14:13, RSV)

"Father, I thank you for those spiritual gifts which you have given to me. Help me to use these gifts appropriately and sensitively and humbly--not to gratify or to glorify myself--but to enhance myself and to edify my fellow Christians, and, most of all, to glorify you."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will carefully control the exercise of my spiritual gifts so that I might not misrepresent Christianity to an unbelieving world!

OPEN-MINDEDNESS TO THE USE OF 'TONGUES'

When 'Tongues' are used in a public service under the conditions specified in the last devotional (i.e., a totally Christian group with intelligent interpretation), all in the congregation must receive benefit from it. If the tongues disturb the worship atmosphere or disrupt the Christian unity, then they are being misused. "Everything should be done to make your Church strong in the faith."

Why do so many react so strongly against 'tongues' and the Pentecostal movement? There are doubtless several reasons, but the following are two main reasons.

First, because of unfamiliarity with the gift and the user. Just as pagans are first amazed and repelled by the thought of God dying on a cross, so Christians who are unacquainted with Pentecostals are first amazed and repelled by the thought of someone speaking in an "unknown tongue". Hostility comes many times because of ignorance of the real meaning and place of this strange, but wonderful gift.

Second, because of the perversion of the gift. There have been many times when the public use of tongues has repelled unbelievers and left believers cold, because of the misuse of the gift. However, misuse of a gift should not take away the desire for the open use of the gift. Notes John Wesley, in his Journal, "The danger (wrote Wesley, talking of outcries, convulsion, dancing, visions, trances, and the like) was to regard them too little; to condemn them altogether; to imagine they had nothing of God in them, and were a hindrance to His work. Whereas the truth is: (1) God suddenly and strongly convinced many that they were lost sinners, the natural consequences whereof were sudden outcries and strong bodily convulsions; (2) to strengthen and encourage them that believe, and to make His work more apparent, He favored several of them with divine dreams, others with trances and visions; (3) in some of these instances, after a time, nature mixed with grace; (4) Satan likewise mimicked this work of God in order to discredit the whole work; and yet it is not wise to give up this part any more than to give up the whole. At first it was, doubtless, wholly from God. It is partly so at this day; and He will enable us to discern how far, in every case, the work is pure, and where it mixes or degenerates. The shadow is no disparagement of the substance, nor the counterfeit of the real diamond."

Simply because there is the counterfeit in 'tongues', does not discredit the genuine and wholesome expression of 'tongues'. Paul indicates that, because 'tongues' cannot be understood with^{out} interpretation, the gift of 'prophecy' (or forth-telling the Word in preaching) is definitely a superior gift to that of speaking in 'tongues'. However, believers who don't have the gift of 'tongues' are to respect believers who do have and practice the gift of 'tongues'.

"Father, free me from judging my fellow Christians who differ from me in background, temperament, experience, and spiritual gifts. Help me never to impose my standards and convictions upon others, but instead to cultivate a spirit of love, acceptance, and understanding, recognizing always that there are a variety of gifts and a variety of manifestations of those gifts."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will seek in the Church to maintain the unity of the faith amidst the diversity of gifts and amidst the manifold variety of expressions of those gifts.

MAINTAINING A 'BALANCED' ATTITUDE TOWARDS 'TONGUES'

After making a brief 'study' on the subject of 'Tongues', what can we conclude? (1) Tongues is one out of several gifts given to some believers by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit chooses. There is no evidence that speaking in tongues is the universal sign of the Spirit's Baptism. (2) The gift of tongues, along with all other gifts, will be activated in the lives of some believers by the Spirit, at the time of the Spirit's Baptism. The activation of individual gifts is a secondary evidence of the Spirit's Baptism. (3) The Spirit's Baptism is a Baptism of love which enables the believer to exercise his gift unselfishly, be that gift tongues or something else. Love is the universal and primary sign of the Spirit's fullness, and I Corinthians 13 shows love to be an imperative in the believer's life. (4) It is possible to exercise many or all of the gifts (including 'speaking in tongues') without being Spirit Baptized (I Corinthians 13:1-3). (5) Specifications for the use of tongues, both publicly and congregationally, are clearly outlined and should be carefully noted. (6) Resistance to tongues is largely explained in terms of unfamiliarity with tongues or because at times there has been a misuse of tongues. People naturally react negatively to the strange or to the bizarre. Unfamiliarity is a poor excuse, however, for resistance, and simply because there is the counterfeit in tongues does not discredit the genuine and wholesome expression of tongues. Wrote Paul, "In conclusion then, my brothers, set your heart on preaching the Word of God, while not forbidding the use of 'tongues'. Let everything be done decently and in order." (I Corinthians 14:39-40)

The following advice represents, to me, a 'balanced' attitude towards 'Tongues'. (1) Never take the hard and rigid stance which denies the validity of all tongues experience and seeks to stop it at any cost. . .(2) Make room for people in the Christian fellowship who express their spiritual vitality in different ways. (3) Take time for serious Biblical and historical study of the whole phenomenon of tongue-speaking. . .(4) Do not allow tongue-speakers to disrupt or take over public worship services. . .(5) Do not cultivate seeking groups who are trying to get the gift of tongues. Nothing could be more contrary to the New Testament. Nowhere are Christians urged to seek this gift or pursue tongues as a special sign of their spirituality or unusual Christian attainment. (6) Stress the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit as regenerating, empowering, renewing, and sealing the Christian life. (7) Emphasize the positive note that tongues or any other spiritual experience must be evaluated ultimately by the fruit which is born in the Christian life. Does the tongue-speaker radiate the love of Christ more truly? Rejoice!" (Speaking In Tongues. Let's Talk About It, p. 150-151)

"Father, I see now that the final test to determine authentic Christians is the love test. Help me, in the spirit of charity, to allow my fellow brothers to respond to the Holy Spirit in their own unique ways. I know, O God, that you will vindicate your truth by the fruit that is borne in the lives of your people."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: By this shall all men know that I am a Spirit-controlled believer--because of the fruit of Christ-like love which is evident in my life!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

WHAT ABOUT 'SPEAKING IN TONGUES'?

1. List several Scriptures that indicate that the fullness of the Holy Spirit (entire sanctification) is God's promise, God's command, and God's will for every believer.
2. Give your interpretation of Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:16-17--"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
3. For what purpose did Jesus tell His disciples to wait in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-5)?
4. What was the 'focus' of Peter's message on 'The Day of Pentecost' (Acts 2:38-39)?
5. List and describe several specific examples (as recorded in the Book of Acts) of believers who received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to their personal conversion to Christ.
6. From a study of the Book of Acts, what can be concluded regarding the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit?
7. What is the primary and universal evidence of the Spirit's fullness in a believer's life? (Give Scriptural references to document your answer.)
8. What does the 'mighty rushing wind' on the Day of Pentecost symbolize (Acts 2:4)?
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement (made by a man who claimed wonderfully to be filled with the Holy Spirit): "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the gift of love such as we have never known it."
10. What is meant by 'Tongues' being a secondary evidence of the Spirit's fullness?
11. Is there evidence, from a study of the Book of Acts, that a believer's God-given spiritual gift/gifts will be 'activated' at the time of the believer's Baptism in the Spirit? List some of the gifts which were activated at the time of the Spirit's Baptism (in the Book of Acts).
12. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The activation of the gift of 'Tongues', following the Spirit's Baptism was no more a sign of being filled with the Spirit than the activation of one of the other gifts, for example, the gift of healing, or the gift of preaching, or the gift of administration".
13. How does John T. Seamands interpret the meaning and the significance of 'Tongues' in Acts 2:4,10:46,19:6?
14. Is it possible to 'speak in tongues' and yet not be 'filled with the Spirit'? (Note I Corinthians 13:1)

15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following evaluation of the problematic Corinthian believers: "The Corinthians were too gift-oriented and not enough Giver-oriented. They had not yet experienced the Giver--the Holy Spirit--in all His fullness." Is it possible yet today for believers to be too absorbed in their pursuits of spiritual gifts and manifestations, and not concerned enough in knowing and experiencing the presence and purity of the Holy Spirit in their lives?
16. Considering the quotation by Arthur D. Zahniser, how would you distinguish between justification and sanctification? "Do you now experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit with his cleansing of heart and empowerment for service?" If not, do you have an intensified desire to know the fullness for the Spirit? Will you seek the Spirit's fullness through study, counsel, and prayer?
17. What are some of the positive benefits to be derived from the personal use of 'Tongues' as a God-given gift? (Note I Corinthians 14:4,14-17)
18. What are the specific guidelines which Paul gives for the public use of the gift of 'Tongues'?
19. Why do so many react so strongly against 'Tongues' and the Pentecostal movement?
20. What should be the appropriate reaction by non-tongues-speaking, Spirit-filled believers who are challenged by tongues-speaking believers that claim that all Christians must speak in tongues in order to be 'filled with the Spirit'?
21. After making a brief study of the strange and controversial phenomenon of 'Tongues' (as taught in the Book of Acts and I Corinthians), what do you believe is a 'Balanced' and 'Biblical' understanding of the place and importance of 'Tongues' in our modern-day Churches?

CHAPTER 8

HOW TO MAINTAIN THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

LEARNING TO LIVE THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

In the Bible reading for today, Paul acknowledges that he has not yet attained his goal, and that as long as life lasts, he must "press toward the mark for the prize" (verse 14). Paul acknowledges in verse 12 that he has not yet reached his goal which is resurrection perfection (i.e., glorification). However, Paul does acknowledge that he has attained a certain type of perfection as shown in verse 15 ("Let us therefore, as many as be perfect"). The perfection which Paul had attained was the perfection of love and motive and disposition. But the main thrust of this passage is seen by the fact that the essence of spiritual health is growth. There is no state of grace that preserves a Christian for heaven unconditionally. As J. Paul Taylor says, "The experience of heart purity is maintained as long as the Holy Spirit, the personal agent in the work of cleansing, remains. The unregenerate man is not a mechanical man, and neither regeneration nor entire sanctification makes a robot of the new man in Christ Jesus. Human cooperation with the Spirit's operation was necessary to justification and cleansing, and when the heart is fully cleansed, the human cooperation is not terminated. . . God can, and will, keep us as we keep ourselves in His hands". (Holiness The Finished Foundation, p. 140-141)

It is common knowledge that in a marriage there must be surrender once-and-for-all, and yet day-by-day. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ" and yet Paul also said, "I die daily". Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". (John 4:14) Jesus said that if a man comes to him he will never thirst, and yet he implies that moment by moment a Christian's thirst will be satisfied by the water that is continually springing up within him. It is like a rich man who adopts a poor, starving boy from off the street and says to him, "After you come to my house you will never be hungry again". The rich man obviously does not mean that the boy will never get hungry. What he means is that the boy will never be destitute again. The boy will periodically get hungry, but he will be regularly satisfied with food. When Jesus tells us that we will never hunger or thirst when we come to Him, He means that we will never be destitute or in a perpetual state of hunger. We will hunger and our hunger will always be satisfied, and in that sense we will never hunger or thirst. We come to Christ once and for all for fulfillment and yet we experience daily fulfillment.

Have you made a once-for-all surrender to Christ in order to be initially filled with the Holy Spirit? If so, are you learning daily to surrender your life to Christ, in all the details of life, in order to experience a daily filling of the Spirit?

"Father, after making a once-for-all, 'blanket' surrender to you, I wish to maintain a vital relationship to you by receiving from you a continuing cleansing and a fresh outpouring of your love."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The central and final 'Yes' to the Lord at the time of the Spirit's initial filling of my life, contains a multitude of little 'Yesses' which I intend to affirm daily, in order that the Spirit may maintain control of my life forever!

THE IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF OBEDIENCE

The important question to ask is this: "How can I maintain a close and meaningful walk with God?" The Spirit-filled life is maintained by obedience and daily surrender to Christ. Daily surrender is the stuff of which obedience is made. Obedience is the stabilizer of the Christian life. Lack of obedience causes shipwreck in the Christian life. The shores of time are strewn with 'King Sauls' who failed to realize that nothing can substitute for obedience--not even sacrifice. Wrote John, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (I John 2:3-4) There are those who strangely believe in Christ, that somehow it is not so important how they themselves live. They feel that Christ's righteousness will somehow cover their unrighteousness, and that what is changed is not their behavior necessarily but merely their relationship with God. Let us again remind such antinomian advocates who have a weak view of the atonement, that John wrote, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." (I John 3:6-8a)

On the other hand, obedience to God is not a slavish, legalistic obedience that is performed out of a mere sense of duty. The Pharisees bent over backwards to keep the Law, but the law they kept was not the Law of God. It was the man-made rules, regulations, and traditions which they strained so hard to keep. They neglected the weightier matters of God's Law and became preoccupied with their own petty ideas and opinions. Jesus said they strained at nats and swallowed camels. They focused so much attention upon externals that they forgot that the essence of godliness is internal purity and righteousness. The children of the Pharisees are still with us. Such are hard and critical of others but easy on themselves. The essence of their religion is a tediously worked out system of 'Dos and Don'ts'. Their obedience is to their own notions and conviction, not to flexible and adaptable principles.

To the Christian that is truly set free from sin and who is living by the dictates of the Spirit, his obedience to God is joyous and delightful. The commandments of God are not grievous to him, but they are his meat and drink. He says with the Psalmist, "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word". (Psalms 119:16) In God's Law he meditates day and night. His obedience is an obedience from the heart, which issues forth in works of love, mercy and forgiveness. God's laws are written on his heart, and his actions are regulated by the spirit of the law instead of the letter of the law. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

"Father, teach me what true obedience really means. I delight to do thy will, O my God! It is not grievous to my soul. Thy laws are nourishment to my spirit, enlightenment to my mind, and strength to my will!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Jesus did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill the law through the enabling Holy Spirit who motivates me to act and to react in love!

RESTORING A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

We noted in the last devotional that there is a 'line' that separates the expressions of innocent human nature and the expressions of carnal human nature. We must be careful not to cross that 'line'. The Spirit-filled person, while given greater strength to resist temptation, is still vulnerable. We must never become over-confident. Jesus said, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation". There is no sin, in being tempted. It is yielding to temptation that constitutes sin.

Suppose a Spirit-filled Christian, caught off guard, does yield to temptation and sins. "Suppose we cross the line and do the thing the Holy Spirit rebuked. What then is our condition and what can we do about it? First of all, let us recognize our condition as sinful. It must not be covered up by reference to the wonder of our original crisis experience of surrender and cleansing or sanctification. Too many have thus accumulated a lot of unforgiven sin by assuming that since they had such a glorious experience back there, and carnality was eradicated, that surely nothing now can be wrong. Whatever eradication means--or crucifixion, or putting to death the old man--it is not a chunk of something material that is done away. Rather, it is a wrong relationship between us and God that is destroyed. But just because it is a relationship, an immaterial rather than a material something, it can as quickly be reinstated as destroyed. The cure, then, is fresh repentance and forgiveness and cleansing as we put the relationship right again. And happy is the one who has learned to make this adjustment instantly and quickly." (The Spirit of Holiness, p. 40; Cattell)

John's words are most instructive: "My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But if you sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely. He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins upon himself, and brought us into fellowship with God; and he is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but all the world's." (I John 2:1-2, Living Bible)

According to I John 1:9, Christ's atonement is sufficient for both your sin (sinful nature) and your sins (sinful practices). As long as you habitually pattern your life after the life of God (i.e., 'walk in the light'), you may be assured that God will continually cleanse you from all unrighteousness and keep you in close fellowship with Christ (I John 1:7). Jesus is both our advocate and our atoning sacrifice. The believer may have his broken relationship with the Father restored quickly and completely! The blood of Jesus cleanses from all unrighteousness! When sin comes into your life, plead the blood of Christ immediately!

"Father, help me to guard against sin. Help me to 'watch and pray' constantly. You know, O God, where I am especially weak and vulnerable. You know also the subtleties of the devil. Give me the good sense to honestly and quickly confess when I sin, and to surrender my life anew to the 'cleansing stream' of the blood of Jesus!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: He who made me clean within--at the time of my sanctification--will keep me daily cleansed from the pollution and defilement of sin--until the day of my ultimate glorification!

INVOLVEMENT IN THE 'MEANS OF GRACE'

We have noted that Obedience is vitally important in order to maintain a victorious Christian life. Equally important is the believer's involvement in the 'means of grace'. Wrote Paul to Timothy, "I now remind you to stir into flame the gift of God which is within you". (II Timothy 1:6, NEB) How do we stir up the flame of faith and love within us? We do it by attending unto the 'Means of Grace'. "The term simply means the media or channels through which God ministers grace to His children. These channels are indicated in the Scriptures, and the Christian Church has given careful instructions on how they are to be used." (Donald Bastian) A certain degree of discipline is needed if one is to involve himself in the 'means of grace'. It has been truly said that "no one ever reached any eminence, and on one having reached it ever maintained it, without discipline." (William Barclay) To maintain a meaningful Christian walk, discipline is needed. Structure and regularity in life are important.

Prayer is one of the effective means of grace to the Christian. Paul wrote, "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus". (Philippians 4:6-7, RSV) Prayer is a means of growth. Prayer is both an attitude and an act. Prayer is a sudden and urgent utterance of the soul, and it is an agonizing and lengthy state of the soul. It is important for the Christian to pray every day. Why? "Because the Spirit-filled person can lose his relationship even as one can lose a human friendship--by avoiding his friend. Friendship with God is lost by ignoring Him. The subtle problem is just this: Friendship is lost a day at a time, and because it is lost no faster than that, we can slowly but surely be blinded to our loss of God. Therefore, prayer must be daily. . .Is it really necessary that the Christian commune with God everyday? Why not just occasionally? The answer is that without prayer there simply is no progress towards becoming like Christ. The more we pray--if it is truly prayer--the more we become like Jesus." (Alive To God Through Prayer, p. 23,26)

The Bible is also a 'means of grace'. There is a "story of a young man who was packing his trunk for his first long journey far from home. As a friend stood by, the young man packed one article after the other--his suits, shoes, clothes, books and finally his tennis racquet and balls. There remained a space about six inches by four inches. The rest of the trunk was full. 'What are you going to pack there?' asked the friend. 'I have reserved this corner to pack a guidebook, a lamp, a looking glass, a volume of poems, a microscope, a telescope, several fine biographies, a package of love letters, a book of songs, some histories, a hammer and a sword. I'm going to put in that little space the Bible my Mother gave me'." (Shoe-Leather Faith, no. 99; Rosell)

"Father, I desire to maintain a loving relationship with you through prayer. Involving myself in regular prayer and study of your Word, I believe I will receive guidance in times of decision, reproof in times of mistakes, comfort in times of sorrow, strength in times of weakness, and courage in times of fear! Thank you so much!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will meditate upon the Laws of God--the Bible--and I will muse on the Love of God--Prayer--all the days of my life!

MAINTAINING SENSITIVITY TO THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE

One who delightfully adheres to the spirit of the Law, does not force his personal convictions upon others. "Physically, some are allergic to certain things, good in themselves, to which others are not allergic. Presumably flowers are good for beauty and fragrance, but some persons have an allergy that makes it impossible for them to keep flowers in the house if they want to keep their health. If it hurts one's weak conscience to eat meat that was once offered in sacrifice to idols and then is sold in the open market that has no connection with the worship of idols (see Romans 14), Paul would say, 'Let him abstain', but he has no commission to try, judge, and sentence those who can eat it without even thinking of idolatry, much less practicing it." (Holiness, The Finished Foundation, p. 148) In forming personal convictions, here are four questions worth asking yourself (when in doubt about the rightness or wrongness of a questionable activity): (1) Is my own mind clear and settled? (2) Can I really do this unto the Lord? (3) How do I feel about this matter in the light of my coming appearance at the judgment seat of Christ? (4) Will this be an offense to others?" (See Donald Bastian's book, 'Belonging Adventures In Church Membership', p. 143-147)

In maintaining a God-controlled life, it is important to obey God's call in regards to life's mission. Some receive a very clear call as to what they are to do in life; others do not receive such a dramatic and definite call. In testifying of his call, Paul said to King Agrippa, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." (Acts 26:19) Many a man has made shipwreck of his life because he failed to obey God's call into full-time Christian service.

Daily obedience to the "small, still voice" is also imperative. Jesus commanded His followers to take up their cross daily. Ananias immediately obeyed (in spite of personal fear and reticence) and went to the one-time persecutor Saul (Acts 9:10-19). Philip went into the desert of Gaza even when he could not understand why he must go (Acts 8:26-40). As a result of his obedience, the Ethiopian was converted and a witness entered Africa.

Maintaining the Spirit-filled life means guarding against sin. "There is an area between that which is clearly and wholly for the glory of God and that which is clearly and wholly for the glory of the isolated self--a sort of twilight zone. As one enters it, the Spirit begins to whisper words of caution. These grow more intense as we approach the line. Crossing, there is a feeling of condemnation and guilt which intensifies the further we go. It is not simple, partly because of our dullness of hearing and perception, and partly because of the complex nature of the situation--the intertwining of the legitimate with the sinful in that shaded area. . .It is impossible to reduce the matter to simple rules or to define exactly the line in all cases. We are shut up to the voice of the Spirit as our only guide." (The Spirit of Holiness, p. 39-40, Everett Lewis)

"Help me, Lord, to listen carefully, understand clearly, and obey quickly. When I am in doubt regarding your will, enable me to wait patiently for further instructions. Help me to follow closely in your footsteps. Then I shall always be a blessing to you and a benefit to others!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will train my 'spiritual ears' to listen for the "small, still voice" of the Holy Spirit--and learn to obey gladly and quickly!

'REACHING OUT' IN WITNESSING AND 'REACHING UP' IN WORSHIP

Sharing with others is another means of great spiritual growth. Expressing deepens impression. You may be greatly impressed with Christ, but the more your impression is expressed openly and verbally, the stronger will your love be for Christ, and the more mature you will become. It is said, "Salvation may come quietly, but we cannot remain quiet about it". There will be within the true Christian a desire to share his faith with others, and in sharing his faith, seeking to influence others for Christ. Wrote Matthew Henry, "I would think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to Christ, than mountains of silver and gold to myself. If God suffers me to labor in vain, though I should get hundreds a year by my labor, it would be the constant grief and trouble of my soul; and if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction".

"A man accosted Charles Alexander, the great singer and personal worker and said, 'I believe in leading men to accept Jesus Christ, but I don't like your method very well'. 'Neither do I like my method very well', replied Alexander. 'How do you do it?' Confused, the man stammered, 'Well. . .I do not know that I do it at all'. 'Then', said the singer, 'I like the way I do it better than the way you don't do it'." (Shoe-Leather Faith, no. 121, Rosell)

We sometimes pray for compassion for souls, but it seems that compassion mainly comes through active involvement with people. Prayer is important as a means of Christian growth, but it is insufficient without outward expression of one's faith. "A Chinaman brought a number of his friends to the mission. When asked how he succeeded in getting so many to come, he replied, 'I got on my knees and talkee, talkee, talkee. Then I got up and walkee, walkee, walkee'. Pray, and then go to work. Prayer without work is vain. Praying without working, like working without praying, is dead, being alone. Let us all 'talkee and walkee'." (Ibid, no. 540)

Public worship is another great 'means of grace'. We are to 'reach out' in witnessing and to 'reach up' in worship. We are living in a day in which many professing Christians are minimizing the importance of public worship services. Some say that they worship God every day and therefore don't need a special day of worship. In their reaction against so-called 'Sunday Christians', they dismiss the importance of Church services altogether. Some feel that the Church services are too sermon-oriented and thus too impersonal, and therefore such persons are much more satisfied with Home Bible studies as substitutes for attendance at public services. Others feel that, since Sunday is the only day they do not work, that they should use Sunday for family recreation and camping. Such usually say that they can worship God in nature just as well as at Church. Do you have any excuses for not regularly attending God's house? Consider carefully Luke 4:16 and Hebrews 10:25.

