



THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH TODAY

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Roger E. Dickson

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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH TODAY

God works in the lives of Christians. He worked miraculously in order to manifest His presence to confirm His messengers and message in the first century. He works today behind the scenes of natural law in order to accomplish His eternal purpose to bring His people into eternal dwelling. God works today through an indwelling relationship with His people. He works through the medium of the Spirit-inspired word of the Scriptures in order to direct the Christian's moral behavior. Since God has chosen to morally lead us through the power of His word, we must assume that He has placed much emphasis on the Scriptures in order to mold the Christian into a spiritual person who is worthy of eternal dwelling. It is for this reason, therefore, that Christians must focus on a knowledge of the word of God and the application of its principles to their lives. However, one's focus on the word of God does not displace the work of God the Holy Spirit in his life. The Spirit works not only through the influence of the inspired word, but also in ways that are past our finding out. Therefore, through faith we understand that God the Holy Spirit is working in our lives in order to work all things together for good.

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit is active in the world today. He is doing His work in the affairs of the world in order to bring about the purpose for which this world was created. That purpose was to bring faithful believers into an eternal kingdom rest with God in a heavenly environment. We may not understand all that the Spirit does in the affairs of man, or in the affairs of our own lives. However, our lack of knowledge does not determine how the

Spirit works or what He does to accomplish the purpose for which He has come into the lives of Christians. Our knowledge of the work of the Spirit is not a regulator of His work. Therefore, regardless of our knowledge or understanding of His work, He will do what needs to be done in order to accomplish the eternal purposes of God.

Our questions concerning the work of the Spirit should not center around

whether the Spirit works. God the Spirit is at work in the world today. Our questions should center around **how** He works. This is the age of the Holy Spirit and it is in this age that the Spirit works in the life of Christians and in the world. How He goes about accomplishing His work is beyond our complete understanding simply because we are not God. Nevertheless, we do seek to know what He does in our lives. We seek to understand that our prayers are answered according to His work. Though we will never understand all the implications or manner by which He works, we do seek to understand what is revealed in the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit indwells the Christian. Our questions concerning this subject should not be based upon whether or not the Spirit indwells. The New Testament clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit has an indwelling relationship with Christians. How the Spirit works in order to influence the moral behavior of man is an entirely different subject. The work of the Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit are subjects that are not dependent on one another. In other words, all that the Spirit does is not associated with an indwelling relationship with the believer. The Spirit certainly works for the Christian, but He also works in the affairs of the world. All things are working together for good for the Christian (Rm 8:28). But not all the work of God is directly associated with the life of individual Christians.

In this chapter I will suggest that you consider the fact that the concept of indwelling refers to the Spirit's association

with and work in reference to the life of the Christian. The Spirit's indwelling relationship with the Christian is the result of the Christian's covenant relationship with God.

Most of the confusion concerning the work and indwelling of the Holy Spirit centers around the fact that we often do not ask or answer the right questions. Sometimes the questions are asked, but the answers are confused. We have too often answered questions concerning the indwelling of the Spirit with answers that should be directed toward the work of the Spirit. The Scriptures teach that there is an indwelling presence of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. We must determine if this indwelling presence is a presence of work and influence, or simply a presence. If there is a difference between the work and indwelling of the Spirit, then the Christian could be indwelt by the Spirit, and yet, there be no work of the Spirit in His life. It may be that this can happen. However, we must determine if the indwelling of the Spirit that is taught in the New Testament refers also to the Spirit's working in the Christian's life in order to bring about all things for good in the Christian's life. And, we must determine if indwelling means that the Spirit is at work in His relationship with the Christian. We must determine if the Scriptures teach that the work of the Spirit today is limited to His indwelling.

Much of the confused discussions concerning the Holy Spirit and His relationship with the Christian also centers around semantics. We often do not understand what we mean by the words we

individually use in discussing the subject. For example, there are those who say that God is working. Others would say that the Spirit is working. Both parties affirm that “Deity” is working, though we do not seem to be able to say it in the same way. Regardless if we say that the Spirit is working or God is working, the Spirit as God is working. I believe everyone who has at least an elementary knowledge of the Scriptures understands that God the Spirit is working in the life of the Christian. How we express this may differ from one person to another. However, in our different ways of expression, we must first allow the Scriptures to determine our vocabulary. Secondly, we must agree that we are not deists. We all agree that God the Spirit is working in the affairs of our world in order to bring about His purpose. After all, Paul clearly wrote, *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory ...”* (Ep 3:20,21).