"Father, enable me to live a balanced Christian life. Help me to 'reach within' myself to meditate on your Word. Help me to 'reach outside' myself to serve others and to witness. Help me to 'reach upward' to worship and to praise you."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will dwell in the 'House of the Lord' all the days of my life, in order that I might behold the beauty of the Lord!

"LIKE A MIGHTY ARMY MOVES THE CHURCH OF GOD!"

Some of the 'means of grace' are prayer, the Bible, witnessing, and public worship. Consider further the importance of the latter. Notes Richard DeHaan, "The person who neglects regular attendance in the house of God may be revealing that he has never really been saved. It is also possible that this failure is a symptom of a low spiritual condition, and surely continued absence from services will deepen his backslidden state. We know that some people live in areas where there are no Bible-preaching Churches, and that others cannot attend due to circumstances beyond their control. God will give special grace, and the Holy Spirit will minister to their hearts. The chastening hand of God, however, may manifest itself to those who willfully neglect worship with God's people. It is certain that they will reap a harvest of spiritual loss. Moreover, meeting with other Christians in worship is not only beneficial to oneself, but also to others. You will notice that Hebrews 10:25 says '. . .but exhorting (encouraging) one another'. Your presence will be an encouragement to others. Your absence may disappoint some weak Christian, and help put him on the road to a spiritually cold condition. Then, too, a half-empty Church does not make for a good service. It does not present much appeal to the stranger who comes in. As a Christian, you have a solemn responsibility to the Lord in this matter of Church attendance."

"A minister asked a returned GI to speak in his pulpit. He said, 'Like a mighty army moves the Church of God. The trouble is that NOW millions know exactly how an army moves. Suppose the army accepted the lame excuses that many of you think good enough for not attending the Church. Imagine this: Reveille at 7 a.m.--squads on parade ground. Sergeant barks out. 'Count fours'. 'One, two, three', four is missing. 'Where's Private Smith?' 'Mr. Smith was too sleepy to get up. He said to tell you he would be with you in spirit'. 'That's fine', says the sergeant. 'Where's Brown?' 'He's playing golf. You know how important recreation is'. 'Sure, sure', says the sergeant cheerfully. 'Hope he has a good game. Where's Robinson?' 'He is sorry, but he is entertaining guests today. Besides he was at drill last week', 'Tell him he is welcome any time he finds it convenient to drop in for drill'. If any GI pulled that stuff he would get twenty days in the brig. Yet, you hear stuff like that every week in Church. 'Like a mighty army!' Why, if this Church moved like a mighty army, a lot of you folks would be courtmartialled within an hour." (Shoe-Leather Faith, no. 7; Rosell)

"Let us not neglect our Church duties and meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the Day of His coming back is drawing near." (Hebrews 10:25, Living Bible)

"Father, if your sinless Son, while on earth, attended the Jewish synagogue weekly as it was His 'custom' to do, then how much more do I, a sinful and needy creature, need regularly and faithfully to attend my local Church! Forgive me for my negligence. Help me to develop a 'holy habit' of committed Church attendance!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Just as a business can only be built by faithfulness and hard work, so a Church can only be built by faithfulness in Church attendance and hard work in outreach and visitation. I will be committed to my local Church!

"ARE YOU HUNGRY? PULL UP YOUR CHAIR AND EAT!"

I like the following which my wife, Venita Christian, wrote: "The analogy of the Church which I enjoy the most is that of a family. When we become a child of God we become a member of God's family. We are blessed with many privileges. One of those is that of growing up in the loving, caring atmosphere of the Family.

As a child the most special time in our day, after a big day of working in the field, was meal time. Our meals were served at regular times, the food was delicious, and the fellowship was great! We were all expected to pull up our chair to the table to be together at meal time. As a Christian, the special time with my brothers and sisters in Christ is at 'meal time'. It is at this time that I am strengthened by the Bread of Life and encouraged by the joy of the fellowship in order that I will be a better worker in the Harvest field. In our local Family of God the meal is served regularly, several times during the week. Around the Family Table is a chair bearing the name of each of our family members. A meal is served at Sunday Morning Worship, Sunday School, Sunday Evening Celebration, Christian Growth Group, etc. When we fail to 'pull up our chair' when the meal is served, we most likely will become weak spiritually and will eventually become ill. Not only do we suffer, but so also do our family members. No one can fill our chair but us. When we are not present at the 'meal', we are missed because we are loved. I think I understand more clearly now, having experienced the sorrow of some family members' chairs not being filled regularly, why my father insisted that we all be present at meal time. Our presence was a sign of health and our presence made the family complete. We needed each other after a long and hard day of work. The laughter and the joy over the meal was so satisfying and drew us even closer together. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we need the nourishment served at 'meal time' and we need each other. When we are not present at 'meal time' we become weak, our chair is vacant and other family members are concerned because they love us.

As one who wants to be present at each meal served to our Church Family, I have noticed that one of the first signs of spiritual illness, is the lack of 'pulling up' to the table when the meals are served. Often we feel tired and weak after a day of working in the heat, battling the obstacles of life. The enemy of our souls, the author of spiritual illness, delights in seeing our presence at the table. Sometimes I would tell my mother 'I'm too tired to eat'. She would respond with 'Come and join us, you'll feel better'. And I did! When you feel weak and tired, I urge you as a family member, to 'pull up your chair' to the table. You'll feel better."

"Father, I am often spiritually hungry and in need of soul-nourishment. I thank you for the 'table' full of spiritual food--the local Church. Whenever the 'meal' is being served, let my God-incited hunger drive me to the table where I shall relish the Word of life with other family members!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: It is a sign of spiritual health for me to eat spiritual food with other family members at the table (the local Church services); it is a sign of spiritual sickness to 'lay in bed' and expect others to come and 'spoon feed' me (in the isolation of my own solitude away from other 'family members').

WHY THE LOCAL CHURCH?

Venita Christian concludes her article by saying, "Family members, some day we will be invited to the table where the meal of meals will be served. The Bible tells us 'Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb' (Revelation 19:9). What a thrill to pull up our chair to the grandest meal of all with Christ and the Family of God! Somehow I believe our response to the regular meals with our Family here on earth will influence whether or not we will be blessed to receive that grand invitation to the Meal of meals. My prayer daily for all my brothers and sisters in Christ and for myself is that we will have a good hearty appetite for the Bread of Life and that we will want to pull up our chairs to the table when the meal is served! See you at 'meal time'!"

Are you committed to regular attendance in your local Church? A vital relationship with God cannot long be maintained without regular attendance at the public worship services. I have noticed, after working with scores and scores of young believers during the last twenty years, that those young believers who become committed to regular Church attendance are the same ones who generally grow into spiritual maturity. The opposite is also generally true: Those young believers (or, for that matter, older believers) who 'drop out' of regular Church attendance also 'drop out' of a vital relationship with God. Such persons become luke-warm Christians and sometimes backslide completely. Church attendance alone is not sufficient to maintain a vital daily relationship with God, but it is almost impossible to enjoy a vital relationship with God without commitment to consistent Church attendance. I have never yet met a mature Christian who does not habitually attend public Church services.

Notes C. S. Lewis: "Enemy-occupied territory--that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful King has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to Church you are really listening into the secret wireless from our friends; that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going. He does it by playing on our conceit and laziness and intellectual snobbery." (The Best of C. S. Lewis, p. 429,432,435)

There are at least ten good reasons for believing in and being a part of the local Church: (1) The Bible commands it, (2) Jesus and the early Church practiced weekly attendance at Church, (3) the local Church is the center of worship, (4) it is the center of fellowship, (5) it is the center of Biblical instruction, (6) it is the center of prayer and evangelism, (7) it is the center for strategy formulating, (8) it is the center of influence for societal change, (9) it is the center for organized giving, (10) it is the center for spiritual nurture.

"Father, how can I be healed and how can I help others in the development of a vital faith, especially in light of the soon coming of Jesus? In many ways, not the least of which is faithful attendance at Church! Without the protection which the local Church affords, I am vulnerable to the terrible attacks of Satan. Thank you for this effective 'means of grace'!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: As birds flock together, fish swim together, cattle graze together, bees swarm together, so Christians are meant to worship together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

HOW TO MAINTAIN THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

1. From a study of Philippians 3:12-16, one can conclude that Paul spoke of two kinds of 'perfection'. What kind of 'perfection' did Paul profess to have attained, and what kind of 'perfection' did Paul acknowledge that he had not yet attained?
2. How is the experience of 'heart purity' maintained, according to the quotation by J. Paul Taylor?
3. What is the relationship between once-for-all surrender to Jesus Christ and daily surrender to Jesus Christ? (Note John 4:14.) Is there any state of grace that preserves a Christian for heaven unconditionally?
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Daily surrender is the stuff of which obedience is made. Obedience is the stabilizer of the Christian life". (Give Scriptural support for this statement, if you agree with it.)
5. What is the difference between giving decisive obedience to the will of God and legalistic bondage to the laws of God?
6. In forming personal convictions, what are four questions that are helpful for one to ask himself (as derived from a study of Romans 14)?
7. List some examples from the Book of Acts that demonstrate decisive obedience to God's definite call in people's lives.
8. Suppose a Spirit-filled believer 'crosses the line' (that separates expressions of innocent human nature and expressions of carnal human nature) and does the very thing the Holy Spirit rebuked. What then is his condition and what can he do about it? (Note I John 1:9 and I John 2:1-2.)
9. What does the term "Means of Grace" mean?
10. Why is it important for the Spirit-filled believer to pray every day?
11. Why is the Bible such a vital 'means of grace'?
12. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Salvation may come quietly, but we cannot remain quiet about it."
13. To what extent do you, as a sincere believer, identify with the following statement by Matthew Henry: "I would think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to Christ, than mountains of silver and gold to myself. If God suffers me to labor in vain, though I should get hundreds a year by my labor, it would be the constant grief and trouble of my soul; and if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction". Do you feel that Matthew Henry put too much emphasis on witnessing and soul-winning to the exclusion of some other equally important areas of Christian experience and service? Why or why not?

14. Do you have a definite method (or methods) of witnessing to unbelievers? If so, share your strategy and plans.
15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We sometimes pray for compassion for souls, but it seems that compassion mainly comes through active involvement with people. Prayer is important as a means of Christian growth, but it is insufficient without outward expression of one's faith."
16. What would you say to those 'believers' who argue that they worship God every day and therefore don't need a special day of worship?
17. What are some of the 'flimsy excuses' which you have heard, for people not regularly attending worship services?
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement made by Richard DeHaan: "The person who neglects regular attendance in the house of God may be revealing that he has never really been saved. It is also possible that this failure is a symptom of a low spiritual condition, and surely continued absence from services will deepen his backslidden state".
19. If the local Church "moves like a mighty army", what actions are basic expectations from the lives of the members in the Church?
20. Do you believe that the analogy of the local Church as a family (with each member of the 'family' expected to 'pull up his chair' to the table to eat) is an analogy that accurately reflects the Biblical picture of the local Church? Why or why not?
21. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A vital relationship with God cannot long be maintained without regular attendance at the public worship services".
22. List at least ten good reasons for believing in and being a part of the local Church.
23. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Without the protection which the local Church affords, I am vulnerable to the terrible attacks of Satan".

PART II

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

CHAPTER 9

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF LOVE

EVIDENCE OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

A fifth century Roman nobleman, a non-Christian defending Christians before the emperor Hadrian, gave a clue to the effectiveness of the Early Church: "These Christians love one another. . .If a man has something, he freely gives to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger, they take him home and are happy, as though he were a real brother. . .If one is poor and there isn't enough food to go around, they fast several days to give him the food he needs. . .This is really a new kind of person. There is something divine in them".

When Mr. Stanley finally found the great African missionary, David Livingstone, after searching some time in Africa for him, Mr. Stanley spent some time with Livingstone, and said of Livingstone, "If I would have stayed with Livingstone much longer I would have been compelled to become a Christian, and he never said a word to me directly about it". Livingstone's life was so Christlike that his witness to Stanley was self-evident and compelling.

Someone has said, "What you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you are saying". Sinners may not read the Bible itself, but they are sure to read your life if you are a Christian. What is the Gospel, according to you? "You are writing a gospel, a chapter a day, by deeds that you do, by words that you say; men read what you write, whether faithless or true. Say, with is the 'gospel' according to you?"

The evidence of genuine Christian experience is seen in the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24). It may be said that all the fruits of the Spirit relate directly to love. God is love; therefore he who is possessed by God is possessed by love. All other fruits are simply descriptions of love. "Joy is the joy of love; peace is love grown quiet; long-suffering is love stretched out; kindness is love with hands outstretched; goodness is love relating itself to the moral law; faithfulness is love holding steady amid everything; gentleness is love expressing itself in relationships; self-control is love in charge within." (Christian Maturity, p. 119; E. Stanley Jones)

What God commands (love), my nature demands (love), and the Holy Spirit supplies (love). "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Romans 5:5, NIV) To be filled with the Holy Spirit, is to be filled with God's love. Holiness is not a mere negative experience of cleansing from sin, but holiness is a positive experience of empowerment to love!

"Father, I am beginning to see that holiness is not some eerie experience reserved for a few remote saints. Holiness in my life is best seen by my supreme love for you and by my unselfish care for others. Holiness is the passion of my life for love is the greatest need of my life. Help me to grow in love!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To the extent that I am actively practicing love, to that same extent am I genuinely experiencing God's sanctifying power in my life!

LOVE--THE CAPSTONE OF THE CHRISTIAN GRACES!

'Agape' is the Greek word which describes the highest and noblest kind of love--the kind of love which Jesus demonstrated when He died on the cross. This love is linked more with the will than it is with the emotions. This love is exercised independently of how the object of the love responds. It is the love which has been described as unconquerable benevolence and invincible goodwill, a commitment of the will to love even those who would be spiteful and hateful. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"--words of love from the Lover of sinners whose treatment of the Saviour was most despicable! "It is the attitude which, no matter what the other person is like, and no matter how we may feel emotionally towards him, will seek the other person's good, and which will never hate. The opposite of this Christian agape is not hate; the opposite is indifference. This Christian love is undefeatable caring." (William Barclay)

"Like their Lord, the recipients of His love where they do not like. It is impossible to think that Christ liked rotting lepers, bloated publicans, loose women or wild demoniacs; yet it is undeniable that He loved them." (Daily Readings, p. 53; William Sangster)

Love is not an option for the sincere Christian; it is an absolute imperative! Jesus commanded us to love God supremely and to love our neighbors as ourselves. "And that love must include the total person--emotions, will, mind, and strength. That absolute commandment expressed in that absolute form is as inevitable as the law of gravitation, and more so. For with it life holds together; without it life goes to pieces. . . This is not speculation, it is verified statement. If you don't love God totally you can't love yourself at all. For a divided self is a despised self. If you don't live with God in the harmony of love, you will have to live with yourself in the disharmony of hate. There is no alternative." (Christian Maturity, p. 102; E. Stanley Jones)

Commander Brengle, of the Salvation Army, began his little book with this startling sentence: "On January 9, 1885, at about nine o'clock in the morning, God sanctified my soul. It was a Heaven of love that came into my heart. I walked out over Boston Column before breakfast, weeping for joy and praising God. Oh, how I loved! In that hour I knew Jesus, and I loved Him till it seemed my heart would break in love. I loved the sparrows, I loved the dogs, I loved the horses, I loved the little urchins on the streets. . . I loved the whole world".

Love is the very essence of the Christian life and is the capstone of all the Christian graces. Said John Wesley: "Religion is the most simple thing that can be conceived. It is only humble, gentle, patient love".

"Father, I am seeing that I am made by Love and for loving. If I don't love, I perish, perhaps only gradually but surely and ultimately! Enable me to love with your kind of love--the love that loves love into the loveless, that cares for the careless, that lifts up the fallen, that soothes the sorrowing, that heals the hurting. In Jesus' loving name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My motions today will be the motions of love because I am motivated by nothing less than the love of God!

NOT TRYING HARDER BUT TRUSTING MORE!

If love is the distinguishing mark of the true believer, how can one experience this divine love? "The fruit of the Spirit is love". Fruit does not come by trying and straining, but by abiding and receiving from the nourishment of the vine. Said Jesus, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing". (John 15:5, NIV) The believer who is vitally attached to the Vine will automatically and dynamically produce fruit. So it is not your responsibility (based on your strength), but rather it is your response to His ability (based on His exhaustless resources). You cannot by mere human effort and ability make yourself loving, joyous, peaceful, etc. God alone can do that for you, for God is the divine resource for spiritual fruitfulness. Your only responsibility is to surrender daily unto the Vine and let the power of the Vine do its work in your life. Love, Joy, Peace are divine qualities which God will produce within you as you simply abide in Christ.

God has an exhaustless resource available for you. Why should you live in poverty when all your needs can be met adequately and even abundantly? A few years ago, a 71 year old woman died of malnutrition in West Palm Beach, Florida, after wasting away to 50 pounds. Hundreds of valuable stock certificates and \$800,000 in cash were found in her safe-deposit boxes two days before she died of starvation! Said one of her neighbors, "We had no indication that the woman had a dime. Her house looked like a pigpen and she got what clothes she had from the Salvation Army. She was starving to death yet she wouldn't spend any money to get something to eat".

Surrender your will to Prosperity and Power--not to poverty! God then will open the resources of the Bank of Heaven for you! "On this level you do not whip up the will, you surrender the will. Then you are relaxed and receptive, and faith becomes re-cooperative. Round our emptiness flows His fullness--and fills us; round our incompleteness flows His perfection--and perfects us; round our restlessness flows His rest--and rests us; round our sin flows His holiness--and invades us; round our selves flows His gracious Self--and displaces us; round our lovelessness flows His love--and loves us into loving. When we know how to take from these infinite Resources, we know how to live by Fullness not our own. Hence we live fully and overflowingly. Instead of religion being strain, hence drain, it is receptivity, hence release--release from ourselves and release to others." (Christian Maturity, p. 221; E. Stanley Jones)

"Jesus, thou art the Way--the divine resource to enable me to love you with all my soul (volitional response). Thou art the Truth--the divine resource to enable me to love you with all my mind (intellectual response). Thou art the Life--the divine resource to enable me to love you with all my heart (affectional response). What thou hast commanded from me--total love--thou hast totally provided--divine resources! Praise you! Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God is the reservoir of divine love, I am the channel of divine love, the world is the recipient of divine love.

THE GRACE OF LOVE

In the Book of Philippians, Paul breathes a special prayer of affection for his Philippian friends: "It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more". Love is the theme of Paul's prayer for his friends. In the Scripture reading for today (Philippians 1:9-11), Paul describes this Christian love in terms of four characteristics: (1) The Grace of Love, (2) The Growth of Love, (3) The Goodness of Love, (4) The Goal of Love. Let us look at each of these features of divine-like Love.

Think of the Grace of Love. When Paul prays that love may abound more and more in the lives of the Philippians, he is speaking of the highest type of love. There is an erotic love or passionate-type of love that Hollywood makes popular, a love that is widely expressed in our day. Properly expressed, erotic love between a couple who are deeply in love and married, is beautiful and God-sanctioned. But erotic love is too often degraded to sensualism and lust. And there is the love between friends, the love that is evoked because of similar interests or likes. Paul was not speaking of that kind of love in this passage, however. Paul experienced a love for the Philippian believers which was greater than mere friendship-type love. Paul was speaking of the highest kind of love called 'agape'. This love is linked with the will more than with the mere emotions. This love is exercised independent of how the object of the love responds--good or bad. It is the same kind of love which Jesus was speaking of when He said, 'Love your enemies; Do good to those who despitefully use you'.

When Paul speaks to the Philippians and desires that their love may abound more and more, he did not mean to imply that this love (agape) was humanly achieved and humanly exercised, independent of God. Central to Paul's thought was the idea of God's grace. Paul clearly taught that corrupted human nature within itself is incapable of agape love. Such a love is the gift of God, thus Paul's doctrine of 'grace'. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." (Romans 5:5)

Because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God's grace is available to mankind. God's love for man is objectively proved through the death of His Son on the cross. God's love is subjectively appropriated by man through the faith of repentance and self-surrender. The God-wrought love in man enables man to love both God and his fellowmen. "God is giver; man is receiver. That makes it grace. The very love with which we relate ourselves to Him in obedience and service has been evoked by His so-great-love for us." (Proclaiming the New Testament, p. 19; Paul Rees) "In this is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent his Son to the be expiation for our sins. We love, because he first loved us." (I John 4:10,19)

"Father, thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love thou art. I am made by Love and for loving. Thou Giver of all perfect gifts, give me the choicest of all gifts--the Gift of thy blessed Holy Spirit, whose power to shed abroad thy love in my heart is limitless!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God is always Giver, and I am always receiver. I will allow the Holy Spirit to 'fill my cup' to overflowing with His divine love!

THE GROWTH OF LOVE

In Philippians 1:9 Paul prayed that the love of the Philippian believers may "abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight". Paul believed that the life of God, which is the life of love, is a life of progress and growth. Through Christ, the believer not only abides in love, but the believer also abounds in love. Love is the door to knowledge and discernment and insight. Take a simple illustration from common life which shows the truth of the principle. Think of the love that one person has for another. The more one loves another, the more he will be around that person and the better he will come to know the desires, needs, goals, sensitivities, weaknesses, and strengths of that other person. Love leads to increased associations which give birth to many experiences together. Love then leads to knowledge, knowledge based upon practical experiences together. This same simple reasoning applies to the knowledge of spiritual things. God's love in us creates a desire to associate and fellowship closely with God. Such desire to know God leads to many experiences. From these experiences we learn practical knowledge and develop our powers of discernment. For example, we learn to discern what is the will of God in difficult circumstances. We learn to discern between our personal impressions and the impressions of God. We learn to discern the subtle temptations and yielding temptations. We learn to discern the subtle temptations of Satan who appears at times in the form of an angel of light. We learn to discern the difference between weaknesses of the flesh and the carnal sins of the spirit. We learn to discern the difference between pure motives and impure motives. We learn that there is a great difference between purity and maturity in the Christian life. We learn to discern the place of feelings and the place of faith in living the Christian life. The knowledge which love leads to is experimental rather than academic, practical rather than theoretical. The discernment which love leads to is discernment in the practical areas of daily living.

The growth of Christian love increasingly gives the believer, the ability to "approve what is excellent", or as Phillips translates, the ability to "recognize the highest and the best". The love of God in the human heart which gives practical knowledge and discernment, also gives the ability to discriminate between the bad, the good, and the best things in life. Love (agape) enables one to test the things in life that differ, that is, this love gives the "capacity for evaluation, ability to assess priorities". Comments Paul Rees: "The preacher needs this, else he will put ecclesiastical niceties and promotional gimmicks ahead of solid prayer and discipline of strong and relevant expository preaching. The layman needs this, else he will confuse committee work with devotedness to Christ and let himself 'off the hook' by giving the Church his money instead of giving God his heart." (Proclaiming the New Testament, p. 20)

"Father, enable me to grow daily in my capacity to love you truly, in order that I may grow in my ability to discern truth accurately. Then I shall live in the depths of understanding and wisdom! Thank you! In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Growth of love is revealed in the believer's ability to increasingly discern and to discriminate in the practical affairs of life. I will open my life to God's love today!