The following chapters of this book center around the work and indwelling

of the Holy Spirit. God works through word of revelation. A primary work of the Spirit for this dispensation of time was to inspire the holy writers of the New Testament to bring into existence the New Testament Scriptures. Therefore, it is the work of the Spirit to operate through the medium of the Scriptures in order to transform the lives of men and women. However, God the Holy Spirit also works behind the scenes of natural law in order to bring about the eternal purpose of God through the church. The Father, Son and Spirit are working as one to accomplish the eternal scheme of redemption to bring obedient believers into eternal dwelling. Much of the work of God is not through the word of God. Therefore, we cannot say that God works only through the word of God in order to carry out His purpose. God simply works in the affairs of His creation. Though we will not understand all the implications of His work, our lack of understanding does not limit His work. Christians must be assured that the Spirit will do His work in their lives regardless of their understanding of His work.

Chapter 1

The Direct And Indirect Work Of God

God works in the affairs of man. Because we live in a material world, God has limited Himself as to how He will affect this world. He limits Himself in order not to continually manifest Himself in a miraculous manner. The fact that God exists in a nonmaterial, super-

natural environment, and we in a material, non-spiritual environment, assumes that there is a gap, or distance, or barrier between the two worlds. We find it difficult to understand God’s environment because of our shallow earthly understandings. In fact, it is impossible for us

to fully understand God and His environment simply because we do not have the ability to transcend our own physical world.

It is God who is transcendent. He must cross over to our environment in order to affect our world. We call this intervention “miracle.” We identify this as miracle simply because any incursion of the environment of the supernatural into the natural is above this natural world. Such intervention is beyond explanation with reference to our natural laws and human experience. We call God’s intervention into our physical world miracle because His intervention is above or outside the ordinary occurrence of natural laws.

When God **directly** intervenes in our world, miracle occurs. However, miracle does not occur at random. Miracle occurs for a specific purpose. It is occasional in the sense that God does not manifest Himself through miracle unless His purposes are to be accomplished. It is not God’s purpose before our future existence in heaven to place us in a supernatural environment that protects us from our present physical environment and ordinary occurrence of natural laws. It is necessary, therefore, that God limit Himself. He must limit Himself as to how He intervenes and how often He intervenes. In a sense, therefore, God must

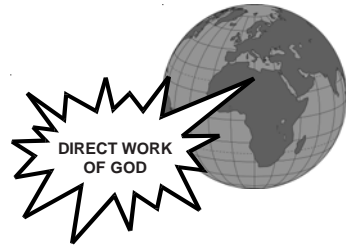


“distance” Himself and yet stay close. He is the God who is here, not there. In Him we live, move and have our being. However, He is the God who veils Himself behind the cloak of natural law lest He spoil us with His environment. In other words, there would be no desire to go to heaven if we lived in heaven.

How, then, does God work? How much does He work? And how does He protect us from His direct influence in order not to weaken our faith by continual sight of His supernatural environment? These are questions that must be answered in order to understand God’s purpose in His work of bringing obedient believers into eternal dwelling.

When God brushes aside the natural and lays bare His working hand, we see Him “**directly**” through His miraculous work. It is not that we actually see Him, for He is spirit and the material eye cannot see spirit (J n 4 : 2 4). What occurs in the work of miracle is that we openly see the **result** of His presence. Therefore, when we say that God works **directly**, we mean that He works in order to be empirically beheld by our natural eye.

God works **indirectly in order not to be seen by our natural** eye. By working indirectly, He works through the course of nature in a way that we can per-



ceive His work **only through faith**. This is not miracle, for miracle is supernatural because men witness the event. God's work behind the scenes would be "miracle" in the sense that the natural course of nature is being manipulated by His power. But from a strictly biblical definition, we could not define God's work behind the scene of natural law a miracle simply because the Bible does not call this work miraculous. Bible students often call God's work behind the scenes of natural law "**providence**." It is God working to provide; it is the Holy Spirit working in order to bring about the eternal purpose of Deity. This work is not the ordinary occurrence of natural law. However, it is not perceived by the senses of man, and thus, would not fall under the definition of miracle. But because we would not define such technically as a "miracle," does not mean that God is not working.