THE GOODNESS OF LOVE

Wrote Paul, "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God". (Philippians 1:9-11)

The goodness of love is described in terms of purity ("may be pure"). The original word can have one of two meanings, either of which is significant. The word can mean 'sun-tested'. If this is applied to a Christian, it means that the love-filled believer is able to stand the heat of man's criticism and can take the light of man's scrutiny. The original word can also mean 'sifted by revolution'. The picture is that if a sieve which whirls and whirls the ingredients to extract every impurity, only to leave the pure. If this picture is applied to the Christian it means that the love of the Christian cleanses and sifts out all impurities, only to leave pure and sincere motives. Whichever meaning you choose ('tested by sunlight' or 'sifted by revolution') the truth remains that the purpose of love is to create a sincere, strong, genuine, and pure character.

The love of God in the human heart not only perfects the motives within, but it guards and guides the actions without. It guards the actions in a negative sense, that is, it enables the believer's actions to be blameless. Blameless actions are actions that derive from a pure heart. Love has no desire to hurt others. Love respects the rights of others. Love does not pursue selfish advantage when with others. Love respects the personal convictions of all. Love seeks to live at peace with all men, but does not pursue peace at any cost. That is, love leaves no room for compromise with sin simply to gain the world's favor and peace. Love never gives birth to a cold, self-righteous type of goodness which repels rather than attracts men to Christ. The love which does not easily give offense is the love that is open, understanding, warm, and compassionate.

Positively speaking, the believer's outward life behavior is "filled with the fruits of righteousness". That is, action is linked with affection, fruit is linked with faith, doing is linked with being, demonstration is linked with doctrine. Love is not passive, but active; love is not primarily negative, but positive. Love, to be proved, must practically manifest itself. Faith as a mere profession is dead without works of love. (I John 3:17-18) "A missionary in India needed physical assistance to get a critically sick man from his house to the hospital. She requested help from two 'holy men' who were sitting not far away, intoning their devotions. She said she would never forget the fire of resentment that blazed up in the eyes of one of them, as he replied: 'We? We are holy men. We never do anything for anybody'." (Proclaiming the New Testament, p. 21; Paul Rees)

"Father, help me to change my religious creeds into practical deeds, to transform my religious words into powerful actions, to translate my good impressions into good expressions."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Goodness of Love is seen in love's accomplishment of internal cleansing and outward fruit-bearing. I will open my life to both!

"ALL PROGRESS IS PROGRESS IN HUMILITY"

Love conquers pride. "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean. How marvelous! How wonderful! Is my Saviour's love for me!" This is the song of the sinner who is saved by grace. In these words there is no attitude of boasting. To realize that the Son of God condescended from the Ivory Palaces of Heaven to a sin-cursed earth to die for fallen humanity, is to realize that there is no place for boasting and glorying in self.

"All I am or ever hope to be, I owe to the Saviour"--that is the attitude of the soul set free from the bondage of sin. To experience God's mercy, is to be "lost in wonder, love, and praise". Said one perceptive soul: "The conquest of Mt. Everest is small compared to the conquest of pride, greed, selfishness, hate".

Notes William Sangster: "All progress is progress in humility, and Paul's progress may be measured by the fact that in his First Epistle to the Corinthians he says, 'I am the least of the Apostles' (I Corinthians 15:9) and writing later to the Ephesians he says that he is 'less than least'--not now of the Apostles--but 'of all the saints' (Ephesians 3:8) (with 'saints' used here as descriptive of all believers) and writing to Timothy later still, he says 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief'. (I Timothy 1:15)." (Daily Readings, p. 262; Sangster)

Sangster further says, "The saint learns that the more humility he has, the more of God he will have also. The primal sin is the assertion of self against God. Pride, therefore, heads any well-drawn category of the deadly sins and humility is its opposite. This explains why, though love is the first fruit of the Spirit and the basis of all the rest, discerning souls have often pointed to humility as the first of the graces. They do so because pride is the deadliest of the deadly sins and humility is its plain contradiction. The more humility, the less pride. The less pride, the more of God. The vision of God begets humility in the soul, and the more humility the clearer one's eyes become to see Him as He is". (Ibid, p. 279)

The question comes forcibly to the Christian, "What has thou that thou hast not received?" The Christian knows he has no cause for boasting, for all he possesses is from the hand of a benevolent God. Newton was captured by God's love, and felt compelled to write of God's grace: "Amazing Grace! how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!" The loveless one--man--is made lovely by the altogether Lovely Christ. As Barclay says, "Love is kept humble by the consciousness that it can never offer its loved one a gift which is good enough". (Daily Study Bible, Corinthians, p. 134)

"Father, deliver me from painful introversion and hurtful introspection. Enable me to be humble in my evaluation of myself, compassionate in my service to others, and bold in my witness for Christ. Through your Spirit-imparted love, help me to be spiritually-integrated, physically healthy, and mentally balanced. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Love enables me to have humility without humiliation and to have self-esteem without pride!

LOVE CONQUERS PRIDE!

Love conquers all, and love is the greatest of the fruits of the Spirit! "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love". (I Corinthians 13:13) Earlier in this devotional book we looked at a portion of the great 'Love Chapter' (I Corinthians 13). We must now spend more time looking at the great characteristics of love, as described in this great chapter.

I Corinthians 13:4 says that love is no braggart, that love is not arrogant. Love is not anxious to impress others, and love is never boastful or proud. George Washington Carver was the greatest Negro scientist the world has ever known. As an agricultural chemist, Carver produced about two hundred different products from the peanut, about one hundred products from the sweet potato, and over eighty products from the little pecan. Carver was born to slave parents, but by the providence of God and through discipline and industry, Carver obtained a good education. From the depths of slavery and poverty, George Washington Carver rose to the heights of success and fame. He was known by kings, presidents, and senators, as well as by multitudes of common folks. Carver's pure spirit of modesty and humility was never blemished by conceit or selfishness. He served humanity and gave God all of the credit and glory for his scientific discoveries. He refused to accept big pay for his hard labors. When someone sent him one hundred dollars, Carver sent it back, declaring, "God does not charge for His work, and neither can I in working for Him".

According to I Corinthians 13, love "does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance". (Phillips) Love does not allow one to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Love enables one to have a sober judgment of his own abilities, and forbids one to be 'flashy' in his appearance or boastful in his claims. (Note Romans 12:3) Says Phillips Brooks: "The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is". A sane estimate of ourselves can be received as we see the smallness of ourselves (even at our best) in light of the greatness of Almighty God. The mountains look much smaller when you are at a distance from them, but the true immensity of the mountains in contrast to your smallness is realized as you get closer to the mountains. Our own weakness and smallness is seen the closer we draw to the Almighty and Infinite God! Follow Paul's advice: "Let us have real warm affection for one another as between brothers and a willingness to let the other man have the credit". (Romans 12:10, Phillip's translation)

"Father, help me not to cherish exaggerated ideas of myself or of my importance, but instead to have a sane estimate of my capabilities by the light of the faith that you have given to me. (Romans 12:3) In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Humility is not an abject, groveling, self-despising spirit; it is but a right estimate of ourselves as God sees us." (Tyron Edwards)

"LOVE DOES NOT BEHAVE GRACELESSLY"

Love, according to I Corinthians 13, does not behave gracelessly. The word for grace in the Greek language is also the word for 'charm'. The behavior of a love-filled believer is not unbecoming, charmless, or blunt and harsh, but it is rather winsome, beautiful, lovely, and gracious. A man who is possessed with Christian love has a fragrance about his life that attracts others, not to himself, but to the lovely Christ whom he serves. One who spends much time in the presence of Christ, is enraptured by Christ's love, and manifests a radiance in his life.

William Carey, one of the greatest missionaries and linguists the world has ever known (he translated parts of the Bible into at least thirty-four languages) began life as a simple cobbler. When he first came to India, some disliked him, among whom was a snob who spoke harshly to Carey at a dinner party, with the purpose of humiliating him. Said the man to Carey, "I suppose, Mr. Carey, you once worked as a shoe-maker". Mr. Carey answered, "No, your lordship, not a shoe-maker, only a cobbler". Carey wasn't inflated with a sense of self-importance. He didn't claim to make shoes, only to mend them. Carey was a man of love, and thus a man of grace.

"Captain Maurice M. Witherspoon, Director of the Laymen's National Committee, tells this unusual story of a college friend: 'While I was a student at Washington and Jefferson, I went into the room of a classmate one day, and there, above his desk, was tacked a simple, hand-lettered sign: 'I am third'. I said to him--'Bill, I know you play baseball, but I don't understand what you mean by that sign'. But Bill wouldn't tell me what he meant. All through college that sign stayed above his desk, and he never told me why. Then, just before he graduated, I asked him again, and this is what he said: 'When I left home, my mother told me always to remember that God is first, others are second, and I am third. I was afraid I wouldn't remember, so I made that little sign and tacked it up'. I am sure Bill was the only one in college to whom that sign did apply--he always followed his teachings.'" (Shoe-Leather Faith, no. 174; Merv Rosell)

Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and in what they are doing". (Living Bible)

J-O-Y--these three letters spell JOY. A life of love is a life of joy, for the relationships of life are in proper order: J stands for JESUS being first, O stands for OTHERS being second, and Y stand for YOU being third!

"Father, in the name of 'justice' I have sometimes acted harshly toward others, and in the name of 'good humor' I have sometimes treated others insensitively. Forgive me for my graceless behavior. Make me sensitive to the feelings of others, delivered on one hand from that pride which makes me look down on my social 'inferiors', and delivered on the other hand from that jealousy which creeps into my life as I look up to my social 'superiors'."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God's imparted love in my life will enable me to live an unselfconscious life, with my attention fixed on Christ's holiness and my energies invested in caring for others!

LOVE CONQUERS PERSECUTION!

Jesus taught the principles of love, and He lived the life of love. He suffered because of love, and He died with the words of love on His lips. Christ is the perfect example that all Christians are commanded to follow. Christians are to live a life of love. Love not only for friends, but also for enemies. Jesus taught, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you". Love is the answer to the problems of a loveless world. The Christian can suffer persecution with patience and kindness.

Paul says in I Corinthians 13 that "Love is patient and kind". Paul exhorted Christians to be "patient in tribulation". When the word patience is used in the New Testament, it means patience with people. Chrysostom, an early century preacher, said it was the word which is used of a man who has been wronged by another, and who has the power to avenge himself, but who refuses to avenge himself of the injustice he has suffered. Abraham Lincoln was such a person. With great contempt Stanton called Lincoln "a low cunning clown" and nicknamed him "the original gorilla". Lincoln, however, treated Stanton with great courtesy and even appointed Stanton as his war minister because Lincoln felt Stanton was the best man for the job. Years later when Lincoln lay silent in a room after he was assassinated, Stanton stood over the bed of the rugged-faced, kind-hearted Lincoln, and with tears, said, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen". The lovely patience of Lincoln had conquered the contempt of Stanton.

Paul further says that "Love does not insist upon its own rights, and never flies into a temper". (Barclay's translation) The love-enraptured person seeks not to see how much he can take from the world, but rather how much he can give to the world. The Christian is concerned for his fellowmen, and helps carry the burden of the world's suffering. He learns to become patient with people, for people, to him, are precious and infinitely valuable to God.

When a modern-day saint, Toyohika Kagawa, first became acquainted with Christianity, he cried out: "O God, make me like Christ!" To follow Christ's example, Kagawa went to live in the slums of Japan, although he himself had tuberculosis. He lived in a six foot by six foot hut in a Tokyo slum. Cecil Northcott tells what Kagawa did. "On his first night he was asked to share his bed with a man suffering from contagious itch. That was a test of his faith. Would he go back on his point of no return? No. He welcomed his bed-fellow. Then a beggar asked for his shirt and got it. Next day he was back for Kagawa's coat and trousers and got them too. Kagawa was left standing in a ragged old kimono. The slum dwellers of Tokyo laughed at him, but they came to respect him. He stood in the driving rain to preach, coughing all the time. 'God is love', he shouted. 'God is love. Where love is, there is God'. He often fell down exhausted, and the rough men of the slums carried him gently back to his hut."

"Father, let me never forget that love is meant to 'go down'--to go down into the valley of human needs to heal the sick, to visit the lonely, to comfort the sorrowing, to recover the wandering ones. Expand my capacity to love with your kind of love."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Love never fails--regardless of the degree of visible or immediate results from loving--for 'God is love'!

RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL

Paul further describes the characteristics of God-like love in I Corinthians 13. Paul says that "Love does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received". (Barclay's translation) Genuine Christians of all ages have had the ability to love their persecutors. Jesus spoke to all ages when he said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven". (Matthew 5:11-12a)

The love of the early-century Christians subdued the hatred and hostility of the powerful Romans. Writes Taylor, "Kind submission to the cruel hand of man and a calm committal of the spirit by faith into the hand of God, melted the heart of stone in the Roman world. Here were men, women, and children who could face any kind of death with a smile on the face and a song of praise on the lips. They considered the day of martyrdom the marriage day of the soul". (Goodly Heritage, p. 22)

Reverend Wurmbbrand, a Rumanian Christian minister who suffered torture for fourteen years in Nazi and Communist prison camps, was finally released from prison in 1965 and then travelled throughout America, describing his tortures and telling of the Underground Movement of Christians in Communist lands. He experienced horrible torture because he would not renounce his faith in Christ. His body was submitted to hot irons and knives; he was beaten and brain-washed; he experienced many other unimaginable tortures. Throughout these many years, he witnessed for Christ to prison guards and saw many converted to Christ. In his book 'Tortured For Christ', he writes, "The first thing which I must say is that I have not the slightest bitterness or resentment against the Communists or their torturers. Not only this, but I love the communists with all my heart. I hate the sin, but love the sinner. Communists could kill Christians, but could not kill their love towards even those who killed them". (Tortured For Christ, p. 33)

Wurmbbrand knows what it is to love his enemies. Love is always the best antidote for hate. Wrote Paul, "My dear friends, do not seek revenge, but leave a place for divine retribution; for their is a text which reads, 'Justice is mine, says the Lord, I will repay". (Romans 12:19, New English Bible)

Dr. Martin Luther King Sr. is a modern-day man whose long life and ministry were filled with love. His was not an easy life--his famous son Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated by a hate-filled person, his other son died accidentally in a swimming accident, his wife of over 50 years was shot in his own Church where he pastored for several decades! But this grief-stricken, yet unembittered, saint of God continued to teach and preach love until the day he died! The impact of this man's life and that of his famous son--Martin Luther King Jr.--will doubtless be felt for many decades to come!

"O Father, make me a man of love! Hate paralyzes, but love liberates. Hate gradually corrodes away the personality of a human being, but love enhances and beautifies the life. Give me power to return good for evil, to love even my 'enemies'. In Jesus' lovely name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "I will not allow any man to make me lower myself by hating him." (Booker Washington)

LOVE FINDS NO PLEASURE IN EVIL-DOING

Love is the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian. The person who is engulfed in God's love, will be involved in other people's lives. Love centers attention on others. Paul describes the traits of love. In each of the descriptions Paul gives in I Corinthians 13, there is an important dimension of love revealed. Love is others-oriented and God-centered.

I Corinthians 13:6 is interestingly translated. Says Phillips: "It does not. . . gloat over the wickedness of other people." The New English Bible translates this section: "Love . . . does not gloat over other men's sins." The New International Version: "Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins". Today's English Version: "Love is not happy with Evil".

What are these different translators essentially saying? They are saying that love is never glad when another suffers or when another does wrong. Love is never glad to hear an unpleasant report about another, but instead love rejoices when another person succeeds. To gloat over another man's sin, is to smile scornfully in gladness that another person has failed. To gloat over another man's failure, is to descend to the depths of soul-meanness. There is perversion in human nature that causes some to feel built up when others are trampled down.

Love never takes pleasure in the derogatory remarks said concerning another. Says Barclay, "It is one of the queer traits of human nature that very often we prefer to hear of the misfortunes of others rather than of their good fortunes. . . We are much more interested in hearing a spicy story to someone's discredit than a story to someone's praise". (Daily Study Bible, I Corinthians, p. 136)

The love-filled Christian weeps with those who weep because of failure, losses, or disappointment. Such a Christian never allows himself to become calloused in his heart or calculating in his evaluations. Rather, he is sensitive to his fellowmen and has a heart pulsating with love and compassion. The love-filled believer is grateful he can help bear his brother's burdens, for he knows he is his 'brother's keeper'.

Christian love rejoices with those who rejoice because of success, advancement, and recognition. A love-filled Christian is never jealous or envious, wishing that his fellowman had not achieved so much. A love-filled Christian is never fearful that he will be 'showed up' in an inferior way, when he is compared to his successful brother. Instead he is thrilled over the success of his fellowman and is grateful that he had any part in helping his brother to reach his fuller potential. A love-filled Christian is not contemptuous or competitive, but rather cooperative and complimentary. He is glad when another gets ahead in life, and he prays for his further success.

"Father, cleanse me at the deepest depths of my human nature. Enable me genuinely to rejoice with those who rejoice, and empathetically to weep with those who weep. Never allow my heart to become calloused, and guard my heart against the perverse inward pleasure that some take when others around them falter and fail. Make me a 'man after your own heart'. In Jesus' powerful name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Holy Spirit will enable me to distain only what God distains, and to delight in only what God delights in!

"LOVE ENVIETH NOT"

I Corinthians 13:4 says that love does not envy others and that love is not jealous. The love-filled Church, as described in Acts 2:42-47 did almost everything together. Love brings people together; jealousy drives people apart!

It is often more difficult to rejoice with those who have found success than it is to weep with those who have met failure. To help the down-trodden often requires less humility of us than to help the success-ridden.

"Oscar Wilde used to tell a fable. . .The Devil was once crossing the Libyan Desert when he came upon a group of small friends who were tempting a holy hermit. They tried him the seductions of the flesh; they sought to sow his mind with doubts and fears; they told him that all his austerities were nothing worth. 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'. Who can cure this evil thing? How shall jealousy be done away? Who is able? Christ is able. He can uproot his rank weed in human hearts and plant the lowly flower of humility in its place." (Daily Readings, p. 200; W. E. Sangster)

One of the early century preachers, Chrysostom, wrote concerning this: "It requires more of a high Christian temper to rejoice with them that do rejoice than to weep with them that weep. For this nature itself fulfills perfectly: and there is none so hard-hearted as not to weep over him that is in calamity; but the other requires a very noble soul, so as not only to keep from envying, but even to feel pleasure with the person who is in esteem". (Daily Bible Readings, Romans, p. 182; William Barclay)

Sir James Y. Simpson, the great discoverer of chloroform, came from a poor home. When James was a child, one day his mother was darning his stockings, and contemplatively said to her son, "My Jamie, mind when your mither's awa' that she was a grand danner". James' brother, Sandy, realized the brilliant potential of James, and willingly worked in the bakeshop in order that James would have money to attend college. Sir James Simpson's discovery of chloroform was possible because of the unselfish cooperation of his simple folk. Sandy was able to rejoice in the achievement of his brother Sir James, and had a part in making James great.

Paul wrote, "Love knows no envy". Love never looks contemptuously or scornfully upon the unfortunate, but more than that, love never grudges another of what he is or what he has. Love gives help to whom help should be given, and love gives honour to whom honour is due.

"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.

LOVE'S ANSWER TO LIFE'S PERPLEXITIES

When a person is perplexed, he is uncertain as to what to think or do. Most of life's perplexities can be solved satisfactorily, but there are some problems in life that are very baffling and complex. A person is a long time finding the answer to these kinds of problems, if indeed he ever finds a satisfying answer, in this life. It is these puzzling, tangled, confused conditions in life that are often the hardest to overcome. When sorrows 'like sea billows rol' and clouds of doubt assail, the Christian must learn to rest in this blest assurance--the Heavenly Father is in control of all circumstances and our Father will never cause His children needless tears. The Father's love assures the human heart even though it may not answer all the questions of the questing mind! When hopes are shattered, plans are altered, tears are shed, questions arise, doubts plague, Christ is the Christian's soul-anchor. His love inspires new hope, builds new plans, wipes away the tears, and restores joy and peace to life.

A man may react in one of two ways to adverse circumstances that come his way. He can either let his adversities drag him down, or he can make "music out of life's remainders".

While I was pastoring my first Church in Hillsboro, Illinois, I had the opportunity to come to know several radiant Christians, whose lives deeply impressed me. I was only 22 years old at the time, a student-pastor. Among those beautiful people was an eighty-year old man whose name was Mr. Glass. Mr. Glass taught me that it is possible for a person to overcome adversity and not let a handicap overcome a person. At the age of twenty-five, one of his hands was cut off while he was on his job. How did he respond to this terrible tragedy, a tragedy which stuck him in the beginning of his adult life? He realized that the future would not be easy, but he said he determined to meet life, and meet it head-on and get as much out of life as he could, despite this handicap. Mr. Glass told me that he worked on the railroad for about thirty years. As a one-handed man, he performed tasks in his railroad work that amazed his fellow employees. He said he developed enough skill that he was even able to lift large boxes. He learned to face life optimistically, and, when I knew him, he and his wife were coming to the closing of their lives together, still full of joy and satisfaction. His triumphant prayers and radiant friendship were evidence that he was not plagued with self-pity. Mr. Glass early learned what it was to "take life by the throat". Love makes one a conqueror over any adversity or perplexity.

Christ came not to make life easy, but He came to make men great! The great man is the Christ-possessed man. The Christ possessed man is the man who has learned to cope with life, not on the basis of his own might or ability but on the basis of strong Christian love.

"O God, when life's experiences bring doubts to my mind and sorrow to my heart, teach me to trust you. Always help me to remember that you are a God of perfect wisdom, love, and power. You know what is best for me, you want to give what is best, and you have the ability to give me the best! Knowing who you are enables me to accept life's challenges, not with dumb resignation but with triumphant victory! Thank you! Thank you!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God's unconditional love will someday answer my unsolved questions; then my question marks will be turned to exclamation marks!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF LOVE

1. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "What you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you are saying". Is the witness of a believer's life sufficient, or is it necessary for a believer to support his 'life' witness with a clear 'verbal' witness? Which is the stronger witness, the witness of one's 'life' or the witness of one's 'lips'?
2. Explain how all of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24) relate directly to love, and how that all of the fruits are simply descriptions of love.
3. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "What God commands, my nature demands, and the Holy Spirit supplies".
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To the extent that I am actively practicing love, to that same extent am I genuinely experiencing God's sanctifying power in my life!" (Give Scriptural references to document your answer.)
5. Define and describe, in as much detail as you can, the meaning and characteristics of 'Agape' (Divine-like love).
6. Is it possible to 'love' a person without 'liking' a person? Why or why not?
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by E. Stanley Jones: "If you don't love God totally you cant' love yourself at all. For a divided self is a despised self. If you don't live with God in the harmony of love, you will have to live with yourself in the disharmony of hate. There is no alternative."
8. Do you feel that the following statement by John Wesley is accurate and adequate in explaining the essence of Christianity?--"Religion is the most simple thing that can be conceived. It is only humble, gentle, patient love".
9. If love is the distinguishing mark of the true believer, how can one experience this divine love?
10. Give your comments and interpretation of the following statement: "God is the reservoir of divine love, I am the channel of divine love, the world is the recipient of divine love".
11. What is the difference between 'erotic' and 'agape' love? What is the result when 'erotic' love is degraded and perverted?
12. When was God's love objectively proved to mankind? How is God's love subjectively appropriated by mankind?
13. Give illustrations of the practical knowledge which comes to the believer as a result of the believer developing a deepening love relationship with God.