A. The direct work of God in the world:

In order not to work directly to be perceived through the senses of man, God must work by means of **medium**. When God works through medium, man's faith is preserved. His faith is preserved in the sense that he is not walking by sight, but by faith in the work of God behind the scene of natural law. Man is thus given the responsibility to develop his spiritual character and faith in preparation for eternity. However, when the Holy Spirit worked in creation on the physical world, **He worked directly in**

order to bring about a direct change in the physical environment (Gn 1:2). This would be miracle. Any direct work of the Spirit in the physical world is miracle. This work is clearly evident in the powers, wonders and signs that Jesus and the early disciples worked by the Holy Spirit in the first century. In fact, this work is described in the Bible as powers, wonders and signs simply because the work is openly manifested to those who beheld the work.

The above is true in the moral world of the behavior of man. Does the Holy Spirit work directly on the moral behavior of man in order to produce an instantaneous and observable change in the heart of man? This is the central question that is open for discussion concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. It is often a difficult question. Answering it has caused differences of opinion among Bible students for decades. Whatever our answer might be in studying the Scriptures, we must answer in a way that guards the free-moral agency of man. As stated in earlier chapters, if man's free-moral agency is attacked or questioned, then God's justice is questioned in judgment.

1. *The Spirit can operate directly with an individual without morally changing that individual.* When the Spirit miraculously influenced inspired men, the result was immediate and instantaneous, though the moral behavior of the inspired men was untouched. Peter preached by inspiration, but still lacked boldness in Antioch to stand up

against legalistic brethren from Jerusalem (Gl 2:11-13). We must conclude from this case that the Spirit did not work directly upon Peter's heart in order to miraculously make a change in his heart. The Spirit worked directly through Timothy in order to preach by the inspiration of the Spirit. However, Timothy did at one time lose his boldness. Paul had to write to him and encourage him to stir up the miraculous gift that he had received by the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Tm 1:6).

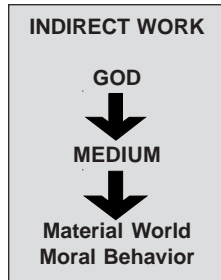
In reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit through the miraculous gifts, the Spirit was subject in His work to the one who possessed the miraculous gift (1 Co 14:32). The Corinthian brethren exercised their gifts of the Spirit among themselves. However, they used their gifts in a manner that manifested pride and division. Paul said that they were carnal (1 Co 3:1-3). The Spirit thus worked among them, but He did not miraculously change them into being humble and united people. Paul's letter to the Corinthian church is the evidence that proves that the Spirit did not miraculously change moral behavior even though He worked miraculously among the Corinthians. There is no greater evidence in the New Testament that proves that the Spirit does not directly, and thus, miraculously change the moral behavior of an individual than the case of the Corinthian church.

If the Spirit works directly, then His work is miraculous. In the work of God, the direct work of God means miraculous according to the understanding of

man who lives in subjection to natural laws. In other words, **the change that does not follow the normal course of nature and is visual to man as instantaneous with purpose is defined as miracle.** In the same sense, the change that is beyond the normal ability of man in the moral realm and is visual and instantaneous with purpose would be miracle. In other words, if a person were hateful, and then in a moment of time was made loving, such would appear to be miraculous because the change would be beyond man's normal ability to change. However, the change that comes over an individual upon repentance and conversion, is truly wonderful. Nevertheless, we could not conclude that the Holy Spirit subjectively made this change in a miraculous manner. The fact that the individual continues to struggle over weeks and months in order to bring his attitude and body into subjection to the will of God proves that it is the individual under the direction of the Spirit-inspired word of God who is at work. If the work of changing moral behavior were miraculous, then the Spirit would do an instantaneous change when one came out of the grave of baptism. This would be truly miraculous and would fall under the purpose for which miracles were worked. The miraculous, and thus instantaneous change would prove to the unbeliever that the Spirit was working directly in the world of man.