14. The 'goodness' of love is described in terms of purity (in Philippians 1:9-11). What are two possible meanings (in terms of 'word pictures') in the concept of 'purity'?
15. How does the love of God in the human heart affect the believer's behavior, in both a negative sense and in a positive sense?
16. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "All progress is progress in humility".
17. In light of I Corinthians 13, give your interpretation of the following statement by Phillips Brooks: "The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is".
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by Tyron Edwards: "Humility is not an abject, groveling, self-despising spirit; it is but a right estimate of ourselves as God sees us". What is the difference between 'true humility' and 'false humility'? Can one be truly motivated by God-like love ('agape' love) to manifest 'true humility', and at the same time be enabled by 'agape' love to enjoy wholesome self-love and self-esteem? How can a believer know when he is experiencing wholesome self-esteem, and when he is wrongly holding an 'inflated view of his own self-importance'? (Note Romans 12:3, I Corinthians 3:3-9,18-23,4:1-7.)
19. What practically do you believe I Corinthians 13 means when it states in this great chapter that Christian love enables a believer not to behave gracelessly? Who among your personal acquaintances best exemplifies 'charm' and 'grace' in their Christlike behavior?
20. Give your interpretation of the following description of love as found in I Corinthians 13: "Love is patient and kind".
21. Give your insights into the following statement: "Love does not insist upon its own rights, and never flies into a temper". Is it possible to be 'angry' and at the same time be love-filled? (Note Ephesians 4:26.)
22. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Love never fails--regardless of the degree of visible or immediate results from loving--for 'God is love'."
23. Can the love-filled believer seek to render justice to a wrongdoer without at the same time seeking vengeance? (Note Romans 12:17-21.) How can a Christian, who has been hurt deeply and unfairly, avoid storing up the memory of the wrong he has received? Can you give examples of believers who have found victory over resentments!
24. Describe and illustrate, as best as you can, the meaning of the following statement from I Corinthians 13:6--"Love finds no pleasure in evil-doing".
25. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is one of the queer traits of human nature that very often we prefer to hear of the misfortunes of others rather than of their good fortunes".

26. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is often more difficult to rejoice with those who have found success than it is to weep with those who have met failure". What is the cure for the evil thing called 'jealousy' in a believer's life?

27. Is 'competition' ever acceptable within the fellowship of believers? Do you agree with the following statement--"Outdoing one another in showing love and in demonstrating generosity is the only kind of competition that is acceptable and worthy".

28. Explain why love is the answer to life's perplexities. Have you found, amidst the perplexities and mysteries of your personal life, that the Heavenly Father's love assures the human heart even though it has not always answered all the questions of the puzzled mind?

CHAPTER 10

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF JOY AND PEACE

THE JOY THAT IS UNSPEAKABLE!

Notes William Sangster, "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. . . Tertullian said 'The Christian saint is hilarious'. . . The summons to rejoice is sounded no less than seventy times in the New Testament. . . Honest men at Pentecost thought that the apostles were drunk, and, whenever the living water has burst fresh from the rock again, the same exuberant gladness has been manifest." (Daily Readings, p. 144)

"The Greek meaning behind the word 'Joy' means 'to be glad to the point of madness'. The joy of the Christian in this word is so vivid and so visible that he seems to be a man who has taken leave of his senses." (William Barclay)

"When Dr. Farmer, organist at Harrow, pleaded with the Salvationist drummer not to hit the drum so hard, the beaming bandsman replied: 'Lor' bless you, sir, since I've been converted, I's so happy, I could burst the blooming drum'."

Joy is experienced, not by seeking it, but by seeking Christ and investing oneself in the interests of others.

Joy comes by the realization of what God has done for one in the past, what God is doing for one in the present, and what God will do for one in the future.

First, consider that joy comes from realizing what God has done for one in the past. It is the sins of one's past which destroy one's joy. All need forgiveness--the moral and the immoral alike--and until the sin problem is taken care of, there is no basis for joy. One medical doctor gives the following testimony: "The night I asked God, for Christ's sake, to forgive my sins, I was weighed down with a sense of guilt and fear. After a few moments of confession and forsaking of sin, the guilt and fears vanished, and a miraculous, heaven-sent joy filled my mind. Instead of long continued and expensive trips to a psychiatrists' couch to get rid of a disease-producing guilt complex, I made one trip to God's altar and got rid of guilt itself." (None of These Diseases, p. 98; S. I. McMillan)

It does no good to rationalize sin or suppress sin, or deny sin. David, who had sinned grievously against His God, confessed his sins and found joy restored. "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)

"Father, the joy you give me is unspeakable and full of glory! Because thou art its source, my joy is completely independent of circumstances, it is constant, it is deep. What joy to know that all my sins are cast behind your back, never to be remembered against me again. In thy presence is joy forevermore!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will not seek joy, I will seek God, and in seeking God I will discover joy!

THE JOY OF THE PERFECTING PROCESS

We saw yesterday that joy comes when one realizes that God has forgiven the sins of one's past. Joy also comes when we realize that God is actively at work in our lives, moment by moment, perfecting us and bringing us more and more into conformity to the will of God. Every day we are becoming more and more like Jesus.

God is constantly working in our lives. "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13, NIV) At age 83, veteran missionary E. Stanley Jones wrote, "The best that I can say about myself is that I'm a Christian-in-the-making. Not yet 'made', but only in the making at eighty-three. And I'm glad I am not 'made', for there is joy and anticipation in 'being made'. A great philosopher said: 'If I held Truth captive in my hand, I would let it go, that I might pursue it again'. A girl, recently in the Kingdom said: 'I like the person I'm becoming'. I do too. For the 'becoming' is a part of the joy." (A Song of Ascents, p. 17-18)

God is constantly working in our lives to perfect our character. God does this in several ways: (1) The Lord disciplines us: "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son'. . . Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it". (Hebrews 12:5-6,10-11, NIV) (2) The Lord permits life's trials to perfect our character: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything". (James 2:2-4, NIV) (3) Confession of personal mistakes and sins to God and to others results in perfecting our character: Says E. Stanley Jones: "There is always a fresh start possible. It begins by saying, 'I am wrong; I must, and will, change'. You feel cleansed by the very confession. . . Without that note of willingness to confess to being wrong, there is--and cannot be--any progress. People who are always right are always wrong--wrong by their very attitude of being always right. No amendment, no attainment. . . There is a perpetual, personal love to which I can return when I stray in thought or attitude or deed." (Song of Ascents, p. 17-18,23)

"Father, your working in me and my working with you to accomplish your life-time goal for me--Christlikeness in character--is a source of joy to me! What you begin, you always finish. What you purpose, you always perfect. Thank you for the joy of the perfecting process. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Lord's discipline, life's trials, personal confession--these are all working for my good and for God's glory. This gives me joy!

JOY HERE AND HEREAFTER!

We have noted thus far that joy comes from realizing what God has done for one in the past and what God is doing for one in the present. Look daily for the Lord and enjoy the present experiences of life, be those experiences ever so common. "God is constantly seeking to meet us in the common and unexpected moments of life. He does not wait for what we are pleased to call the 'grand moments' but He will make the common place the grand. We walk about blind to the glory that is around us because we do not expect to find it there. We mortgage the joys of the present, the quiet homely joys of humdrum days, to our anticipations of some distant time of overwhelming happiness of a kind that never comes to most people. Joy is all around us if we would only learn to see it in common things." (William Sangster) Open your life anew to the God of all joy, and your life will be 'on tiptoe with joy'.

Third, joy comes from realizing what God is going to do for one in the future. Regardless of how dark the present circumstances may sometimes seem, the future for the believer is bright with joyful prospects. Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you". How heavenly to have God's constant presence! That is the source of perpetual joy--the joy that is not dependent upon circumstances. The more we entertain thoughts of Jesus and His Word throughout our daily routine, the more our lives will be filled with joy! Jesus is our joyful Companion in life. He lightens every burden, for Christ turns our burdens into blessings. In his autobiography, written when he was 83 years old, E. Stanley Jones wrote: "Life to me has not been a struggle. It has been, and is, a Song. The struggle has been only when I have departed from His Way".

Heaven is a glorious future reality for the true believer, an anticipation that brings indescribable joy! Every believer will see Jesus, face to face. All the tears will be wiped away. Each believer will receive his new resurrection body, and he will reign with Christ forever!

Of those who have reached Heaven's home, C. S. Lewis writes: "The dream is ended: this is the morning. . . All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before." (quote from The Last Battle as quoted in 'Christianity Today', April 11, 1975, p. 19)

If you want joy, real joy, follow Christ every step of the way! Christ gives joy here and joy hereafter!

"Father, thank you for being such a gracious God, a God whose joy is our joy, whose purpose is our salvation, whose heavenly home is our inheritance! Praise and thanksgiving forever!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Fear not little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom of Heaven"--these words make me burst with gratitude for the God that I serve!

WHAT HAPPINESS IS NOT!

There seems to be constant talk in our modern-day concerning 'Happiness'. Nearly everyone is seeking to be happy--the best sellers today are written on the subject: 'How To Be Happy'.

The terminology today is 'personal fulfillment'. Everyone wants his rights! Everyone wants opportunity to fulfill his potential! There is great talk today about talents, gifts, abilities, individual accomplishments!

People talk about their 'right to be happy'. Happiness is the orientation of modern-day man. Is this good or bad?

Let us first say that God wants His creatures to be happy. At the heart of Christianity is Joy. 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! We are children of the Heavenly Father who knows us well and who had declared life as positive and good! It is "ours to run out and embrace life and know with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air that the first thing about life is to enjoy it." "It is your Father's good pleasure", said Jesus 'to give you the Kingdom.'" (Secret of Radiant Life, p. 109; Sangster)

But, while God wants his creatures to be happy, we must realize that happiness is the sequel to or the by-product of holiness. Anything that goes against holiness, goes against happiness!

Happiness is not self-centered pursuits, resulting in making people into 'things' to be used. Happiness is not avoidance of pain at all costs or escape from personal responsibility. Happiness is not throwing off restraints in an attempt to find freedom. Happiness is not throwing off restraints in an attempt to find freedom. Happiness is not living a life without schedules or disciplines or requirements or accountability. Happiness is not dramatic events and escape from routine jobs which appear so mundane and tedious. Happiness is not constantly seeking personal fulfillment or personal rights. Happiness is not perpetual vacations, unlimited money, constant ease and total release from tension. Happiness is not power, prestige, an applause from one's peers. Happiness is not escape from responsible human relationships with all their accompanying challenges and complexities. Happiness is not doing what you want to do, when you want to, and in the way you want to. Happiness is not escape from difficulties, hardships, or afflictions.

The saint who perhaps more than any other spoke of joy, is the saint who suffered most. The list of Paul's sufferings and troubles fills a page. Read them in II Corinthians 11:23-33. And yet he could write: "In all our troubles my joy knows no bounds." (II Corinthians 7:4)

"Father, knowing you truly is to possess within me a spring of living water, bubbling up with the joy of the Lord! Help me never to seek happiness but instead to seek holiness, and in experiencing your holiness to find that I am permeated with happiness."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will minister today out of the overflow of my life--the overflow of joy!

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

Yesterday we briefly described what happiness is not; today we describe what happiness is.

Happiness is doing God's will, regardless of the pleasure or the pain which accompany that commitment. Happiness is full-surrender of one's will to God's will, one's mind to Christ's mind, one's emotions to Christ's emotions. Happiness is death to self-centeredness, with a consequent resurrection to Christ-centeredness. Happiness is living responsibly in relationships, giving God supreme place in one's affections, will, and intellect, and giving preference to other's needs before one's own needs.

Happiness is living a holy life--a life forgiven of sins and delivered from self-centeredness. Happiness is loving yourself genuinely because you love God supremely. Happiness is living responsibly, being faithful to one's commitments to God, to the Church, and to others, regardless of the pain or afflictions which such commitments incur. Happiness is being faithful in performing the God-given tasks--daily, routinely, yearly, with or without the recognition of fellow humans. Happiness is serving others and in the process finding yourself deeply fulfilled. Happiness is seeking to make others happy, comforting the sorrowing, cheering the fainting, loving the loveless. Happiness is living a God-focused life, living fully to meet human needs and living dependently to appropriate divine resources.

Happiness is being a channel--a channel to connect God's love with human lovelessness, a channel to connect God's transforming power to human impotence. Happiness is service. Delighting in creating. Implementing 'love projects' in the context of a love-hungry world. Being God's little creators--creating new movements, new lives, new hopes. Happiness is fulfilling the purpose for which humans were created--to love God and to serve mankind. Happiness is the exciting process of 'becoming', forever 'becoming', but never fully arriving. Walking by faith here and seeing Christ face to face someday. Happiness is companionship with Christ, made nearer and dearer when death robs one of the body!

Seek holiness, and you will get happiness also. Seek happiness and you will not only lose holiness, but you will lose happiness as well. "Whoever finds his life (i.e., seeks happiness as his primary goal in life) will lose it, and whoever loses his life (i.e., seeks God's will and way--His holiness--as his primary goal in life) will find it." (<Matthew 10:38-39) "The hope of good men is eternal happiness; the hopes of evil men are all in vain." (Proverbs 10:28, Living Bible)

"Father, help me not to be afraid of life with its stringent demands and responsibilities. Help me to fall in love with life with its pains and pleasures alike, because I have fallen deeply in love with you. Make my joy complete because I am completely committed to you. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Following Christ is not a 'joy ride' but it is a 'joy road'. Hallelujah!

PEACE WITH GOD

Peace is a fruit of the Spirit. Christ said to His disciples, just before He was arrested and crucified: "I am leaving you with a gift--peace of mind and heart! And the peace I give isn't fragile like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid." (John 14:27, Living Bible) Recognizing that peace is a gift of God, we must consider, during the next few days, peace WITH God, peace OF God, and peace FOR God.

First, consider peace WITH God. Man was made to be filled with God, but sin empties one of God's inner presence and leaves one void, estranged, and lonely. Man is lost without God. The ultimate consequence of sin is hell, and hell is separation from everything that is good. Sin results in driving one away from God, away from the one that man is made for! "And they (the human couple) heard the voice of the Lord God walking the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8)

In one section of his poem, Francis Thompson describes the way in which sin drove him from God, and yet how God pursued him in love.

"I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter."

Sin always has a way of alienating. Sin alienated the prodigal son from his father. Sin alienated the woman of Samaria from society. Sin alienated the thief from his family and friends, and nailed him to a cross. Sin alienates the spirit of man from the Spirit of God. Alienation from God destroys joy and peace and causes emptiness, misery, and loneliness.

The twentieth century might well be called the Age of Estrangement. Many today rub shoulders in large crowds, but still feel alone. Many today manifest their deep restlessness by frequent movement from one location to another or from one job to another, or from one wife to another. Many are madly pursuing pleasure, hoping to fill the void of loneliness. A fear of death plagues many.

Is there any peace, any hope for a person upon whom the wrath and condemnation of God rests? Yes, there is hope and peace in Christ! "Yet now God declares that we are good in His eyes if we trust in Jesus Christ, who freely takes away our sins. For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith to satisfy God's wrath. . . For God declares sinners to be good in His sight if they have faith in Christ to save them from God's wrath". (Romans 3:24-25,4:5, Living Bible)

"O God, all attempts to find peace through human efforts have left the human heart restless. I see that peace is more than a right set of external circumstances. Lasting and true peace is an internal condition of the human heart, given as a gift from God upon entering into a new relationship with Christ!

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: In troubling circumstances I need not be troubled, for God's peace is not fragile; it is tough and enduring!

PEACE OF GOD

Many times God is called the "God of all peace". Peace is a gift of God, the fruit of the Spirit. Said Jesus to His disciples, shortly before the crucifixion: "I have told you all this so that you will have peace of heart and mind. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world". (John 16:33, Living Bible)

The gift of God's peace is enjoyed in spite of circumstances. The peace the Christian enjoys is not unlike that which Christ enjoyed when he enjoyed undisturbed calm in the midst of the raging storm on the lake (Mark 4:35-41). "A contest was once held in which a prize was to be given to the most original allegorical painting of peace. One artist brought a landscape of exquisite beauty and tranquility, the limpid lake, the softly flowing brook, the green fields with cattle and sheep feeding on rich pasture, luxuriant trees with birds singing in the branches and children playing under their shadow, while soft fleecy clouds sailed across the blue expanse and flung their changing shadows on the mountain sides. It was without doubt a perfect picture of peace under normal conditions. But the painting that won the prize was very different. It represented a naked rock in mid-ocean with wild tempests beating around it and the surf tossing high about its base while a ship in distress was seen driving before the fierce hurricane. The clouds were black and angry with the fury of the storm. But in the center of the picture that naked rock was seen to divide near the summit, and in its cleft, a dove was calmly dropping into her nest and spreading her soft wings above her little brood, safe and quiet amid all the fury of the elements. That is the peace 'which passeth all understanding', and which only the Spirit of God can bring to our heart." (Honoring the Spirit, p. 13-14; Myron F. Boyd)

There is a song which speaks of 'a deep settled peace in my soul'. Regardless of the troubled surface waters, the waters that are deep remain calm and powerful. The current may flow fast, but it flows undisturbed and peacefully.

Peace is a gift of God which is maintained by centering ones attention on Christ and on the needs of others. "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee." (Isaiah 25:3, RSV) To keep peace in our hearts, we must learn daily to cultivate the presence of Christ in our lives. Also, we must give ourselves in service to others, for the more we are preoccupied with meeting the needs of others, the less occupied we will be with our own problems. As Sangster says, "Give yourself in service to others; every needy soul is an opportunity; seize every self-pitying thought in its early stages and direct it in pity to somebody else. . . Then the miracle will happen. Peace will come to you". (Daily Readings, p. 231)

"Peace, 'in spite of' when it cannot be 'because of' circumstances! That is the kind of peace I want in my heart, dear Father. Help me to stay my mind on You in order that you may keep me in perfect peace!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I cannot 'Make' the peace of God rule in my heart, but I can 'Let' the peace of God rule in my heart. My surrender to God shall result in my serenity from God! Glory!

PEACE FOR GOD

If we have peace WITH God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and if we have the peace OF God in our hearts as we stay our mind on Christ, then we will seek peace FOR God, i.e., we will be peace-makers. We can be active peace-makers in many ways. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God". (Matthew 5:9) He who is a peacemaker is doing the very work of God, for God is a God of Peace.

First, express peaceful greetings. In many of Paul's letters, he expressed his greetings to his friends in these words: "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ". To wish someone peace is to wish him every blessing which God can give, even those choice gifts which sometimes come through troubling circumstances! To wish someone peace then is not to wish him freedom from all troubles in life, but to wish him God's richest blessings which sometimes come as a result of enduring life's trials.

Second, use peaceful words. We can be peacemakers by the words we speak. Some words build up and some words tear down human relationships. Be very careful in the selection of your words! "A soft answer turneth away wrath but grievous words stir up anger." (Proverbs 15:1) "Some people like to make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise soothe and heal." (Proverbs 12:18) Blessed are those who bring good tidings, who proclaim peace! (Nahum 1:15)

Third, involve yourself in peaceful actions. "Abraham Lincoln once said: 'Die when I may I would like it to be said of me, that I always pulled up a weed and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow'. . . There are people who are always storm centers of trouble and bitterness and strife. . . There are other people in whose presence bitterness cannot live, people who bridge the gulfs, and heal the breaches, and sweeten the bitterness. Such people are doing a godlike work, for it is the great purpose of God to bring peace between man and Himself, and between man and man. The man who divides men is doing the devil's work; the man who unites men is doing God's work." (Daily Study Bible, Matthew, vol. 1, p. 105; Barclay)

Fourth, pray peaceful prayers. One of the most productive activities to bring about peace is prayer. What the world needs is millions of prayer warriors who will cover the earth with a blanket of prayer. Prayer is the mightiest force in the Universe, and the only ultimate way of bringing peace to our troubled world. "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way." (I Timothy 2:1-2)

"Father, enable me to be an ambassador of peace, your instrument of peaceful relationships between fellow human beings. Let my greetings be peaceful greetings, my words be soothing words, my actions be reconciling actions, my prayers be world-changing prayers!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Upwardly I enjoy peace with God. Inwardly I enjoy the peace of God. I will therefore outwardly allow peace to flow from my life for God.

CHRIST--THE SOURCE OF PEACE!

Have you ever wished that every one could get along with one another? Why are there racial conflicts, and why is there a 'generation gap'? There are conflicts over styles, tastes, and outlooks and philosophies. Why can't Americans and Russians get along, in spite of the various ideological differences? Why can't the various classes--rich and poor--accept each other instead of contemptuously and suspiciously looking down on each other? Why can't people whose temperaments and personalities are so different get along, accepting differences without allowing those differences to become barriers of misunderstanding?

These are the concerns which Paul dealt with in the Book of Ephesians. The gathering together of all things in Jesus Christ is the key theme of Ephesians. Unity, reconciliation, and peace are the key words of the Book. In Ephesians 2:14-18 (our devotional reading for today) we have a 'Profile of Peace'. The Profile of peace is shown in five ways: (1) Source of Peace--Christ; (2) Instrument of Peace--Blood of the Cross; (3) Purpose of Peace--Reconciliation; (4) Foundation of Peace--Love; (5) Meaning of Peace--Unity amidst Diversity.

Ephesians 2:14 says that Christ is our Peace. If Christ is the source of peace, it is the blood of the Cross which is the instrument of peace. There is no cheap peace, either between God and man or between man and man. Sin has destroyed the peaceful relationships between God and man and between man and man. It is through "the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13), by the 'flesh' of Christ (Ephesians 2:14) that the dividing walls of hostility can be destroyed and that peace can be established! There is no easy peace. Christ is the author of peace, but not even Christ could bring peace without the suffering and the blood of the Cross! It is "through the Cross" (Ephesians 2:16) that God is able to reconcile man to Himself and to reconcile man to his fellowman.

What a message to our world! Many there are who talk about peace today! But they don't know either the source of peace (Christ), nor the costly instrument of peace (the blood of Christ's cross). They don't discern the seriousness of man's problem of estrangement! They are like the false prophets of Israel: "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace', they say, when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 8:11)

Men look to other sources of peace outside of Christ--sources like peace treaties, councils, the United Nations, military armaments, education, etc. As earnest as man's attempts are to find peace, there is no peace outside of Christ! Christ alone is the Author of peace, and His Cross alone is the Instrument of peace between God and man and between man and man!

"O Father, I am restless until I rest in thee, and yet I cannot rest in you without coming to your Son, whose blood alone can affect a reconciliation between You and me. The blood of your Son is able to cleanse me at the deepest level of my sins, and to speak peace to my troubled soul. Hallelujah!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "I see the new creation rise, I hear the speaking blood; It speaks! polluted nature dies--Sinks 'neath the crimson flood.'" ('The Cleansing Wave')

RECONCILIATION--THE PURPOSE OF PEACE!