In the religious world, and the non-Christian pagan world as far as moral change goes, it is affirmed that radical change takes place in the hearts of the

truly “converted.” However, the problem in associating this with the miraculous work of the Spirit is the fact that this change takes place over a period of time. This may be a brief period, but it is not instantaneous in a moment of time as the occurrence of a miracle. These religious people have changed their lives from the most wicked to the point of being very spiritually minded individuals. As a result of their “conversions”, they abound in the fruit of the Spirit. We certainly could not deny their tremendous spiritual change and growth.



Such is real and actual. **However, would we affirm that the Spirit is working directly in these who have not obeyed the gospel in order to change their moral behavior?** If not, then to what would we ascribe their change? I would answer that man has the ability through belief and moral conviction, to make personal change. He has the mental ability within himself to radically change his moral behavior through application of moral principles. The spiritual lives of priests and religious leaders of non-Christian religions is a testimony to this fact. The testimony of non-Christian people to do the same, is evidence that man can make great moral changes in belief and behavior. This is not miracle. It is not the Holy Spirit directly working the change, though it is claimed to be such by the religious world who have not obeyed the gospel.

To maintain the above interpretation of the work of the Spirit on the moral behavior of man through his obedience to the directions of God is not legalism. It is not legalism to obey the commandments of God in order to bring about moral change in one’s behavior. Obedience to God’s word does not mean that one is meritoriously working for his salvation. Neither is it grounds for boasting to do what God has commanded us to do. In fact, growth in the virtue of humility would certainly not lead to one’s boasting that he has grown in humility. **It is natural to give all credit to God for growth in the fruit of the Spirit.**

Paul said, “... *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ...*” (Ph 2:12). He did not say “work for” your salvation with fear and trembling. The Christian has salvation. He must work it out in the sense of working in response to what God has done for him through the manifestation of His grace on the cross (See 1 Co 15:10; Ti 2:11). Therefore, it is not legalistic to work in response to what God has done for us. The Christian has been saved, and thus it is only natural for him to obey in response to God’s grace.

Some religious groups who believe in salvation by faith alone excel in the fruit of the Spirit. They often excel beyond Christians who have obeyed the gospel. However, we would not say that the Spirit is working in the life of the one who is not in a covenant relationship with God in order to change his moral behavior. If we affirm that the Spirit directly touches the moral behavior of man in

order to change his character, then we are faced with a dilemma. Why does not the Spirit always and equally produce in the Christian's life a greater spiritual dedication or goodness than that which is witnessed in the lives of those who are not in a covenant relationship with God because of obedience to the gospel? Could it be that we have missed the point of how the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in the character of the Christian? Could we be believing something that the Spirit does not actually do? Regardless of our answer, we must face the fact that there are many great spiritually minded and faith-oriented religious people out there who put Christians to shame in many areas of commitment and evangelistic fervor. There are thousands of those of non-Christian religions who have great devotion, love, joy, peace, and gentleness in their lives. However, they do not have the Spirit. How do they develop these personal characteristics without the Spirit? I believe that we must deal with this point. **If the Spirit operates directly, then why are not Christians committed above what is seen in the religious world where we witness great commitment?** In my discussions with Bible students concerning the work of the Spirit on the moral behavior of man, I have found that students usually do not like to discuss this point. When the point is brought up, there is usually no answer given. Preconceptions of how the Spirit is supposed to work on the moral behavior of the Christian has often made it impossible for one to give an objective answer. Nevertheless, the question of spiri-

tual growth among those not in a covenant relationship with God must be discussed and answered. Refusing to answer the question and deal with the matter only manifests one's refusal to be objective in allowing the word of God to give us an objective answer concerning how the Spirit goes about doing His work of changing the moral behavior of man in an indirect and non-miraculous manner.

I would like to add here an observation. During a crusade, campaign or gospel meeting, ten individuals might obey the gospel by immersion. One year later, however, five of these may have fallen away or grown poorly in the faith. The other five may have excelled in spiritual growth, being fruitful in teaching and preaching. Has the Spirit succeeded in the latter group, but failed in the first group? How shall we account for the difference between the two groups if we believe in a direct work of the Spirit on the heart of an individual? Jesus gave the parable of the Sower (Mt 13:18-23,37-43). Only one-fourth of the soil produced. What happened to the other three-fourths? Why would the Spirit fail to produce in the three-fourths, and succeed in only one-fourth?

Some have answered the above thoughts by saying that the Spirit works on the moral behavior of man as the individual free-morally allows Him to work. However, this seems to be an effort to dodge the question and an effort not to accept one's personal responsibility to submit his character to the will of God. We may claim an inadequacy in

understanding some mysterious “direct” work of the Spirit on the moral behavior of man. Nevertheless, one’s final position must conclude that man will be held accountable for any moral change in his life. He will be held accountable for his behavior (2 Co 5:10). If this is not true, then the five apostates of the first group who responded to the invitation at the campaign above have an excuse. The three-fourths of those represented by the unproductive soil of the parable of the Sower have an adequate excuse not to be condemned to hell (See Mt 13:3-8,18-23). Their excuse would be valid if they could claim that the Spirit did not sufficiently work in their lives to produce faithfulness.

2. To operate directly means to operate miraculously. How is the Spirit actually working on the moral behavior of the Christian? **We must understand that a direct operation of the Spirit apart from means is a miraculous operation.** Keep in mind that direct means miraculous in relation to the work of God in the affairs of man. However, we must confess that God can work directly without our observation. The Holy Spirit could work directly on the planet Mars at this very moment. We would not perceive the work. Nevertheless, the direct contact and work would still be defined miraculous according to our biblical dictionary here on Earth.

DIRECT = “MIRACULOUS”

The direct work of the Spirit simply means that something immediately happens in the material world. It happens

apart from the normal process of natural law. **Therefore, there is no such thing as a direct non-miraculous work of God.** All direct work of God is miraculous according to our judgment of the natural processes of natural laws, though we may not be present to see the miraculous activity. It can be direct, and yet not perceived by our senses.

3. To operate directly means that God is directly responsible. God is responsible for the effect of any direct work. Therefore, if God operates directly on the heart of man, then God is directly responsible for the condition of the heart of the individual at any one time. If the Christian falls, then God must accept some responsibility for inefficiency in His work. It is for this reason that God must work indirectly and through me-



medium upon the heart of man. When He works indirectly, and through means, then man is held accountable for any insufficiency. **Fallen men must be held fully accountable for their sins.**

4. To operate directly means to operate without means or medium. God works through means or medium in order to conceal His working from probable beholders. We call this “non-miraculous.” This is God working, but His working is concealed by the medium through which He works in order not to be **seen** to be miraculous by man. By

working through medium on the moral behavior of man, God allows the free-moral agent to respond voluntarily. On the other hand, in a direct operation of the Spirit on the heart of man, the Spirit of necessity would miraculously change the moral behavior of man. However, in an indirect operation through the medium of revelation (the word of truth), God allows the free-moral agent to voluntarily respond. Thus, free-moral agency is preserved and the justice of God is maintained without accusation.

We must affirm, therefore, that the Spirit works on the moral character of man through medium, through a means of operation in order not to infringe on the free-moral agency of man. In this way man's spiritual growth is also subject to the free-moral choices of man. If Christians do not grow in commitment and evangelistic fervor beyond the religious world in which they live, or non-Christian world, then only the individual Christian can be blamed. Religious commitment should be greater among true believers than among any man-made religion of this world.

So how does one give credit to the Spirit for spiritual growth? The answer is simple. We cannot take credit for being directed toward a certain goal if we have not established the goal or the route to follow in order to reach the goal. Through the Spirit, the goal of eternal life has been revealed. Through the Spirit, the knowledge of what is expected of us by God has been revealed. When we act on this knowledge, how can we take

credit for arriving at the goal? Since we cannot reach the goal of eternal life either by good works or perfect keeping of law, then all credit must be given to God when we arrive. All credit must be given to the Spirit for informing us concerning all matters that pertain to our salvation. It was through the Spirit that all things have been granted to us (2 Pt 1:3). Therefore, it is the Spirit who accomplishes His work in us as we work out our salvation (Ph 2:12,13).