Says Ephesians 2:14-15--"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace." The fact is this: By His Cross, Christ has destroyed the walls of hostility and has built the bridge of peace between all peoples of all races, nationalities, cultures, and ages. Christ destroys the barriers between races, nations, and individuals because Christ has demonstrated his love on the Cross! The Cross shows God's love for all, and God's love for each. "The sight of that Cross awakens in the hearts of men of all nations love for Christ, and only when they all love Christ will they love each other." (Daily Study Bible, Ephesians, p. 134; William Barclay) The Cross is God's outstretched hands, drawing all people to one another in peaceful and loving reconciliation. God is saying through the Cross to hostile humanity: "Because I love you all equally, all of you who are so different culturally, racially, and religiously must love each other deeply!" Jesus said, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth (on a Cross), will draw all men to myself." (John 12:32) The purpose of peace is reconciliation--between man and man and between God and man. "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross." (Ephesians 2:15b-16)

The Cross demonstrated God's love for all mankind, which is God's giant magnet to reconcile man with man, "thus making peace" (verse 15). Also, the Cross satisfies God's justice--Christ receiving the death penalty of sin in his ~~own~~ body in the place of sinners--which provides the basis for God's reconciliation with sinners.

Thus, the Cross is the basis of all reconciliation. Because the Cross satisfies God's justice, the Cross is Christ's appeal to God to forgive mankind. Sin has been punished in Christ. Being the just God that He is, God will not punish twice for one crime! The innocent one (Christ) has died for the guilty ones (sinners), therefore the alienated ones can become the reconciled ones. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Christ's death on the cross, providing atonement for sin, Christ is our door of access to the presence of God! Further, because the cross demonstrates God's love, the Cross is Christ's appeal to man to reconcile himself with his fellowman. "The work of Jesus is to show all men that God is their friend, and because God is their friend, that they must be friends with each other." (Daily Study Bible, Ephesians, p. 137; Barclay) The Cross of Christ both satisfies God's justice, regarding sin's punishment, and demonstrates God's love in the midst of sinners' hostility to one another.

"Greater love hath no one than this--that the sinless One would lay down His life for the sinful ones. O Christ, your sacrificial life and substitutionary death provide not only inspiration for change but power for moral transformation of my life. Your blood speaks peace to my sinful heart, and draws me to make peace with my fellowmen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The love of the invisible Christ will motivate me to express love to His visible creation!

LOVE--THE FOUNDATION OF PEACE!

Love, not law is the Foundation for Peace. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations." (Ephesians 2:14-15a)

Law divides because it is exclusive. Love unites because it is inclusive. The 'law' (Ephesians 2:15) which Christ abolished in his flesh, refers to man-made ceremonial laws. Man-made laws and regulations divide mankind, but God's love unites mankind. "The Jews believed that only by keeping the Jewish law was a man good, and only by so doing could he attain to the friendship and the fellowship of God. Now that law had been worked out into thousands and thousands of rules and regulations and commandments and decrees. . . A religion which is based on all kinds of rules and regulations, about sacred rituals and customs and practices and sacrifices and days can never be a universal religion. . . Jesus ended legalism as a principle of religion. And what did He put in its place? He put love to God and love to men. Jesus came to tell men that they cannot earn God's approbation by a keeping of the ceremonial law; that they must accept the love and forgiveness and fellowship which God in mercy freely offers them." (Daily Study Bible, Ephesians, p. 134; Barclay)

Love opens the door to all; Law closes the doors to most. Love destroys the barriers--the fences! "Rita Snowden tells a story of the war. In France some soldiers with their sergeant brought the body of a dead comrade to a French cemetery to have their friend buried there. The priest told them gently that it was a Roman Catholic cemetery, and he was bound to ask if their comrade had been baptized adherent of the Roman Catholic Church. They said that they did not know. The priest said that he was very sorry, but, if that was the case, he could not permit burial in his Churchyard. So the soldiers took their comrade sadly and buried him just outside the fence of the Churchyard. The next day they came back to see that the grave was all right, and to their astonishment they could not find it. They knew that it was only six feet from the fence of the burying ground, but search as they might they could find no trace of the freshly dug soil. As they were about to leave in perplexed bewilderment the priest came up. He told them that his heart had been troubled because of his refusal to allow their dead comrade to be buried in the Churchyard; so he told them that early in the morning he had risen from his bed, and with his own hands he had moved the fence to include the body of the soldier who had died for France. That is what love can do. The rules and regulations put up the fence; but love moved it. Jesus removed the fences between man and man because He abolished all religion that is founded on rules and regulations, and brought to men a religion whose foundation is love." (Ibid, p. 135)

"Father, you have destroyed the barriers which separated me from you. Now help me to tear down the 'fences' that separate me from my fellowmen. Make me a peacemaker--a 'bridge-builder', not a 'fence-constructor'! In Jesus' peaceful name. Amen!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will major on those things that bring me closer to my fellowmen; I will minimize those controversial issues that lead to division and misunderstanding with my fellowmen.

'UNITY AMIDST DIVERSITY'--THE MEANING OF PEACE

What does peace really mean? Does it mean that all individual differences between mankind are abolished? If persons are reconciled to one another, does this mean that all personal identity is lost and that all individual distinctives are sacrificed? Ephesians 2:15 says, "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace".

Christ came into the world "to create a new quality of thing which did not exist before. . .Jesus brings together Jew and Gentile and from them both produces one new kind of person. . .It is not that Jesus makes all Jews into Gentiles, or all Gentiles into Jews; He produces a new kind of person out of both, although they remain Gentiles and Jews. . .The unity which Jesus achieves is not achieved by blotting out all the racial and national characteristics; it is achieved by making all men of all nations into Christians. It may well be that we have something to learn here. The tendency has always been that when we send missionaries abroad we tend to produce people who wear English clothes and speak the English language and have an English education. There are indeed some missionary Churches who would have all their congregations worship with the one liturgy which is used in the Churches at home. But it is not Jesus' purpose that we should turn all men into one nation, but that there should be Christian Indians and Christian Africans, whose unity lies in their Christianity. The oneness in Christ is in Christ, and not in any external change." (Daily Study Bible, Ephesians, p. 136; Barclay)

Unity, not unison, is the meaning of peace. For instance, a symphony is great because there is unity (harmony) amidst differences in musical instruments. Another example: The Body is one, not because the body parts are the same, but because the body parts, though very different, work together to bring a harmonious functioning to the entire body (I Corinthians 12:12-31).

'Unity amidst diversity' is the meaning of peace. The Church is composed of many Christians, all of whom are different, but all of whom are to cooperate together for the over-all harmonious functioning of the entire Church. What does peace mean? It means unity in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-13). Differences between persons in the Church is what makes unity possible! If all persons were the same, there could at best only be unison! But unity amidst diversity is the meaning of peace. Never turning differences into barriers to communication! To be one in Christ is to appreciate one another's national, racial, cultural, religious, temperamental, age differences and to allow those differences to be used by God to benefit the entire body of Christ. Christ has come, not to destroy the God-created differences, but to destroy the sin-caused differences--the barriers caused by sin.

"Heavenly Father, you are the author of life with all of its rich variety. Help me to accept my uniqueness, and enable me to use my unique personality and gifts to contribute to the growth and edification of your Church and of your wonderful world. In Jesus' uniting name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I have a distinct contribution to make to my world, because I am a unique creature, created for a specific purpose. I will use my gifts, not to compete or to compare, but to complement and to serve the Body of Christ!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF JOY AND PEACE

1. Is it accurate to say that the 'last word' in Christianity is joy, not sorrow; self-realization, not self-surrender? Does a believer have a 'right' to experience joy in his life, in light of the fact that here is a 'cross' at the heart of Christianity? (Give Scriptural references to document your answer.)
2. What is the Greek meaning behind the word 'Joy', as it is used in the New Testament?
3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Joy is experienced, not by seeking it, but by seeking Christ and investing one's self in the interests of others".
4. Tell what is meant by the statement: "Joy comes from realizing what God has done for one in the past".
5. Is it accurate to say that one can never experience genuine joy unless and until he acknowledges the reality of real guilt in his life and openly confesses all his sins to Almighty God?
6. Do you personally identify with E. Stanley Jones' statement: "The best that I can say about myself is that I'm a Christian-in-the-making".
7. List ways in which God is constantly working in our lives as believers to perfect our character.
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "People who are always right are always wrong--wrong by their very attitude of being always right". Has it been your personal observation that the people who are most joyous as Christians are the same ones who are most 'open', transparent, humble, and ready to confess personal mistakes or sins?
9. Does the following statement reflect your personal testimony, as you have sought to experience genuine 'joy' in your personal life?—"The Lord's discipline, life's trials, personal confession--these are all working for my good and for God's glory. This gives me joy".
10. Illustrate from your personal life, the truth of the following statement: "Joy is all around us if we would only learn to see it in common things".
11. What are the spiritual realities which are the basis for the believer's sense of perpetual joy? (Note Matthew 28:20, Luke 12:32, I Corinthians 2:9, Revelation 21:1-7)
12. Is Christianity basically a life controlled by moral prohibitions and demands, or is Christianity basically a life motivated by divine love and empowered with divine energy?

13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "While God wants his creatures to be happy, we must realize that happiness is the sequel to or the by-product of holiness. Anything that goes against holiness, goes against happiness!"
14. Describe the worldly conception of 'happiness' and contrast this conception of happiness with the Christian's conception of 'happiness'.
15. After considering the apostle Paul's many sufferings and troubles (as listed in II Corinthians 11:23-33) why was it possible for Paul to say, "In all our troubles my joy knows no bounds" (II Corinthians 7:4)? Is it accurate to say that the 'happiness' of the non-believer depends upon the pleasant 'happenings' in his environment, whereas the joy of the Christian depends upon his living relationship with his God, independent of external circumstances? Can you personally testify to the fact that you have experienced 'Joy amidst Sorrow', because of your personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
16. What is happiness, according to your personal understanding and experience? Is your definition and description of happiness Biblically supportable?
17. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Happiness is doing God's will, regardless of the pleasure or the pain which accompany that commitment. Happiness is living responsibly, being faithful to one's commitments to God, to the Church, and to others, regardless of the pain or afflictions which such commitments incur".
18. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "Following Christ is not a 'joy ride' but is is a 'joy road'."
19. Is there any peace, any hope for a person upon whom the wrath and condemnation of God rests? Based upon an understanding of Romans 3:24-25,4:5 do you believe the following statement is accurate?--"Lasting and true peace is an internal condition of the human heart, given as a gift from God upon entering into a new relationship with Christ!"
20. Describe what is meant by the following statement: "The gift of God's peace is enjoyed in spite of circumstances". How does a study of Mark 4:35-41 help a believer to discover and to maintain the 'peace of God' in his life?
21. Illustrate from your personal life, as a believer, the truth of the following statement: "Peace is a gift of God which is maintained by centering one's attention on Christ and on the needs of others". (Note Isaiah 26:3)
22. Share several ways in which you, as a child of God, can be a true 'peace-maker' in the midst of a troubled and distressed world.
23. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following vivid statement: "The man who divides men is doing the devil's work; the man who unites men is doing God's work".
24. From a study of Ephesians 2:14-18, who is the Source of Peace, and what is the Instrument of Peace?

25. Share your understanding of the following statement: "The cross of Christ both satisfies God's justice, regarding sin's punishment, and demonstrates God's love in the midst of sinners' hostility to one another, thus motivating mankind to love one another."

26. Explain the meaning of the following statement, as it relates to Peace: "Law divides because it is exclusive. Love unites because it is inclusive".

27. If persons are reconciled to one another (Ephesians 2:15) does this mean that all personal identity is lost and that all individual distinctions are sacrificed? What is the difference between 'unity' and 'unison'? What does 'unity amidst diversity' mean, as this concept applies to the local Church?

28. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To be one in Christ is to appreciate one another's national, racial, cultural, religious, temperamental, age differences and to allow those differences to be used by God to benefit the entire body of Christ". To what extent can a single local Church include people of various cultures, races, temperaments, and classes within its fellowship? Has not experience shown that the constituency in most local Churches is very similar (i.e., homogeneous, rather than heterogeneous), and that it is almost impossible for any one local Church to grow without a basic commonality among its constituency? Is it possible to believe in the concept of 'unity amidst diversity' and still recognize that it is almost impossible for any one local Church to reach 'all types and temperaments'?

CHAPTER 11

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF PATIENCE AND KINDNESS

PATIENCE--NEVER GIVING IN TO DESPAIR!

Another fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) is Patience. Patience is one of the many rich dimensions of Love. Patience is love which can wait without despair and which can endure without resentment. We must look at both of these descriptions during the next few days.

The man of patience is the man whose spirit does not give in to despair. It is God's patience which breeds man's patience. God's patience is seen in His longsuffering with the sinful human race. Paul declared that he received mercy from God as an example of God's perfect patience (I Timothy 1:16). "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9, NIV)

Patterened after the patience of God, the Spirit-controlled person keeps on hoping, believing, and working with people, regardless of the odds and the obstacles, and the oppositions. Patience means persistence in loving people, regardless of human obstinacy and regardless of despairing circumstances.

Growth in love is growth in patience. To love truly means to wait persistently. Patience with sinners until they respond to God's call of repentance. Patience with believers until the slow growing fruit of the Spirit is evident in their lives. Patience with the Church until God's sanctifying power removes the spots and the stains and the wrinkles in it's corporate life. Patience with God's patience with an unbelieving world which seems bent on self-destruction.

Love can wait on God and can wait on people, and while waiting, work persistently as God's tool of redemption. Notes E. W. Sangster: "The saint never gives up. He goes on serving, loving, helping. . .He aches for souls. Neither indifference, nor slander, nor injury can stop him. He does not make a motive of gratitude. His great motive is his utter love of God". (Daily Readings, p. 134)

The Christian must cultivate the fruit of patience in his life if he is to work effectively with people. The believer need not lose hope or faith in people, for he knows that God is constantly working to perfect His good work of grace in people's lives. Because all believers are merely 'Christians in the making', progressively changing to become more like Christ, the man of God can be patient with those with whom he lives and works. 'Be patient, God is not finished with me yet' is a good motto for all believers to personalize.

Every shepherd of the flock of God is to practice patience with his people and persistence in his love, being faithful to the sheep during times of sickness as well as during times of health, during times of danger as well as during times of safety. He never grows tired in caring for his sheep, for he is patiently and lovingly dedicated to his sheep (John 10:12-13).

"Dear Lord, help me to believe in people, looking beyond what they are to what they can become in Christ! As you have suffered long with me, help me to be longsuffering with others. Help me to breathe faith into the faithless and love into the loveless."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because God has never given up on me, I must never give up on anyone else!

PATIENCE WITH PEOPLE

Patience is a distinctively Christian trait, resulting from being controlled by the Holy Spirit. We said yesterday that the man of patience is the man whose spirit does not give in to despair with people.

John Wesley spoke to this need for a steadfast spirit which will never give in to despair. "You that are diligent in this labour of love, see that you be not discouraged, although, after you have used your best endeavours, you should see no present fruit. You have need of patience, and then, 'after ye have done the will of God' herein, the harvest will come. Never be 'weary of well-doing; in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not'. Copy after Abraham, who 'against hope, still believed in hope. Cast thy bread upon the water, and after many days thou shalt find it again'." (Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching, vol. 3, p. 34)

An old saint of God for years wrote me almost monthly, and the recurring phrase of exhortation in her letters was: "Keep on keeping on!" One can wait patiently without falling into despair, if he believes that God is faithful to His promises. Because Abraham believed in God's faithful character, he 'patiently endured'. In the end, the promise was fulfilled.

One can work patiently with people if he is committed to Christ's unchangeable love. The question has been asked of some faithful Christians, "How can you work, decade after decade, with people who are so changeable, without despairing?" In answering that honest question, let it be honestly acknowledged that the temptation to despair is a real and recurring temptation to any Christian leader who is deeply involved with helping people. Any Christian leader who works long and closely with people knows how changeable and unpredictable human nature can be. The ever-present temptation to despair is best countered through commitment to Christ's unchangeableness and integrity. Christ promised to build His Church, and therefore not even the gates of hell can prevail against His Church. Christ promised to cleanse and to perfect and to sanctify His Church, and therefore not even the faithlessness and sinfulness of man can destroy God's purpose for His Church. (Ephesians 5:25-27) Because Christ believes in the Church, and because Christ has declared that the Church will endure and grow (in spite of problems within and without), the Christian leader can remain patient with people and can work without despair to build the Kingdom of God.

To be patient with people means to like people, to make allowances for people's faults (Ephesians 4:2-3), to be tenderhearted and forgiving (Ephesians 4:31-32), and to patiently believe in imperfect people.

"Father, I confess that I desire to be known as a fruitful, successful worker in your spiritual vineyard. Cleanse me from my inordinate desires to be 'successful', and help me instead to be faithful to your divine call to love people, regardless of the visible results of such loving. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Love never fails, so when I truly love people 'in the Spirit', I am always successful, regardless of the tangible results of such loving!

LOVE WHICH NEVER GIVES UP!

Patience is that Spirit-cultivated quality in the life of the earnest Christian which enables him never to give up in his care for people, regardless of the imperfections in saints or the outright oppositions of sinners.

"There are the 'perfectionists' who 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!

"Jesus was patient with and hopeful for the weak and the faltering and the sinful. And yet he did not compromise with and accommodate himself to their imperfections and sins, for he held them to victory and not defeat, perfection not imperfection--and led them to it!

"That was what I needed: someone who would accept me with all my imperfections and yet hold me to perfection. . . I could be imperfect and accepted as such by my Redeemer, but I could be held to perfection by my Redeemer whose grace would be set to work at producing it. And this subsidiary note: I would treat others as Christ treats me. I would accept them as they are but expect them into expectancy, hope them into hope of being different, believe them into believing they could grow up to the crown I am holding above their heads. I would be able to live with my imperfect self without chafing and to work with imperfect colleagues without discouragement or without losing my temper." (A Song of Ascents, p. 39-40; E. S. Jones)

If there is need to accept people in spite of their imperfections, there is even a greater need patiently to love people in spite of their sins. "God gave this mighty love to Catherine Booth. Even as a girl, she said that she was willing to die for her father's salvation. . . She said that the all-absorbing question of her husband's life (and it was no less true of herself) was how best to reach and save the masses. Many a time she cried, 'O! the value of souls! They are worth all the trouble and sacrifice involved--yea, a thousand times over'. . . Or consider the life of John Woolman, the Quaker saint. His biographer says: 'The keynote of his message was always and ever love. Love to God and love to man. This single note runs through his life and writings like a silver thread'. It was still true of him when he came to die. On his deathbed he had no pre-occupation about heaven: no mention of crowns, harps, raptures 'but the same tender and touching concern for suffering humanity, relieved only by the thought of the paternity of God, and His love and omnipotence'." (Daily Readings, p. 134; Sangster)

"Father, fill me with so much of your love that I will see the saint in every sinner, and love each sinner with the very persistence of divineline love. May love be the single note that runs through my life. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My goal for life: To condemn no sinner, to condone no sin, to love all unconditionally and persistently!

LOVE NEVER GIVES WAY TO VENGEANCE

Christian patience is not only the spirit which will not give in to despair with people, but further, it is the spirit which will never give way to vengeance. Christian patience has been defined as the spirit which could take revenge if it liked, but utterly refuses to do so. Patience is that spirit which will never retaliate. In Christian thought, the big man is not the man of vengeance, but the man of forgiveness. The violence of our Western culture is in direct violation to the Christian quality of patience. In secular culture, might is right. The prize goes to the strongest. The big man is defined as the man who goes all out for vengeance. The mighty man--the man of importance--is the man who tolerates no insult or injury.

The Bible says that the truly great man is the man who is possessed of love. He returns good for evil. He refuses to reap vengeance upon his persecutors, even though he could. To simply illustrate, have you ever seen a big dog harassed by a small dog? The big dog takes the harassment patiently, even though the big dog has within his power the ability to tear up the little dog.

God's loving, forbearing, forgiving, patient attitude toward sinful mankind is the attitude which every believer is to reproduce in his life. "If God had been a man He would have taken His hand and wiped out this world long ago; but God has that patience which bears with all our sinning and which will not cast us off." (Daily Study Bible, Galatians, p. 56; Barclay)

God delayed His judgment many times throughout history, providing opportunity for men to repent of their sins. God loves the loveless; He suffers long with unregenerate man. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." (Psalms 103:8) God waited 120 years before sending the flood, to allow Noah's generation to repent. God suffered long in giving Sodom and Gomorrah opportunity to repent. He would have saved those cities if only ten righteous souls could have been found (Genesis 18). God spared the ancient pagan city of Ninevah from destruction when the inhabitants repented of their sins under the powerful preaching of Jonah. Romans 2:4 talks about God's great patience with sinful mankind. "Don't you realize how patient he is being with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see that he has been waiting all this time without punishing you, to give you time to run from your sin? His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." (Romans 2:4, Living Bible)

When Jesus' disciples were rejected in a certain Samaritan town, they wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the inhabitants, but Jesus said that their spirit of vengeance was very wrong. Jesus suffered long with even those who rejected Him. Jeremiah suffered in unbelievable ways because of persecutors who rejected his prophesies. He was called the 'weeping prophet'. Are we able to weep over the lost rather than impatiently reject them?

"Help me to weep over the erring ones, to lift up the fallen, to tell them of Jesus the Mighty to save! Help me to bear with the insults of the ungrateful and to love the loveless for Jesus' sake."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When my patience grows thin with people, I will take a closer look at the eyes of Jesus!

MOTIVATION FOR PATIENCE

We have spent several days describing the Biblical meaning of Patience. Patience, we have said, is that steadfast spirit which will never give in to despair. Further, it is that loving spirit which will never give way to vengeance. We must now look at the motivation for practicing such patience.

First, God's longsuffering with sinful mankind is our strongest motivation to practice patience with people. One great preacher said that if God has any 'weakness', it is His great mercy. God patiently spares His wrath and extends His mercy, calling men and nations to repentance. Even with those who refuse to repent and who finally perish, the Bible says that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23,32). Notes the great preacher Charles Finney, concerning the patience of God with sinners: "God never frets--is never impatient. His love is so deep and so great that He is always patient. Sometimes, when parents have unfortunate children--poor objects of compassion--they can bear with anything from them; but when they are very wicked, they seem to feel that they are quite excusable for being impatient. In God's case, these are not unfortunate children, but are intensely wicked--intelligently wicked. But oh, His amazing patience--so set upon their good, so desirous of their highest welfare, that however they abuse Him, He sets himself to bless them still, and weep them down, and melt them into penitence and love, by the death of His Son in their stead." (Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching, vol. 3, p. 334)

Second, the believer is motivated to remain patient with people because he is convinced that God's power is great to change human nature. Confidence in God's power to transform human nature, both instantaneously and gradually, gives a basis for patience in working with people. God is willing patiently to work with people in order to produce change, and therefore we too can learn to be patient with people while they are changing.