B. The indirect work of God in the world:

We now come to the moral behavior of man and how the Holy Spirit changes that behavior by His influence. The question here does not concern the location of the Spirit in indwelling. We are concerned about how the Spirit works in the Christian's life. We are specifically concerned about the influence of the Spirit on the moral behavior of the believer. All the unnecessary argument around locating the Spirit is of no value when considering the work and influence of the Spirit. The subject of indwelling is very important. However, the real issue is how the Spirit works in order to influence the moral behavior of man. This is the subject we must always keep in mind while discussing indwelling.

1. *The Spirit's work is not limited by our knowledge.* The Spirit works regardless of how we think He indwells the saints as far as location. The Spirit's work is neither enhanced nor limited by

the nature of His “personal” indwelling. His work in the Christian’s life is not regulated by His location. Neither is it determined by our knowledge of how He works. God the Holy Spirit can work from the distant corners of the universe. He works regardless of our knowledge of how He works in our lives. In the chapters to come, the effect of His work is often defined as indwelling. The metaphorical use of the word “indwell” emphasizes the close working relationship God the Holy Spirit has with the Christian. However, we must not confine His work solely to the lives of Christians. God has always been transcendent in His creation. I believe He still works among the nations of the world in order to bring about His purposes. He is working all things together for good for the believer (Rm 8:28). This work is certainly not confined to the moral behavior of the believer. Therefore, to say that God’s work in this world is confined to the location or presence of the believer is a limited view of the totality of God’s work. His ways are beyond our discovery, beyond our comprehension. Therefore, unless we overestimate our knowledge of His work, we would do well to caution ourselves about being too dogmatic in this area of study.

2. *The Spirit works in a way to guard free-moral agency.* The Spirit works on the moral behavior of man in an indirect manner, and thus, through means or medium. If He worked directly, then He would miraculously, and thus immediately change our moral behavior to confirm completely to total godliness.

However, He works indirectly and through means in order to preserve the free-moral agency of man and uphold the justice of God. In other words, through the means of natural law God has worked in order to affect the material world. Such work is indirect. It is not miraculous. However, change did/does occur. In the same manner, God the Holy Spirit works through medium to change the moral behavior of man.

3. *The Spirit works in order to change moral behavior.* In the realm of the morality of man, the Spirit works through moral law in order to affect the moral behavior of man. His work is **indirect**. It is through the medium of inspired words of direction in the life of the one who believes. Moral change does occur. However, such change is not miraculous in the sense that it is instantaneous. Through the means of intelligible communication of written words, the Spirit directs and leads the behavior of submitted men.

To be more specific, the Spirit operates upon the heart of the sinner and the saint today through the medium of revealed truth.

Before the New Testament was written, the Holy Spirit operated through inspired men. Now He operates through the inspired Book. Even when the Holy Spirit operated miraculously through inspired men, He did not operate in conversion and sanctification apart from the Word. The miraculous operation was to reveal the Word, by which the sinner was converted and the saint edified.^{5:16}

4. *The Spirit's work is not mystical.*

There is nothing mysterious or superstitious about the work of the Spirit. There is nothing mystic about God's requirement that men morally obey His word. One is not to seek for some nudge or inner feeling in order to conjure up something mystical. God strictly warned Israel not to involve herself in the mystical incantations of the occult world. These admonitions served a purpose for God knew that He made man with the ability to search to the limit in all fields of study. The inquisitive nature of man leads him to reach to the lower depths of the sea. He must probe the outer limits of space. He is not satisfied unless he can break matter down to its most minute substance. Men exercise the same inquisitiveness in the spirit world. We are driven to move the mind to the limit, even to the point of making the unreal seem real. For this reason God warned Israel against inventing religions that were unreal. He warned Israel against following the deceptions of her imaginations (Lv 19:26,31; Dt 4:15-19; 18:9-14).

It was not that there was something there when one went to the extent of his imagination. The fact was that God knew that He had created man with the ability to conjure up something that was not real, but think that it was real. God made the mind of man with the ability to talk himself into believing something that was not real. For this reason God warned man not to go to such limits of imagination, for when men would do such, they would only deceive themselves into believing a lie.

God's warnings, therefore, were not based upon the fact that what man would invent was real. God knew the ability of man to deceive himself. This ability of self-deception needed a bridle. That bridle is God's direction through revealed truth. When men forsake guidance by the word of God, they leave themselves open for the invention of countless religious deceptions (See 2 Th 2:10-12).