Third, God's ultimate triumph over all evil is our motivation to practice patience. The believer can be patient with people--both the righteous and the unrighteous--for he knows that God will have the final word at the end of time. Though wrong seems often so strong, God is Ruler yet. Though evil tries the souls of the righteous, the godly man can wait patiently upon God to bring judgment upon unchecked wrong and blessing upon unrewarded good. In the end, the wheat shall be separated from the tares. All wrong will be righted, all unrepented sin will be punished, and all the proud will be brought low. We need not fret ourselves because of evildoers (Psalms 37), for their certain end is destruction. All evil will be judged and Christ's righteousness will be vindicated. All knees shall someday bow before the Lord, and all tongues will confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of lords (Philippians 2:10-11).

"Father, I see now that Patience is a divine enablement, not a human attainment, and yet I realize that I must cooperate with You in cultivating His spiritual grace in my life. Help me to surrender to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to control my life. Then I--even I--will be able to work with people without despair, to experience love without resentment, and to suffer without complaint."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The fruit of patience is the fruit of holy love, produced by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I will not try harder to be patient, but I will trust more in the Holy Spirit who will produce patience with me.

KINDNESS IN COMPASSION TOWARD OTHERS

"The Greeks defined this quality as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbor's affairs as it does of its own. Kindness is as concerned with the feelings of other people, as it is with its own feelings. It is as concerned with the sorrows, the struggles, the problems of other people, as it is with its own. Kindness has learned the secret of looking outwards all the time, and not inwards." (Daily Study Bible, Ephesians, p. 189; Barclay)

Notes William Sangster, ". . .if the professing followers of Christ are more concerned to maintain their own standard of living (four meals a day, cars, TV, etc.) than to serve a second meal a day for the hungry multitudes of the East. . .how hard it is for despised and suffering people to believe in Christianity at all. Talk of 'abundant' life sounds like a cruel joke, and the offer of 'salvation' smells of hypocrisy". (Daily Readings, p. 243)

Kindness always begins in the home, perhaps one of the more difficult places consistently to practice kindness. Kindness in common courtesies, kindness through a smile, kindness in a sincere compliment, kindness in a kind act or a secret prayer. Kindness can be demonstrated every day in the home.

A personal friend of mine, a godly woman in her 80's shared with me recently a personal secret from her past life, that illustrates this selfless spirit of kindness in the home. She had the misfortune of a divorce early in her life, and consequently had to raise her children by herself, which was very difficult financially. She struggled even to have enough food to place on the table for her growing children. She shared with me that many days she herself would go without food in order to make it possible to feed her children. Her children, she said, never realized that many times she would eat only one meal a day in order to have more food for them.

Here is an illustration of motherly kindness, a kindness that involved sacrifice and love. Kindness means "the quality which thinks far more of others than of itself. . .the sweetness of temper which puts others at ease and shrinks from giving pain." (Daily Study Bible, II Corinthians, p. 216; Barclay)

The classic illustration of kindness is recorded in Genesis 26:17-22. Here is found the account of Isaac's willingness to give another his dug wells, rather than justly disputing over the wells which rightfully belonged to him. No spirit of fighting for personal rights, but rather a surrender of rights, allowing others the advantage. Seeking the welfare of theirs rather than one's own welfare! Seeking to live at peace with others, if at all possible, even if this means giving up personal rights! Kindness thinks more of others than it thinks of itself.

"Spirit of the Living God, I ask you to daily cultivate in me your noble fruit of kindness. Help me to be concerned with the feelings of others, and reach out a helping hand to meet the practical needs of others. Deliver me from mere sentimentality, and enable me to be concrete in expressions of love. In the compassionate name of Jesus, I make these requests. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Christianity that does not work itself out in deeds, is like a bell that is never rung and like a song that is never sung.

KINDNESS IN EXPECTATION FROM OTHERS

Jesus said, "My yoke is easy (chrestos--kindly) and my burden is light". (Matthew 11:30) The word translated 'easy' is the same word which can be translated 'good', 'pleasant', 'kindly'.

"The yoke was tailor-made to fit the ox. . .What Jesus says is, 'The life I give you to live is not a burden to gall you; your task, your life, is made to measure to fit you'. Whatever God sends to us is made to fit our needs and our abilities exactly; God has a task for every one of us, which is made to measure for us." (Daily Study Bible, Matthew, vol. 2, p. 19; Barclay)

Jesus' yoke is a kind yoke, i.e., it fits us perfectly. Jesus has a Yoke for everyone. It is this work--yoke--which gives dignity to each person. "No matter how despised a person or creature may be, Christ has a use for him. . .No matter how ordinary, ill-educated, disfigured, ill-born, one-talented or obscure a man or woman may be, Christ has a use for them, and He gives them dignity by that use." (Daily Readings, p. 85; Sangster)

Applying the kindness of Jesus to our own lives, the truly kind person will allow his fellowmen to be yoked by God for service, not yoked by man's ideas. Kindness is having realistic expectations for others. Kindness means allowing others the liberty to be the self which God created them to be and to do the work--i.e., wear the yoke--which God has designed for them to do, without forcing one's own preconceived molds upon others.

Apply this definition of kindness in the home of human relationships. "Joe Senior is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Yale Law School. Joe Junior is seventeen. Joe Senior's dream is that Joe Junior will work into his law firm. There's only one problem: Joe Junior has no apparent aptitude for law. In fact, he has very little inclination toward academic pursuits of any kind. Joe Senior constantly rides him, trying to motivate him to academic excellence. He has used pressure, insult, compliment, and even bribery to achieve his goal, but nothing works.

"On the other hand Joe Junior has a special talent. He can lift the hood of a car, take the engine apart, and put it back together again. He's a brilliant mechanic, but never once has Joe Senior given him recognition for his abilities. In his own way this young man is gifted--gifted by God!" (Becoming A Whole Family, p. 73; Huffman)

To be kind is not to force unrealistic expectations upon others, or to force the yoke upon others which does not fit another's aptitudes or abilities or God-given gifts. Being kind to one another means accepting each other for the unique self which God has created in each person.

"Father, help me never to impose my own convictions, notions, or expectations upon others, but instead, help me to accept each person as a unique creation, with unique contributions to make in your wonderful world."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Christ's yoke is my yearning, for I am only happy when I am wearing His yoke.

KINDNESS IN TREATMENT OF OTHERS

There is a type of Christianity which is critical and harsh and legalistic. As in Jesus' day, there are still religious people who are adept at manifesting a rough spirit, all in the name of morality and justice. Such people would never offer a shoulder for you to weep upon!

Make no mistake about it; there are times when love must be expressed in forms of discipline, as when Jesus drove out the moneychangers with whips! However, more times than not, it is not whips, but words of tenderness and forgiveness which Jesus used to draw people to the heart of God!

We must never lose our ability to be indignant with holy love, and we must be able to whip our will into a holy campaign against sin when the occasion demands it. But too many times we find it easier to identify with the critical, self-righteous crowd who wanted to stone the condemned adulterous woman, than we do to identify with the kind-hearted Christ who spoke words of love and forgiveness to the guilty woman. The crowds' stones would have broken her body, but Jesus' love broke her heart. "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." Those were the kind words. Here is the sweetness of Jesus' temper which put the woman at ease and which shrank back from causing her needless pain. The pain of her shame and guilt was enough to drive her to repentance. No need for the infliction of the cruel pain of a self-righteous judgment. Jesus' kindness healed the woman! The kindness of Jesus' followers will also heal the broken-hearted today!

There are still those professed followers of Jesus--followers in name rather than in spirit--who are more concerned about the letter of the law than about the spirit of the law, more concerned about justice than about mercy, more adept in inflicting pain than in applying the salve of healing.

It is true that there is no place for compromise with sin, but it is also true that there is no place for discourtesy with sinners. While hating sin intensely, let us love sinners tenderly, and treat sinners with that courtesy which befits the Christian gentleman.

God is kind. He is not harsh. He came not to condemn, but to save. He is only severe after his mercy and love are ultimately spurned. Whenever Jesus was severe with the Pharisees, it was only a form of kindness, a kindness that sought through drastic means to awaken the complacent and to induce him to repentance. As God is kind, so must Christians be kind. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)

"Father, never allow me to mistake harshness for justice, or sentimentality for kindness. Help me to be kind to sinners without compromising truth, and instructive to the complacent without sacrificing kindness."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will seek to be kind without being morally soft, and disciplined without being morally rigid.

THE WINNING WAY OF KINDNESS!

I once read about a devout Christian who was riding on a train, sitting in a seat next to an unbeliever who was taking one drink of alcohol after another. The unbeliever asked the Christian if he would like to have a drink. "No thanks", replied the Christian. Before the unbeliever took his second drink, he asked the Christian if he would like to have a drink. Again, the Christian replied, "No thank you". A third time the unbeliever asked the Christian if he would like to have a drink, and again the Christian replied, "No thank you". Then the unbeliever said to the Christian, "You must think I am a terrible person". The kind-hearted Christian answered, "No, I didn't think you were a terrible person. As a matter of fact, I thought you were a friendly and generous person to offer me a drink three different times!"

This Christian could have proceeded to give the non-Christian a moral lecture on the evils of alcohol. He could have condemned the poor fellow. Criticism could have poured forth from the lips of the Christian. But instead, words of love and kindness and graciousness came from the Christian. Of course the believer was not condoning the fact of drinking alcohol, but neither was he critical and condemning of the person whose habit was harmful.

Jesus loved the sinner and was called 'a friend of publicans and sinners'. He accepted them unconditionally and His kindness won their hearts to God. More people are won to God through acts of kindness than by words of criticism. 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. Healing of the troubled or sinful person takes place, not in the atmosphere of criticism or self-righteousness, but in the atmosphere of mutual caring and sharing.

The kind person seeks to put others at ease, and always avoids inflicting needless pain upon others. This does not mean that wrong in others is denied or that sin is condoned. But the kind Christian is quick to see faults and sins in himself first, before pointing out sins in others. When the Christian is willing, according to James 5:16, to engage in self-incrimination, open sharing, and humble confession, then the wrong-doer will be motivated to do the same. Confession is contagious. It is the humble and kind and open person who will win the sinner for Christ!

Never be harsh, or bitter, or critical, or condemning. Have mercy. Be sweet in your spirit, never compromising with sin but also never treating the sinner roughly or discourteously. Provide a shoulder for hurting people to weep upon!

"Father, just as your kindness led me to repentance, use my Spirit-inspired kindness to lead the careless to you. Make my kindness robust and enduring, expressed with no appetite for praise and gratitude from men, but with a desire to reveal the kind heart of God to all."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will seek to treat all persons in the same way God treats me--kindly and mercifully!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF PATIENCE AND KINDNESS

1. Define and describe the Biblical concept of 'Patience'.
2. The believer who is seeking to cultivate the fruit of patience, is to exercise patience with whom? (List at least four different persons or groups of persons, and describe how Christlike 'patience' is expressed with each one of these four.)
3. Is the following description (by William Sangster) of the patience of a 'saint' too idealistic or is it realistic, considering the Bible's teachings and considering the 'possibilities of grace'?--"The saint never gives up. He goes on serving, loving, helping. . .He aches for souls. Neither indifference, nor slander, nor injury can stop him. He does not make a motive of gratitude. His great motive is his utter love of God."
4. What considerations must a Christian worker keep in mind when he is working with 'fallible human beings' in order that he might not lose hope or faith in people or become embittered and cynical?
5. List some of the noble traits in the life of a good leader ('shepherd' of men's souls). (Note John 10:12-13.)
6. How does the example of Abraham provide motivation for a hard waking Christian to continue persistently to perform acts of loving service and witnessing, even though quick or visible results may not be forthcoming from such earnest efforts? (Note Galatians 6:9-10)
7. How does a Christian worker's commitment to Christ's unchangeable love help enable such a worker to work, decade after decade, with people who are so changeable, without despairing?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Love never fails, so when I truly love people 'in the Spirit' I am always successful, regardless of the tangible results of such loving!"
9. From a Biblical viewpoint, do you believe that the following statement accurately describes 'Patience'? "Patience is that Spirit-cultivated quality in the life of the earnest Christian which enables him never to give up in his care for people, regardless of the imperfections in saints or the outright oppositions of sinners."
10. Describe and define 'Perfectionists'.
11. With what attitude did Jesus, as a Man, relate to the weak and the faltering and the sinful person of his day? What is there about the model of Jesus, as He worked with faltering and sinful persons, that will help you, as a Christian worker, to live with your "imperfect self without chafing and to work with imperfect colleagues without discouragement or without losing your temper"?

12. Is the following a worthy and Biblically-supportable goal for a believer to strive constantly to reach?--"To condemn no sinner, to condone no sin, to love all unconditionally and persistently."
13. What is the Christian concept, in contrast to the secular concept, of true 'Manliness', in terms of aggression, strength, and vengeance?
14. List several Biblical examples of the manifestations of God's patience and longsuffering with sinful mankind.
15. List several motivations for believers to practice Christian Patience.
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If the professing followers of Christ are more concerned to maintain their own standard of living (four meals a day, cars, TV, etc.) than to secure a second meal a day for the hungry multitudes of the East. . .how hard it is for despised and suffering people to believe in Christianity at all." Is exercise of the fruit of 'Kindness' in the life of a believer (in terms of showing compassion and practical concern for the poor) consistent with a luxurious lifestyle?
17. What are the characteristics of 'Kindness', as illustrated in Genesis 26:17-22?
18. Tell what is meant by the statement, "Jesus' yoke is a 'kind' yoke".
19. What is your personal response or reaction to the following description of 'Kindness'?--"Kindness means allowing others the liberty to be the self which God created them to be and to do the work--i.e., wear the yoke--which God has designed for them to do, without forcing one's own preconceived molds upon others."
20. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There are still those professed followers of Jesus--followers in name rather than in spirit--who are more concerned about the letter of the law than about the spirit of the law, more concerned about justice than about mercy, more adept in inflicting pain than in applying the salve of healing".
21. What 'place' does the expression of Christian courtesy have in the life of a Spirit-filled, kindly-oriented believer? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is true that there is no place for compromise with sin, but it is also true that there is no place for discourtesy with sinners".
22. In counselling a troubled or sinful person, why should a Christian counsellor avoid appearing critical or harsh or judgmental towards the counsellee? Tell why 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. Healing of the troubled or sinful person takes place, not in the atmosphere of criticism, but in the atmosphere of mutual caring and sharing and confession."

CHAPTER 12

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF GOODNESS AND FAITHFULNESS

MORAL INDIGNATION IN CHRISTIAN GOODNESS

The fruit of the Spirit is Goodness. Goodness, as listed among the fruits of the Spirit, is speaking of a moral quality. It is speaking of moral goodness and justice and right in contrast to moral evil.

The Spirit-controlled person, like Jesus, is to have a high regard for justice and right. Moral sensitivity in an age of moral relativism, where moral distinctives are blurred, there is a need for a declaration of moral absolutes. In an age of easy toleration, there is need for strong convictions and a rejection of the false. In an age where so many are doing that which is right in their own eyes, there is need for the prophetic voice which declares "Thus saith the Lord!" When men turn all the 'blacks' and 'whites' into pale 'grays', there is need for clear thinking and a renewed emphasis upon the morally good and the morally bad. The believer must never deny the legitimate existence of some moral relatives, personal convictions, individual preferences, and cultural tastes, but neither must the believer deny the fact of moral absolutes and universal principles, which apply to all persons, in all societies, in all ages. Adultery is just as wrong today as it was when the Ten Commandments were first given.

The person who is cultivating the fruit of Christian Goodness in his life, is the person who has a strength of moral character, a sensitivity to right and wrong. He has a strong sense of justice and righteousness. He is aware of the moral issues, and he seeks good and right solutions in the moral arena of individual and corporate relationships. He seeks to apply Christian truth to the difficult problems in society. He has a toughness of moral fiber in his character. He is not easily swayed by society's majority opinions. His awakened conscience seeks for the right, not merely for the popular, solutions to moral problems. He is morally upright, intellectually alert, decisive in moral decision-making.

The man of goodness knows that his strong sense of moral oughtness originates in the Divine Mind. What is morally right, therefore, for him, is morally right for all, for, since the Divine Mind rules all the world, what is morally right for one individual is also morally right for all individuals.

The man of Christian Goodness is a champion for righteousness and justice for all persons. The man whose goodness is being strongly exercised is the man who is seeking justice and right for all people. The man of goodness honestly faces the moral and social issues of his day. He is eager, with all good men, to see righteousness prevail in the lives and institutions of men. He is zealous of good deeds.

"Father, help me to cultivate every fruit of the Spirit in a balanced way. The goodness of kindness tempers justice with mercy and does not allow the goodness of righteousness, which seeks to destroy sinful practices, to destroy sinful men in the process. Cultivate both the fruit of tender kindness and the fruit of tough righteousness in my life. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The balanced cultivation of moral goodness with tender kindness will enable me to champion holy causes with a holy spirit.

MOTIVATION FOR CHRISTIAN GOODNESS

Why do people attempt to live good lives, lives characterized by good deeds? There are many motivations to do good. There are those who are 'good' simply because their friends are good, or because they are afraid of the consequences of wrong-doing. Others have a higher motive; they are 'good' because of duty. "His jaw is set; his eye looks straight ahead; he has but one purpose. Up the flinty way he comes. He passes the craven and the invertebrate. He is on that path because it is right to be on the path. He doesn't claim to enjoy it. 'Enjoyment' is a word he doesn't often use. He braces himself at the thought of duty and steadily but joylessly. . .he passes by." (Daily Readings, p. 254; Sangster)

Duty may be a noble motivation, but it is not the highest motivation for doing good. "Duty alone may produce the type of character that is cold and unattractive, the sort of man of whom we say, 'Yes, he is a good man--undoubtedly a good man, but I don't want to be like him'." (Ibid, p. 266)

There is a higher motive than duty. It is the motivation of love. There are those who are good (in terms of moral righteousness and in terms of personal winsomeness) because they are controlled by God's love. The goodness of these persons is distinctive and attractive because, just as fruit grows by abiding on the vine, so the goodness of these persons is the effortless product of abiding in the Holy Spirit. The Psalmist said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." (Psalms 40:8) The believer, whose goodness is Spirit-induced, is "impelled by love, glad to serve, happy to do His will". He is "on the path (of righteousness) because he loves it. He comes along at a swinging gait. There is a spring in his step. He barely notices the paths that lead aside. His whole bearing suggests a joyous adventure and not a perilous pilgrimage". (Ibid, p. 254)

Thus, the goodness of the love-filled, Spirit-controlled believer is the goodness of delight, not the goodness of mere duty, or the goodness motivated by fear or convention or custom.

Mere human goodness--i.e., good deeds performed in the name of mere human compassion--is tainted with pride. Those who seek to work their way to heaven by keeping a moral code or by performing enough 'good turns' or by taking pride in ethical achievements, are working in vain. How easy it is for pride to take a hold on even 'good people'! Isaiah wrote, "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags". (Isaiah 64:6) We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ--to do good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). But the good works of moral goodness are not meritorious; they are appropriate manifestations of a son's love for a Good Father. ". . .if the path of ethical achievement is deliberately chosen, and a man comes to have pride in his achievement, we are back at the sin of Pharasaism again." (Ibid, p. 235)

"Heavenly Father, fill me with so much love for you that I will become unselfconscious in my concerns for others, and uncalculating in my work for you. Let my labors be the labors of love, not the labors of duty."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all!"

ATTITUDE IN CHRISTIAN GOODNESS

Goodness, as we have noted, is not anemic sentimentality. Goodness is moral sensitivity, a holy anger channeled into moral action and reform. The fruit of Christian goodness is wrought with moral strength. Christian goodness is the goodness which can love the sinner tenderly and, at the same time, hate his sin intensely. While destroying the instruments of sin, the man of moral goodness must not destroy the sinner himself. Men of goodness are concerned in moral righteousness. Therefore, they never lose their ability to be indignant with holy love. Good men must be able to whip their will into a holy campaign against sin when the occasion demands it! There are still times when love must be expressed in forms of discipline, as when Jesus drove out the moneychangers with a whip! Those priests who were shamelessly exploiting the poor and humble pilgrims raised the temperature of Jesus' wrath!

The goodness of Jesus was the goodness of both moral righteousness and tender compassion. Let us always remember that Jesus' goodness was not only morally strong, as shown by His act of driving out those who were turning the Temple into a bazaar, but that Jesus' goodness was also tender and kind, as shown by His act of healing the blind and the lame who came to the Temple (Matthew 21:14). Notes Barclay about this incident: "Only those with guilty consciences fled before the eyes of his wrath. Those who needed him stayed. Need is never sent empty away by Jesus Christ. Jesus' anger was never merely negative; it never stopped with the attack on that which was wrong; it always went on to the positive helping of those who were in need. In the truly great man anger and love go hand in hand. There is anger at those who exploit the simple and bar the seeker; there is love for those whose need is great. The destructive force of anger must always go hand in hand with the healing power of love." (Daily Study Bible, Matthew, vol. 2, p. 248) In the midst of His moral toughness, Jesus never lost tenderness for the morally weak and the spiritually degenerate.

It is possible to be morally good and yet lack loveliness, attractiveness, and graciousness in the expression of moral righteousness. It is possible to speak out prophetically against adultery or drunkenness, for instance, and yet in the process lack tenderness and love for the fallen one. It is possible to be practically and morally good and yet not be aesthetically good. To be aesthetically good is to be attractive, winsome, and lovely in one's actions of good. The goodness of justice and righteousness seeks to destroy personal and institutional evils. The goodness of kindness and mercy, on the other hand, attracts the sinner away from his sin to the loveliness of Christ. The man of Christian goodness needs both kinds of goodness in his life.

"Father, never allow your warm love in my heart to be chilled by the rigour and coldness of my moral codes. While upholding strict moral principles, keep me tender and responsive to people who are morally broken by sin."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: It is my desire to shed a sympathizing tear for sinners without holding any sympathy in my heart for sin!

AGENDA FOR CHRISTIAN GOODNESS

We have said that the performance of good deeds without the sweetness of holy love is not acceptable to God! Let us be actively involved in the good deeds of morality and work to right social wrongs and destroy the evil works of evil men. But, while we campaign for social righteousness, let us be motivated by love. In championing moral good, let us be good in our tempers--loving, attractive, winsome. The toughness of moral pronouncements always must be tempered by the sweetness of a holy temper. We must be both morally good and aesthetically good.

It is a strong moral sense of right and wrong which motivates the man of goodness to work tirelessly to right wrongs and to champion social righteousness. Truth, motivated by God's love, must find expression, as it encounters falsehood and deception and corruption. This brings us to a brief discussion of the agenda for Christian Goodness.

What determines the moral agenda of goodness? The answer to that question obviously depends upon the person and the age in which the person lives. The agenda for moral goodness changes with the temper and climate and condition of the ages, but there will always be a need for a strong expression of moral goodness. Each believer must discover where he is to express his moral goodness within the moral arena of his day. The moral issues which good men must be involved in today are many and complex. Each one must become sensitive to those issues and become involved as God leads.

Take one of many moral issues that could be discussed--that of Poverty. Notes David McKenna: "At the national level, the priority question is created by the evidence that the rising gross national product will make it possible to alleviate the conditions of poverty if we choose. As the non-violent black protesters have illustrated, the twenty-four billion dollars that was spent to put a man on the moon could also have tipped the scale in the relief of the poor during the same decade, if poverty had been the national priority.

"Actually, Christians should be leaders in the war on poverty. They have the motive of Christ who made the poor His people. They have the cultural ethic which protects against give-away programs that destroy human initiative. They have the Biblical perspective for sharing their wealth with a brother in need.

"Even skeptics would listen to the gospel according to affluent Christians who set their standard of living at the level of basic needs and gave the difference to the poor. . .Simplicity is the key. In the midst of shortages, simple needs, simple trust, and a simple life will fill our horn of plenty." (Awake, My Conscience, p. 94-95; David McKenna)

"Father, show me where you want me to become involved in applying the healing salve of the Gospel to the gaping wounds of social hurts. Give me knowledge to know, courage to fight, patience to endure, and love to suffer--all for the purpose of fulfilling your redemptive purposes for your world. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will allow the Holy Spirit to awaken my conscience to the needs of suffering persons around me today.

THE HIGH CALL TO FAITHFULNESS

The fruit of the Spirit is love. What is Love? Love is joy, Love is peace, Love is patience. Love is kindness. Love is goodness. We must now look at another dimension of love. Love is faithfulness or fidelity.

That faithfulness is a description of love should come as no surprise to us. Look at the groom and bride at the marriage altar. The groom is deeply in love with the bride. But love is more than a temporary feeling. Love is a lifetime commitment to fidelity! "Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her, so long as you both shall live?" Faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty--these are inseparably connected with true love. The person who is Spirit-controlled is the one who is faithful in his relationship and responsibilities. Faithful in obeying his Master. Faithful in serving his world. Faithful in fulfilling his personal ideals. He who loves truly is he who serves faithfully.

There are perils in life which threaten fidelity. The Spirit-controlled Christian must remain faithful to God's call regardless of apparent success, regardless of the changes and the chances of life, regardless of persecution in its many forms.

Success, or lack of success, can cause us to become unfaithful to our high call in Christ Jesus. Lack of apparent success causes some to despair, and too much success causes others to become smug and complacent and proud. Failure or success must not be our main consideration in confronting a task. Faithfulness to God's call must be our sole concern. We are not called to be successful, as the world records success; we are called to be faithful to Jesus Christ! The one who is faithful to Christ Jesus, may or may not be considered successful in the eyes of the world, but such a person, from God's perspective, is truly successful.

By the world's standards Jesus was a failure--rejected by His own people and crucified on a shameful cross! And yet Jesus was faithful to His God-given call. Said Jesus: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4)

From God's perspective, Jesus was the most successful person who ever lived! Why? Because He fulfilled His God-given mission in life. He was faithful in obedience to God, faithful in service to His world, and faithful in reaching His God-given goals. Faithful to God, to others, and to Himself! He learned obedience and faithfulness by the things which He suffered, and He has forever been declared the greatest success in history!

In our success-oriented society, let's follow Jesus' example!

"O God, don't allow me to prostitute my divinely-given call on the altar of worldly success. Close my ears to the world's call to power, prestige, wealth, and fame, and open my ears to the voice of the Spirit who is calling me to follow in the footsteps of the Master, whose glory followed His suffering."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will repudiate the world's standards of success and accept God's standards for success--faithfulness and obedience!

BEING 'SUCCESSFUL' OR BEING FAITHFUL?

In our success-oriented society, if certain tangible results are not achieved within a prescribed time, then one is pronounced as a failure. From God's perspective, tangible results are not to be despised. But if a Christian labors diligently and prays fervently, and yet there are no tangible results forthcoming, he is not to abandon His God-given task. He is to remain faithful to His Lord, with or without tangible results!

How easy it is to become discouraged and eventually 'throw in the towel' if we don't see results from our spiritual labors! On the other hand, how easy it is to grow smug, complacent, or self-sufficient if we see many tangible results from our spiritual labors! The Spirit-filled man is faithful, regardless of man's applause or man's scorn. He is faithful, regardless of his temptation to despair when seeming to fail, and regardless of his temptation to pride, when seeming to succeed.

Notes E. Stanley Jones: "A great many people go through life in bondage to success. They are in mortal dread of failure. Why should they be? Jesus cared little about success or failure . . . A faith that has a cross at its center cannot be a faith that worships success. I do not have to succeed; I have only to be true to the highest I know--success and failure are in the hands of God. On my way to India, I once said in England: 'The romance of missions has gone for me. I know what I'm up against. If you should say to me that I go back to India to see nothing but frustration and failure and that I would see no more fruit whatever, I would reply: "That is an incident. I have the call of God to India, and to be true to that call is my one business; success and failure are not my business--to be true is"'. (Abundant Living, p. 82

Paul the apostle had a high sense of divine call in his life. Faithfulness to that call was all-important to Paul. He focused his attention on God, not on man's praise or on man's persecution. Both in happy times and in hard times, Paul was faithful to his divine commission to preach the Gospel regardless of life's changing circumstances. Faithful when he appeared to be successful and when he didn't appear to be successful. Faithfulness to God was the ruling motive of his life--not success! Said Paul, "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ." (Philippians 3:8, RSV) Many missionaries have labored hard and long with little numerical or 'worldly' success, but they were faithful to God's call. They are on God's honor roll, for their faithfulness constituted their success. Love never fails, even if the one you are loving rejects you. To love, in spite of rejection, is to be truly successful!

"Father, help me not to grow weary in my labors of love, not to lose heart when my little world of achievement around me begins to crumble. Help me to keep running the race of life and fighting the fight of faith, even when my efforts seem fruitless of results. Keep my eyes on the 'finished line' and let me see the prize of God that awaits the faithful of all ages. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To 'keep on keeping on' for Jesus when circumstances tell me to 'throw in the towel' is a great evidence of loyalty and a great demonstration of love!

FAITHFUL AMIDST CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

William Barclay notes that fidelity "is the virtue of the man who, through all the changes and the chances of life, down even to the gates of death, is loyal to God". (Daily Study Bible, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, p. 134)

God is faithful (II Thessalonians 3:3, II Timothy 2:13, I Corinthians 10:13). God is the same yesterday, today and forever. God is the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning". (James 1:17)

The Conquering Christ, pictured in Revelation 19:11 is described as He who is mounted on a white horse who "is called Faithful and True". "Christ is the person on whose utter fidelity a man may literally stake his life." (Daily Study Bible, Revelation, vol. 2, p. 229; Barclay)

In the same way that God is faithful, His followers also are to be faithful. Faithful amidst the change and the flux of time and circumstances. II Timothy 4:2 tells us that we are to herald forth the word of God with urgency and persistency. We are to communicate the Word of God "in season and out of season", when it is popular and when it is not popular, when there is response and when there is no response. We are to take or make our opportunity to speak for God. No change in times or circumstances or localities should cause us to change our message of God's love.

The changes of time must not change the changeless Message! Both God's Word of Truth and our works of love are to be expressed faithfully and persistently. We are not to grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we do not faint (Galatians 6:9). Paul exhorts Christians to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (I Corinthians 15:58)

Faithfulness to Christ throughout life's changes and chances--this is the call of every Christian! Till death us do part! The believer's faithfulness to Christ is to stand the test of time!

"The years can be cruel. They can take away our ideals and our enthusiasms and our dreams and our loyalties. They can leave us with a life that has grown smaller and not bigger. They can leave us with a heart that is shriveled instead of one expanded in the love of Christ. There can be a lost loveliness in life--God save us from that." (Daily Study Bible, John, vol. 1, p. 230; Barclay)

"In the last analysis Christianity is not a philosophy which we accept, nor a theory to which we give allegiance. It is a personal response to Jesus Christ. It is the allegiance and the love which a man gives because his heart will not allow him to do anything else." (Ibid, p. 230) Whether it means popularity or persecution, prosperity or poverty, our loyalty and faithfulness to Christ must never waver. Changing circumstances must never change our loyalty to Jesus Christ!

"With the increase of years, let my love for you grow, dear Lord. Don't allow me to grow bitter when bitter circumstances descend upon me, but let me grow sweeter in my spirit. Don't allow me to abandon my walk of faith when people become faithless to me, but let me become ever more loyal to you."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When the storms of life assail, I will tighten my squeeze on God's strong hand!

FAIR-WEATHER FOLLOWERS?

During Jesus' earthly ministry there were those who were merely fair-weather followers! They were faithless to Jesus when times and circumstances got rough. "From this time many of the disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God'." (John 6:66-69)

"Some saw quite clearly where Jesus was heading. It was not possible to challenge the authorities as he was doing and get away with it. He was heading for disaster and they were getting out in time. They were fair-weather followers. It has been said that the test of an army is how it fights when it is tired. Those who drifted away would have stuck by Jesus so long as his career was on the upward way, but at the first shadow of the Cross they left him.

"Some shirked the challenge of Jesus. Fundamentally their point of view was that they had come to Jesus to get something from him; when it came to suffering for him and giving to him they quit. No one can give so much as Jesus, but if we come to him solely to get and never to give we will certainly turn back. The man who would follow Jesus must remember that in following him there is always a Cross." (Daily Study Bible, John, vol. 1, p. 229; Barclay)

Life is very changeable, but our loyalty to Christ must be steadfast and unmovable. Job, who suffered unspeakably, remained faithful to God even when his suffering defied reason. When others told Job to curse God and die, Job remained faithful and true to his God. His fidelity was never questioned! Even when he wished to curse the day he was born, he never cursed God. His faithfulness to God not only stood the test of time, but it also stood the test of unexplainable sorrow and loss! Job's faithfulness is capitalized in these memorable words: "Though He slay me, yet shall I serve Him". Job was no 'fair-weather' follower of God. In both prosperity and poverty, in both health and suffering, Job remained faithful to his God. The change of circumstances did not change his loyalty and his faithfulness.

The Bible tells us that it is he who endures unto the end that shall be saved. "Loyalty. . . means that fidelity which will never waver in its utter devotion to its Master and its Lord. . . The Christian must win his battle with the world by presenting to all men the steadfastness and the loyalty which will not be moved by the fear or the favour of men." (Daily Study Bible, Revelation, vol. 2, p. 127; Barclay) Amidst change, remain changeless in your devotion, loyalty and faithfulness. Said one, "There is nothing in this world which can take the place of loyalty. If all the other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all." (Daily Study Bible, Revelation, vol. 1, p. 101; Barclay)

"Father, search my motives today. Have I followed you to see how much I can receive from you or to see how much I can give to you? Do I follow you as closely when you call me to suffer as when you promote me to success in the eyes of my fellowmen? In sunshine and in darkness alike, I want to follow you! I commit myself to be a stormy-weather follower of you!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Steadfastness and loyalty always have their rewards, if not immediately in life, always and ultimately in eternity!

REVIEWING A HERITAGE OF FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness to God and faithfulness to God's Church is something I was taught all throughout my childhood and youth. Although I have a humble ancestry, I am rich with a heritage of godly forefathers who were faithful to Christ and to His Church.

There is much which I value in my heritage, but nothing more than the many lessons I have learned in loyalty and faithfulness. I only pray for God's grace to help me to pass on such a heritage to my children.

As a child, I regularly went with my mother to Wednesday night prayer meetings in a little white-framed Free Methodist Church in Fountain, Colorado. My mother rarely missed attending those prayer meetings, even though she was often weary and many times plagued with headaches. She believed in faithfulness and she practiced it throughout my childhood. She was faithful to teach me the Bible and to pray with me daily in my home.

My grandmother, before her, was equally faithful to her Lord and to her Church. It was her godly life, along with that of my mother, that strongly influenced me to become a Christian. My great grandmother, who died in 1950, was a faithful godly woman, seldom missing the Church services, held in the same little Church where I received my childhood training.

My great grandfather was a humble, but faithful man, I am told. I recently found his obituary in an old family album. "Joseph E. Benedict, was born at Brownville, Nebraska, May 12, 1857, and departed this life at his home at Fountain, Colorado, October 8, 1928. . . Early in life he united with the Free Methodist Church and was a very active, faithful member and sacrificed greatly for the work of God. Though for many years a cripple he was always faithful. He would hobble to Church or prayer meeting even when others thought the weather too bad or they were too weary" (written October 1928).

My great, great grandfather was born in 1821 and died in Fountain, Colorado, in 1909. His pastor, who wrote his obituary, notes, "When the Free Methodist Church was organized in Fountain he and his wife became charter members. He loved the means of grace and often, even in the last months of his life, walked with trembling steps to the house of God" (quote appeared in the Fountain Newspaper, May 1909).

My children are sixth generation Free Methodists, a fact that is important to me, but not nearly as important as the fact that they are learning to be faithful to God and to His Church.

Will you allow weather or weariness or worry to keep you from being faithful? Can you say with the little chorus, "Though no one follow, still I will follow"? Follow whom? Follow the one who declared, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24, NIV)

"Father, help me to so live every day of my life that it can someday be said of me, 'He was a very active, faithful member and sacrificed greatly for the work of God. He loved the means of grace and often, even in the last months of his life, walked with trembling steps to the house of God'."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The best gift I can give my grandchildren is a godly heritage of faithfulness and fidelity to my God and my Church.

FAITHFUL IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION

In His parable of the Four Soils, Jesus describes four different kinds of response to the Word of God. Says Jesus in the parable, "What was sown on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away." (Matthew 13:20-21, NIV) Persecution takes its toll, causing the shallow believer to fall away. No faithfulness! No steadfastness!

Paul says that persecution will be experienced by all true believers. "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of." (II Timothy 3:12-14, NIV) Notes Edith Schaeffer in her book 'Affliction': "The warning is to each of us. We are not to be surprised when persecution comes in the form of nasty remarks by neighbors. We are to be forewarned that persecution might come in the form of our Ph.D thesis being turned down. We are not to be flattened by the announcement that our expected promotion fell through. We are to be prepared for the possible scorn of unbelievers, the withdrawal of family members who are not Christians, the snubbing of friends, and unfair news reports or criticisms. We are not to forget that Satan can and will also attack us directly in areas of our health, a deluge of disasters, car accidents, our house burning down, higher-than-expected taxes, a baby born with a handicap, loss of a job, or a crippling disease. Satan will persecute us directly, as will people persecute us because they hate what we stand for despite what we believe. Yes, all who will live a 'godly life' will suffer persecution." (p. 198-199)

In spite of persecution, we are to be faithful to the Lord. The three Hebrew children who were cast into the fiery furnace were faithful to their God, regardless of the consequences. "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, 'O, Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. but even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up'." (Daniel 3:16-18, NIV)

II Corinthians 11 records many of Paul's sufferings and persecutions-- being whipped, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, enduring sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, etc. and yet it was Paul who could say at the end of his life: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith". (II Timothy 4:7)

"Father, when trouble or persecution arises, help me to be faithful and loyal to you. When the world 'kicks' me, let it kick me forward into a closer walk with you. May the fire of persecution result in consuming the dross and refining the gold of my life. My problems are your opportunities of grace. Thank you."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When it is hardest to follow Jesus, I will follow hard after Him!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF GOODNESS AND FAITHFULNESS

1. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "In an age of moral relativism, where moral distinctives are blurred, there is a need for a declaration of moral absolutes". On what basis do you personally determine in your life what is absolutely 'right' and what is absolutely 'wrong' and what is morally permissible (the 'gray' areas of personal conviction)?

As you are forming your 'personal convictions', and are faced with a confusing and questionable moral dilemma, study Romans 14, and then ask yourself the following questions:

- a. Is my own mind clear? (Romans 14:5,23)
- b. Can I do this for the Lord? (Romans 14:8)
- c. When I consider this matter in the light of my coming appearance at the judgment seat of Christ, how do I feel about it? (Romans 14:10,12)
- d. Will this be an offense to others? (Romans 14:21)

2. Where does one's moral sense of 'Oughtness' originate? Is it true to say that what is 'morally wrong' for one person is always 'morally wrong' for all people? How reliable is one's conscience in guiding one in making moral judgments and decisions? When should one contend that a moral 'course of action' is right for everyone to follow, and when should one contend that a moral 'course of action' is 'right' for him personally to follow as a personal conviction only--a 'conviction' that one does not seek to impose upon anyone else?

3. Why is it necessary for a Christian person to cultivate both the fruit of Kindness and the fruit of Moral Goodness in his life, and seek to practice both Kindness and Moral Goodness simultaneously in his daily human relationships? Do you agree with the following statement?--"The balanced cultivation of moral goodness with tender kindness will enable me to champion holy causes with a charitable spirit".

4. Does the following statement accurately describe 'kindness' and 'goodness' as complementary traits?--"The goodness of kindness tempers justice with mercy and does not allow the goodness of righteousness, which seeks to destroy sinful practices, to destroy sinful men in the process."

5. List and describe the various motivations for the performance of 'moral good' in the lives of people. What is the highest of all motivations for doing 'good works'? What is the 'sin of Pharisaeism'?

6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Goodness is moral sensitivity, a holy anger channeled into moral action and reform". How can you tell the difference between 'righteous indignation' and 'carnal anger'?

7. Is there evidence, from a study of the Gospels, that Jesus perfectly possessed all the complimentary Christian virtues and that he exercised them in a most balanced way in his treatment of people? After reading Matthew 21:12-17, can you conclude that the following statement is accurate?--"The goodness of Jesus was the goodness of both moral righteousness and tender compassion."

8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "It is possible to be morally good and yet lack loveliness, attractiveness, and graciousness in the expression of moral righteousness. It is possible to be practically and morally good and yet not be aesthetically good."

9. Do you identify with the following statement (as a personal goal in your spiritual development)?--"It is my desire to shed a sympathizing tear for sinners without holding any sympathy in my heart for sin!"

10. Is it possible for a person to be 'tough' in the pronouncement of moral righteousness in his campaign for social reform, and at the same time to be 'tender' and courteous in his personal mannerism while he is making such pronouncements? Does not the Bible command Christians to 'speak the truth in love'?

11. What determines the 'moral agenda' of goodness? List some of the areas of moral concern in our modern-day in which conscientious believers ought to be deeply involved.

12. Tell why you agree or disagree with David McKenna's guidelines for meeting the challenge of worldwide poverty: "Even skeptics would listen to the gospel according to affluent Christians who set their standards of living at the level of basic needs and gave the difference to the poor. . .Simplicity is the key. In the midst of shortages, simple needs, simple trust, and a simple life will fill our horn of plenty."

13. Illustrate from your personal life or from your observations of others, the truth of the following statement: "He who loves truly is he who serves faithfully."

14. Do you believe the following statement reflects a realistic view of life?--"Lack of apparent success causes some to despair, and too much success causes others to become smug and complacent and proud."

15. Contrast the world's conception of 'success' with the Christian conception of 'success'. Why, from the Biblical and Christian perspective, is Jesus considered to be the most successful person who ever lived?

16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Spirit-filled man is faithful, regardless of man's applause or man's scorn. He is faithful, regardless of his temptation to despair when seeming to fail, and regardless of his temptation to pride, when seeming to succeed."

17. Do you agree with E. Stanley Jones' following statement?--"A faith that has a cross at its center cannot be a faith that worships success." Is it possible, even within the 'Christian world', to adopt and to use the world's standards for success in striving to 'build the Church', or striving to 'become known as a speaker on TV and radio', or seeking to 'raise money for Christian causes', etc., etc.?

18. Are you, as a Christian, personally in bondage to the world's conception of 'success', or do you personally identify with the following statement by E. Stanley Jones?--"I do not have to succeed; I have only to be true to the highest I know--success and failure are in the hands of God."

19. In seeking to be faithful to Christ, regardless of circumstances, do you identify with the following statement?--"To 'keep on keeping on' for Jesus when circumstances tell me to 'throw in the towel' is a great evidence of loyalty and a great demonstration of love!"
20. Cite Scriptures that show the absolute faithfulness and fidelity of Almighty God.
21. Tell what William Barclay means when, in his discussion of Faithfulness, he states: "The years can be cruel".
22. What is meant by the statement that some people are only 'fair-weather followers' of Jesus Christ? (Note John 6:66-69)
23. Do you agree with the following statement?--"No one can give so much as Jesus, but if we come to him solely to get and never to give we will certainly turn back. The man who would follow Jesus must remember that in following him there is always a Cross."
24. Why is the study of the life of Job (in the Old Testament) such a helpful study in one's attempt to understand the Biblical meaning of 'Faithfulness'?
25. Do you agree with the following evaluation of the greatness of the virtue of 'Faithfulness'?--"If all other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all."
26. Can you share from your personal experience your joy in intimately knowing a truly faithful servant of God--one who remained true to God, through all the 'changes and chances' of life until God called him 'home' to heaven?
27. What does the Parable of the Four Soils (Matthew 13:20-21) teach us regarding one of the major causes for some Christians becoming faithless and 'barren' in their lives and in their relationship to God?
28. What lessons in 'Faithfulness' can you learn from a study of Daniel 3:16-18?

CHAPTER 13

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL

THE 'GOLDEN MEAN' IN CHRISTIAN GENTLENESS

"Prautes, gentleness, is an interesting word. Aristotle defined it as the correct mean between being too angry and being never angry at all. It is the quality of the man whose anger is so controlled that he is always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time. It describes the man who is never angry at any personal wrong he may receive, but who is capable of righteous anger when he sees others wronged." (Daily Study Bible, Corinthians, p. 238; Barclay)

Jesus never became angry when he was personally insulted or injured. He was a perfectly God-controlled man. "Anger you will find in Christ, but not bad temper. . . He is entirely free of anger when most strong men would be choked with rage. . . Christ bore with sublime serenity the indignities and injustices heaped upon himself. . . Hate at its most venomous nails him to two pieces of wood and provokes him to nothing but prayers for his murderers' pardon. Nothing of anger, only prayer and love. . . Nothing that ever happened in this universe was more unrighteous than the Cross. But they did not crucify an angry man." (The Secret of Radiant Life, p. 121; Sangster)

Only the true, Spirit-controlled, love-filled man can exercise out restraint and remain free from inner resentments! John Wesley was a man of strong character who knew how to whip his will into a holy anger against social evils, but Wesley was a Spirit-controlled man. He knew when to be angry and when not to be angry. His anger was leashed by God's Spirit. As a true gentle man, he mastered his spirit, because he submitted to God's control. He did not retaliate during times of physical persecution or mental abuse. John Wesley writes that at Wednesbury the mob came "pouring down like a flood". He then writes, "To attempt speaking was vain; for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town; when, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the crowd. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other."

The man of gentleness knows when to be angry and when not to be angry. John Wesley remained loving amidst the unlovely treatment he received. The man of gentleness returns good for evil. Said Jesus, "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic." (Luke 6:29, NIV)

"Father, make me a Spirit-controlled person, one who is gentle, keeping his anger under control. I confess that my natural reaction to mistreatment is retaliation. I surrender myself and my passions and instincts to your control, asking you to cleanse me from carnal anger and to rechannel all my anger to constructive purposes. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My God-created emotion of anger must be cleansed and controlled by the Spirit for redemptive ends today!

MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING GENTLENESS

The worldly-minded man thinks that Jesus' Beatitude 'Blessed are the meek' is ridiculous. The man of the world "believes in the survival of the fittest. He believes the most fit to survive in a world like ours is the aggressive, heavy-handed, hard-fisted, self-assertive man". (Sermon On The Mount, p. 36; Clovis Chappell) "The world thinks in terms of strength and power of ability, self-assurance and aggressiveness. That is the world's idea of conquest and possession. The more you assert yourself and express yourself, the more you organize and manifest your powers and ability, the more likely you are to succeed and get on." (Studies in the Sermon On The Mount, p. 63; Lloyd-Jones)

So many "do not want to be meek. We prefer to be like the little boy whose mother kept calling him, 'my little lamb'. Finally, he said, 'Mother, I don't want to be your little lamb, I want to be your little tiger'." (God's Psychiatry, p. 137; Charles Allen)

We must eliminate all misconceptions from our thinking regarding the meaning of meekness or gentleness. Gentleness or meekness is not a natural disposition that some are born with and others are not born with. Those who are endowed with a good-natured disposition from birth are not meek or gentle in the Biblical sense of the term.