But God's warnings do not presuppose that there is a real world of incantations out there for the discovery of the mystical mind. God knew that men would invent and deceive themselves into believing that his mystical inventions were real. Herein is the danger of man's mystical religions. Man would lead himself away from truth to follow his own inventions. The end of the journey of mystical religion is always error. Israel went down this road of self-deception. We will go down the same road today if we do not hold tight to the direction of the word of God.

There is also the danger in mystifying Christianity. There are those under the umbrella of "Christianity" who would lead us to believe that there is something mystical about the Holy Spirit and His work. The very mention of His name conjures up mystical emotions on the part of some. Thus under the banner of "Christianity" men have invented "christian" occults that are entirely foreign to the Scriptures. A form of occult "Christianity" has been developed that smirks at the idea of the Spirit limiting His work on the moral behavior of man to word of revelation. To some, this con-

cept robs Christianity of its mystery. I would disagree. There is a mystery about the work of God in the lives of Christians. His ways are beyond our comprehension. However, when it comes to understanding how God intended to influence the moral behavior of man, there is little mystery. There is little mystery in the statement of Jesus, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”* (Jn 14:15).

We surely cannot understand God’s ways, for Scripture says that His ways are past finding out. His ways are mysterious, but not mystical. And we surely cannot understand all the workings of the Holy Spirit. However, those ways that **directly** affect us are clear. They are objective. We can know how God works in our lives in order to change our moral behavior. Nevertheless, **God works around us in a mysterious manner that cannot be defined by our empirical dictionary.** This mystery does not frighten us. We know that God is here. He works. He affects our environment. We cannot explain His workings, for such workings are above our experience. For this reason, they are mysterious to our world. We would not rob Christianity of its mystery. On the other hand, we would not make it a mystical religion of notions and nudges.

Boles was correct when he said, **“The immediate, direct, mysterious [mystical], superstitious, and traditional impact of contact of the Holy Spirit with the soul or spirit of man is not taught in the New Testament.”**^{6:239}

We must not lead ourselves off into mystifying Christianity. What God would have us do in order to be saved and grow

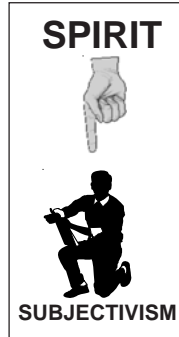
spiritually is not unclear in His word. We would not call upon some spiritualistic influence to do for us what God expects us to do for ourselves.

On the other hand, Christianity is not a mathematical equation. It is not a philosophical discipline of logic and humanism. God knew that our investigative minds would lead us out of control and away from Him if not controlled by word of revelation (2 Th 2:10-12). He is therefore clear and distinct in His word as to what we must do and be. He is clear as to how we would get to where He wants us to be. Howard correctly stated,

Any theory of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit through miraculous intervention, separate and apart from the word of God, would nullify the cross and set aside the whole scheme of redemption, revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles in the New Testament The Holy Spirit moves the mind and convicts the souls of man today, but not independent of the word of God. When man hears and obeys the gospel he hears and obeys the word of the Spirit. The word of God has always been the revelation of the Spirit, which man is obligated to hear and obey.^{38:13}

5. The Spirit’s work is not subjective. There is also the belief that the Spirit “incubates” the word in order to empower its effect upon the soul of man. This concept was born out of the Calvinistic concept of total depravity. Calvin taught that the sinful nature of man made him nonresponsive to the law of God. In

order for man to respond to God's call through the word, the Holy Spirit had to be sent into the heart of man in order to activate the will of man to respond to God's call. This concept of spiritual growth is often brought over to the Christian life. In other words, in order for the Christian to spiritually grow, the Spirit must activate the word. One cannot free-morally respond to the commands of God in order to grow into that which is required by God. The Spirit must ignite the influence of revelation upon the heart of man.



Those who believe that the Spirit works in conjunction with the word in order to activate its effectiveness in the life of the Christian are too often antagonistic to the idea of those who affirm that the Spirit works on the moral behavior of man through the medium of the Scriptures. It is assumed that if one does not believe in the aid of the Spirit in spiritual growth, then he or she cannot adequately grow spiritually. However, if one's knowledge of the Spirit's work on his moral behavior regulates the amount of spiritual growth the Spirit will generate, then the scripturally uneducated new convert in the bush of middle Africa has a problem. His lack of knowledge of the supposed activating work of the Spirit will hinder his spiritual growth until he discovers this supposed truth. However, God will save all those who believe and obey the simple gospel, regardless of

their knowledge of great theological "truths" that we would demand that people know in order to spiritually grow.