Gentleness is not a quality that only some Christians are able to possess and express. All believers, regardless of natural temperament, are to express this God-given quality. Meekness cannot be humanly achieved, independent of divine enablement. Moses had a very fiery disposition in his earlier life, but God made him meek. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3)

Gentleness or meekness is far removed from mere niceness. Niceness is a mere human quality and has nothing to do with meekness. One can be meek and yet be firm in conviction and assertive in character. There are some people who never want to disagree with anyone or about anything. They are the kind of people who stand firm for nothing and fall for anything. Meekness is not spinelessness or excessive tolerance.

Meekness is not indolence, laziness, or apathy. Those who are meek are "not those who grieve at nothing, because they know nothing; who are discomposed at the evils that occur, because they discern not evil from good. Not those who are sheltered from the shocks of life by a stupid insensibility." (Wesley's Sermons, vol. 1, p. 188)

"Father, forgive me for thinking that meekness is weakness, that gentleness is cowardice. Help me ever to remember that might is not right, but that the gentle spirit of Christlikeness is always right! I confess my hypocritical role-playing. I have often appeared peaceful on the outside while suppressing my rage of anger on the inside. Purify my inward spirit that my outward behavior may manifest a genuine gentleness. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The strength of gentleness is stronger than the might of violence!

CAN A GENTLE MAN BE ANGRY?

Jesus never became angry when he was personally insulted or injured. But Jesus became very angry when injuries and injustices were done to others! When self-righteous, hypocritical leaders reacted to Jesus' healing of a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath Day, "Jesus looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man: 'Stretch out your hand'. He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." (Mark 3:5-6, NIV)

When the money changers made God's Temple a center for dishonesty in business transactions, resulting in exploitation of the poor and weak, Jesus' anger blazed within him! Jesus' holy love and just anger drove the money changers from the Temple.

The gentle or meek man never exercises excessive anger or excessive angerlessness. In my early understanding of the Spirit-controlled life, I thought that a mark of the spiritual man was an absence of all anger. My deeper understanding of the Scriptures revealed to me that anger is a basic, God-created emotion which must not be denied or suppressed or carnally expressed, but which must be cleansed, controlled, and rechanneled towards God-honoring purposes. Angry, but not because of personal injuries. Angry not at sinners, but angry at sinful practices. "Be angry, but do not sin. Do not let the sin go down on your anger." (Ephesians 4:26)

There is a righteous anger and there is a carnal anger. "We shall call anger 'righteous indignation' when pure concern for the suffering of others leads a man to bold and costly action, and we shall call it something else (however natural it may be!) when their blazing indignation has been provoked by some setback to themselves." (The Secret of Radiant Life, p. 121; Sangster)

The Greek word 'praus' which is translated meek or gentle is the "regular word for an animal which has been domesticated, which has been trained to obey the word of command, which has learned to answer to the reins. It is the word for an animal which has learned to accept control." (Daily Study Bible, Matthew, vol. 1, p. 91; Barclay)

The gentle man is the man who has learned self-control in every instinct, every impulse, and every passion because he has learned to submit to God's control! But, as we shall see, the man of gentleness has learned not only to submit to God's control, but he has also learned to submit to man's wise instructions. He is both God-controlled and teachable. He gives place to Christ's lordship and to his fellow Christian's instructions.

"Father, control my spirit in its expression of anger. Give me moral discernment to know those evil actions of sinful men against others which should incite my anger to defend the defenseless, and those vindictive actions of sinful men against me which should incite my compassion to return good for evil. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The Holy Spirit will make me calm in His calmness in the face of unjust evil against me, and angry in His anger in the face of unjust evil against others.

TEACHABLE IN ALL GOOD THINGS

The Spirit-controlled man is a gentle man. A gentle man is submissive to God, and also teachable in all good things.

The man of meekness or gentleness is the man who constantly is seeking to learn. He has an inquiring mind. As a student of life, he is always asking questions. He has learned to discern truth and to reject error. He has an habitual vision of God's greatness, and with this vision of the Holy One, he is motivated to seek truth and to evaluate all ideas against the standard of revealed truth.

Julia Arnold Shelhammer was long known as a humble and loving servant of God. She lived to be well over one hundred years. On her 100th birthday, she celebrated her birthday by preaching at Asbury Theological Seminary! Near the end of her talk she said, "I don't know how much longer I'm going to live but I want every moment to be crowded with successful efforts to win souls for Christ." At 100 years old, she was still on the growing edge of life! Still growing! Still learning! Still sharing! Humble and teachable!

What are the marks of a truly educated man? The truly educated man is the man of gentleness and meekness. That is, he is humble enough to learn! James 1:21 describes the teachable person as one who "in gentleness receives the inborn word which is able to save your souls." (Barclay's translation) "The teachable spirit is docile and tractable, and therefore humble enough to learn. The teachable spirit is without resentment and without anger, and is, therefore, able to face the truth, even when the truth hurts and condemns. The teachable spirit is not blinded by his own evermastering prejudices, but is clear-eyed to the truth. The teachable spirit is not seduced by laziness, but is so self-controlled that it can willingly and faithfully accept the discipline of learning. Prautes describes the perfect conquest and control of everything in a man's nature which would be a hinderance to his seeing, learning, and obeying the truth." (Daily Study Bible, James, p. 68; Barclay)

E. Stanley Jones was not a man who was highly educated formally, and yet, under the control of the Holy Spirit, he became the missionary and teacher to the highly educated persons in India and around the world. He wrote nearly 30 books in his lifetime, and was constantly learning. He gives an illustration of a mountain climber who died while climbing a mountain during a snow blizzard. To mark the place where the mountain climber died, a small marker was placed which said, "He died climbing". Stanley Jones noted that he wanted to die 'climbing'--climbing for new knowledge and understanding and wisdom from God!

"Father, give me courage to face newly revealed truth, humility to receive it into my thinking, and strength to apply it in my daily relationships. Give me an open mind, a teachable spirit, and a determined will to do your will. Help me to walk in the light as you are in the light! Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will allow the Holy Spirit to take away the scales of prejudice from my spiritual eyes in order that I may clearly see reality!

CHRIST-CONTROL LEADS TO SELF-CONTROL

Notes E. Stanley Jones, "The Christian Way produces through Christ-control the self-controlled man. But note that self-control is not so much a means as an end. You do not gain Christ through self-control; you gain self-control through Christ. . .If you begin with self-control, then you are the center, you are controlling yourself. And you will be anxious lest yourself slip out from beneath your control. But if you begin, as Paul does, with love, then the spring of action is love for a Person, someone outside yourself. You are released from yourself and from self-preoccupation. . .When you begin with love, you end in self-control. . .The emphasis of the New Testament is Christ-control through love for Christ. 'Love Christ and do as you like', for you'll like what He likes." (Growing Spiritually, p. 197)

The word 'self-control' in the Greek language speaks of self-restraint, self-discipline, purity and chastity. It is the word that speaks of victory over evil desire. "It describes that strength of soul by which a man takes a hold of himself, so that he can restrain himself from every evil desire." (Flesh and Spirit, p. 123; William Barclay) A man who is self-controlled is a man "who prevents desire from being the dictator of his actions and his life." (Ibid, p. 126) The self-controlled man may have "strong desires which seek to lure and force him from the way of reason, but he has them under control". (Ibid, p. 127)

Mastery over internal instincts and mastery over external allurements is greatly needed in our society. We are living in an hedonistic age. A hedonist is one who lives by his passions and who equates happiness with pleasure. The hedonist makes no attempt to curb the desires of his flesh.

Paul warned the early Christians against pleasure-obsessed people. "For there are many, of whom I have told you before and tell you again now, even with tears, whose lives make them the enemies of the cross of Christ. These men are heading for utter destruction--their god is their own appetite, they glory in their shame, and this world is the limit of their horizon." (Philippians 3:18-19, Phillips)

Too many today live by their appetites and desires--totally undisciplined, unrestrained, unchaste. "These men mock and curse at anything they do not understand, and, like animals, they do whatever they feel like, thereby ruining their souls." (Jude 10, Living Bible)

God's call is the call to self-control, resulting from Christ-control!

"Heavenly Father, you have created me with strong desires. Help me to control these desires, channeling them for creative and redemptive purposes. Master, I want you to master my desires and bring them into conformity to the will and ways of Christ!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: A mastered man is a masterful man--if his Master is Christ!

SECRET THOUGHTS GIVE BIRTH TO OUTWARD ACTIONS!

What is the secret of self-control in one's life? Cultivating the mind of Christ! Learning to think Christ's thoughts! Submitting to Christ's lordship!

Remember, whatever gets your attention, gets you! "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny!" It all starts with the way a person thinks!

As a man thinks, so is he! You are the product of your thoughts! What you imagine, you will become! "What you hold in the mind passes automatically into act, if you hold it there long enough. . .Your secret meditations become you, for good or ill." (Growing Spiritually, p. 201; Stanley Jones)

A moral landslide is preceded by a mental landslide. What you focus your thoughts upon, you eventually become! "If therefore you dally with sex thoughts and imaginations, that dallying will become a doing. And that doing will become you." (Ibid, p. 201)

"Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about." (Philippians 4:8, Living Bible) Meditate on God's laws day and night! If you do, you will be like a tree that is planted by the rivers of water which bringeth forth its fruit in its season. Its leaves also shall not wither and die! (See Psalms 1.) Why do people wither and die morally? Because they wither and die mentally! Ignoble thoughts lead to ignoble lives. Lustful thinking leads to lustful living! Dr. George A. Buttrick says, "We dramatize temptation in our secret thought, thus gathering gasoline for the devil's spark." Should we then wonder why we blow up?

When lust hath conceived it eventually bringeth forth death! (James 1:15) How is lust conceived? By failing to control the thought life! You cannot help it if birds fly above your head, but you are responsible if you allow birds to make nests in your hair! You cannot help it if Satan suggests evil thoughts to you, but you are responsible if you entertain evil thoughts, resulting in developing patterns of evil thinking! You are not responsible for having temptations, but you are responsible for yielding to temptations. You may not be responsible for the first look, but you are responsible for the second look! If you can go around temptation, you cannot expect God to take you through temptation. If you put yourself in the very trap of temptation, don't be surprised if you are trapped in sin!

"Father, I acknowledge that I cannot 'play with fire' and not expect to be burned. I cannot engage in lustful thinking and not expect to become lustful in action. Help me to guard my affections, for my affections guide my life. Make me pure in thy purity, and holy in thy holiness. In the holy name of Jesus. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will focus my attention on the Holy One in order that I might become a man of holiness!

MASTERY OVER LUST

Control your thoughts if you want a pure mind. Control your glances, lest you begin to gaze at sin. Learn to separate yourself from sinful places and things (see II Corinthians 6:17).

How do you win the sex battle in a world that is saturated with licentiousness? The victory is won in the mind. The secret to sex-control is mind-control, and the secret of mind-control is focusing one's mind on Christ! We are to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (II Corinthians 10:5, NIV) We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. (See Romans 12:1)

Do you make your thoughts obedient to Christ? If you struggle with evil or lustful thoughts, don't try to fight these thoughts! To fight such thoughts is to give more attention to these thoughts. Rather than fighting evil thoughts, replace evil thoughts with pure thoughts! Fill your mind with the Scriptures! (Remember, an idle mind is the devil's workshop!) Fill your eyes with the beauty of nature! Fill your time with love projects! Seek and find good companions! (Remember "evil company corrupts good manners".) Turn your back on evil companions!

Wrote Paul to young Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts". Keep away from lustful thoughts! Run from evil companions! "Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right." (II Timothy 2:22, Living Bible)

Christian young people (and adults, for that matter) have no business watching TV programs or movies which lead to lustful thinking! Christian young people have no business flirting with sin! Discipline of desires is the price of moral freedom!

Says William Graham Cole in one of his books, "Stolen goods can be returned, or compensated for, lies can be retracted and corrected, covetousness can be overcome. Even idolatry can be undone and forgiven. But the sex act once committed with another person cannot be undone. The interpersonal relationship has undergone a radical change, and the couple concerned can never return to where they were before. Something indelible has stamped them both." (See I Corinthians 6:18-20)

Mastery over lust--what is the secret? "You can expel one desire only by a higher desire. Let the love of Christ be the fire that eats up these lesser loves. All the prohibitions against the wrong use of the sex will not save you unless the love of Christ be at the center--then the sex urge becomes marginal and right." (Abundant Living, p. 133; Jones)

"Father, let me never despise the sex urge, for this powerful creative urge is your beautiful gift to me. My beautiful Creator, I ask you to master this urge within me, lest it end up mastering me. Help me never to abuse this sacred gift but to use it for your glory and for my good. In Jesus' precious name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will enjoy sex intensely because I will use it at the right time, at the right place, with the right person--all in the context of my marriage.

MASTERY OVER MONEY

Surrendering to the control of Christ, you find freedom in self-control. Accepting Christ's inner restraints, you enjoy outer freedom--glorious freedom! Self-control relates not only to mastery over lust but also mastery over money.

Self-control in the use of money is one of the greatest needs in America today! Millions of dollars are spent in advertising which has one primary purpose--to motivate more people to buy more things.

The use of money determines the value of money. The Rich Man in the Gospel parable was not condemned because he had much money, but because he loved money and worshipped what money can buy. This parable teaches the folly of trusting in riches. He was called a fool because he allowed money to master him, instead of exercising mastery over his money. He did not exercise self-control in matters of his money, because he was not a God-controlled man in matters of his soul.

The Bible calls us to a simple life-style. We must pattern our lives after the King, rather than try to live like a king! "We are right to think of the kingdom of God coming on earth, as well as in heaven, but we have been wrong to associate the kingdom of God with material prosperity. . . Unlimited spiritual development is possible because God is infinite and we live in a vast, spiritual world. But unlimited economic expansion and exploitation in a finite, material world is finally impossible and can lead only to a giant blowout. Simple living means learning to conserve and preserve--which means living, eating, traveling as good and careful stewards of the good earth." (Light and Life Magazine, October 1979, p. 40)

In a world of shrinking resources and growing hunger, Christians must learn to discipline their acquisitive urges. The more godlike one is, the more generous he is. Someone said, "When a man begins to prosper, either the Lord gets a steward or the Devil gets a soul." "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. Put in a stop where your needs end. After that all you make belongs to other people's needs. Keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs." (Abundant Living, p. 300-301; Jones)

After a long day of sight-seeing, one Christian returned to his motel and prayed, "Father, I thank you for the enjoyable day. I thank you that, of all the things which I have seen today, there is not one thing which I want!" Financial freedom! He had mastered the material world because he was mastered by spiritual priorities!

"Father, I surrender my acquisitive urge to you. Help me to learn the secret of enjoying without coveting material things. Help me to develop the 'Art of Using'--using things for God's glory and for man's good without exploiting the resources of your world."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Wastefulness or extravagance have no place in the Christian practices of stewardship.

MASTERY OVER SELF

There can be no mastery in life unless one has surrendered his self to the Lordship of Christ. Says E. Stanley Jones, "The self as a servant to the Kingdom of God is rhythmical and harmonious and adequate; the self as a servant to itself is halting and inharmonious and incompetent--its own slave. . .The self then must be disciplined to die. It must die as first, in order to live as second. That is why at the center of the Kingdom is a cross. You must go through spiritually what Jesus went through physically--you must die and be buried in order to experience a resurrection into freedom and fullness of life." (Abundant Living, p. 124; Jones)

Self at the center is a self that is off-center! When man makes himself his own god, then he comes to hate that god! To control the self, one must surrender the self. Surrender the self to the Creator God in order that the self may become creative. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their lower nature with all that it loved and lusted for." (Galatians 5:24, Phillips)

What is the great secret of self-control? It is Christ-control, made possible through death to self-will and surrender to Christ's will. It was George Muller of Bristol who testified: "There was a day when I died--died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved to God."

The man whose life is a message rather than a mess, is the man whose life is under the Spirit's control. 'I delight to do thy will, O God!' Christ's burden is our blessing! Christ's yoke is our yearning! But is Christ's way always easy? Is there not struggle? Is it always easy to submit to Christ's will? Not always easy, but always right! Christ suffered being tempted, but He never yielded to temptation! Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered, but He never once disobeyed the Father! He sweat as it were 'great drops of blood' in the Garden of Gethsemane, but His final mastery over life was demonstrated when He prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39)

Mastery in life will mean that we give counsel to reason, not to passion; that we give counsel to faith, not to fear; that we give counsel to discipline, not to indulgence; that we give counsel to God's will, not to man's will!

"Father, I am slowly learning the way of true freedom. Bowing low at the feet of Jesus, I stand tall before everything else! Surrendering to the control of Christ, I find freedom in self-control. Forgive me for trying to whip my will into obeying moral laws when you call me to surrender my will to find your liberating love. Your will is my freedom! Glory!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I am never so much my own as when I am most Christ's.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

CULTIVATING THE FRUIT OF GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL

1. What is the world's method of 'surviving' and 'success' and 'strength'?
2. What are some misconceptions regarding the concept of 'meekness' or 'gentleness' which need to be eliminated from our thinking?
3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The strength of gentleness is stronger than the might of violence!"
4. Define and describe the meaning of 'Gentleness' from the Biblical viewpoint.
5. Give illustrations from the Scriptures that demonstrate the fact that Jesus was a perfectly God-controlled man (i.e., He was a Gentle man)--One who was angry only for the right reasons and at the right times.
6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Only the true Spirit-controlled, love-filled man can exercise outer restraint and remain free from inner resentments!"
7. Do you agree with the following statement?--"The man of gentleness knows when to be angry and when not to be angry". From a study of the life of Jesus, can one conclude that Jesus never became angry over personal abuse which he unjustly received from others, but that He became justly and intensely angry when others were unjustly abused or when God's name and cause were being defamed? (Note Mark 11:12-18, Mark 3:5-6, Luke 23:32-34)
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Anger is a basic, God-created emotion which must not be denied or suppressed or carnally expressed, but which must be cleansed, controlled, and rechanneled towards God-honoring purposes." What is your interpretation of Ephesians 4:26? How do you tell the difference between 'righteous anger' and 'carnal anger'?
9. Do you think the following description of a 'gentle man' is both accurate and Biblical?--"The gentle man is the man who has learned self-control in every instinct, every impulse, and every passion because he has learned to submit to God's control."
10. What is your personal evaluation of the following description of 'Gentleness'?--"Prautes (Gentleness) describes the perfect conquest and control of everything in a man's nature which would be a hinderance to his seeing, learning, and obeying the truth."
11. Does the following affirmation express your own determination?--"I will allow the Holy Spirit to take away the scales of prejudice from my spiritual eyes in order that I may clearly see reality!" What are some forms of prejudice from which believers need to be delivered?

12. In a person's attempt to become a truly 'Gentle man', what is the relationship between self-control and Christ-control? Do you agree with the following statements?--"If you begin with self-control, then you are the center, you are controlling yourself. And you will be anxious lest yourself slip out from beneath your control."

13. What is the secret of self-control in one's life? What is God's part and what is man's part in gaining self-control? (Note Psalms 1:2, Philippians 2:5-8,4:8)

14. Is it true that people 'wither and die morally' because they first 'wither and die mentally'?

15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by Dr. George A. Buttrick: "We dramatize temptation in our secret thought, thus gathering gasoline for the devil's spark." Do you believe, generally speaking, that most Christians should be more careful to avoid putting themselves into the 'trap of temptation' through careless watching of television and movies at theatres, and through indiscriminate listening to 'worldly' music on radio? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If you can 'go around' temptation, don't expect God to take you 'through' temptation!"

16. Do you understand and agree with the following statement?--"You cannot help it if Satan suggest evil thoughts to you, but you are responsible if you entertain evil thoughts, resulting in developing patterns of evil thinking!"

17. Does the following affirmation express your own personal determination, as you strive to become a self-controlled Christian?--"I will focus my attention on the Holy One in order that I might become a man of holiness!"

18. What is your personal interpretation of II Corinthians 6:17? What attitudes or practices do you personally consider to be 'worldly' from which you, as a believer, know that you must 'separate' yourself? Is what is 'worldly' for you, necessarily 'worldly' for all other believers, or is it a matter of 'personal conviction'?

19. How do you win the 'Sex battle' in a world that is saturated with licentiousness? How do you interpret II Corinthians 10:4-6, as this Scripture relates to finding victory over 'lustful thoughts'?

20. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following strong statement: "The sex act once committed with another person cannot be undone. The inner-personal relationship has undergone a radical change, and the couple concerned can never return to where they were before. Something indelible has stamped them both." (Note I Corinthians 6:18-20)

21. In a day in which 'Sex' is treated as a 'toy' to be played with, rather than as a 'gift' to be sacredly cherished and properly used, what can parents and the Church do to help young people to become self-controlled and disciplined in the handling of the God-created, strong sexual urges? How can you tell the difference between wholesome 'sexual attraction' for the opposite sex, and 'sexual lust' for the opposite sex?

22. What difference does 'being filled with the Holy Spirit' make in disciplining and restraining the strong sexual urges which even Christians feel? Do you agree with the following statement?--"All the prohibitions against the wrong use of the sex urge will not save you unless the love of Christ be at the center--then sex urge becomes marginal and right."

23. Concerning the use of Money, what lessons can be learned from a study of Jesus' Parable of the Rich Man in Luke 12:13-21?

24. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Bible calls us to a simple life-style. We must pattern our lives after 'The King' (Jesus), rather than try to live like a king!"

25. If Christians are called 'children of the King', do the following statements reflect a realistic and Biblical viewpoint of life as it is to be lived as 'children in the Kingdom of God'?--"We are right to think of the kingdom of God coming on earth, as well as in heaven, but we have been wrong to associate the kingdom of God with material prosperity. . . Unlimited spiritual development is possible because God is infinite and we live in a vast, spiritual world. But unlimited economic expansion and exploitation in a finite, material world is finally impossible and can lead only to a giant blowout."

26. What is your response or reaction to the popular teaching among some Christians today who teach that believers can expect to be materially prosperous as a result of their strong faith in Christ? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "In a world of shrinking resources and growing hunger, Christians must learn to discipline their acquisitive urges."

27. In a world where millions are living in poverty, how do you, as a conscientious American believer, determine the material standard of living which best reflects your sense of stewardship and which best represents your commitment to a simple lifestyle? Do you agree with the following statements?--"Put in a stop where your needs end. After that all you make belongs to other people's needs. Keep your needs down to needs, not luxuries disguised as needs." To what extent can Christians indulge themselves in the enjoyment of 'luxuries'?

28. In your quest to experience 'Mastery over Self', do you believe the following statement realistically describes the means towards such mastery?--"You must go through spiritually what Jesus went through physically--you must die and be buried in order to experience a resurrection into freedom and fullness of life." (Note Galatians 2:20,5:24)

29. Is the following statement a good summary of the meaning of 'Mastery in life'?--"Mastery in life will mean that we give counsel to reason, not to passion; that we give counsel to faith, not to fear; that we give counsel to discipline, not to indulgence; that we give counsel to God's will, not to man's will!"

30. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "I am never so much my own as when I am most Christ's."