Those who hear and obey the word of truth are subjects for salvation. God demands that men obey His word. He has not placed the responsibility for the salvation of the individual on the shoulders of the Holy Spirit. In other words, He does not demand of the Spirit that He work in conjunction with the word in order to prepare man for salvation. Over one hundred years ago Campbell wrote,

With some, there is a sort of compound system, claiming both the Spirit and the Word—representing the naked Spirit of God operating upon the naked soul of man, without any argument, or motive, interposed in some mysterious and inexplicable way—incubating the soul, quickening, or making it spiritually alive, by a direct and immediate contact, without the intervention of one moral idea, or impression.^{15:361}

No one has ever been able to explain how the Spirit works to empower in conjunction with the word in order to bring about spiritual growth. The fact that such a work cannot be explained by Scripture moves us to question this supposed manner of work by the Spirit. This does say that we must understand how the Spirit would do such a work. What must be found are the passages where the Spirit states that He works in such a manner.

We must remember that we are limited in understanding the work of the

Spirit to the revelation of the Spirit. Our understanding of the Spirit's work, therefore, must be explained by the Spirit in the word of God. We know nothing of His workings other than what is revealed in the Scriptures. This is not a confining principle. It is a safe principle that God has set forth for believers to follow. Because of our desire to create religions after our own desires, God has confined our understanding of true Christianity to His Scriptures. Those who would dare go beyond the Scriptures to claim what

God does, would fall under the indictment of 2 Thessalonians. In this context Paul stated that because some did not have a love of the truth, they believed delusions. Abiding in and believing the truth deals with more than one's beliefs. It deals with actions. Beliefs are the foundation for action. If one does not discipline his beliefs to what is revealed in Scripture, invariably he will lead himself to wrong conclusions, and thus wrong actions. The disciple's mind must be directed by Scripture.

Chapter 2

The Work Of The Spirit Through Revelation

The theology of many in the religious world concerning the influence or work of the Holy Spirit is based on the assumption that men are born with either a totally depraved or sinful nature. The belief that one has a totally depraved nature assumes that one cannot of his own free will respond to the revealed will of God. The concept of a sinful nature is the assumption that men are inclined to evil. Those who assume either theology teach that a direct work of the Spirit in the life of both the unbeliever and believer is necessary in order for one to respond to the word of God. It is believed that a direct operation is necessary to move the sinner to respond to the spoken or written word. A direct operation is necessary in the life of the saint in order to move the Christian to apply the word in the sanctification of the soul. Because of these erroneous concepts of the nature

of man, the denominational world continually sets forth erroneous teachings concerning the work and influence of the Holy Spirit.

Some of the beliefs of the religious world concerning the work of the Holy Spirit are represented by the following statements. J. B. Moody taught "that man is so depraved that he is unable without a direct enabling power of the Holy Spirit to obey the Gospel of the Son of God."⁴³ The *Baptist Church Manual* states "that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is affected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in conjunction with divine truth."^{44:49,50} N. L. Rice stated, "We believe and teach that in conversion and sanctification, there is an influence of the Spirit in addition to that of the Word and distinct from it. An influence without which the arguments and

motives of the gospel would never convert and sanctify one of Adam's ruined race."^{45:628} At a Mennonite General Conference it was affirmed, "At conversion the Holy Spirit sanctifies the believer Therefore the Spirit progressively transforms him into the spiritual image of Christ and enables him to have victory over temptation. The Spirit makes possible growth in moral discernment"⁴⁶

The above representative statements present the view of what many in the religious world have taught for decades concerning the direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the moral behavior of man. Regardless of what is taught in the religious world concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, it is the Bible student's task to come to the Scriptures with an objective view to determine what the Spirit says He does. In view of the tremendous influence the religious world places on the church concerning erroneous ideas of the Holy Spirit, it is our task to reevaluate the influence of the Spirit on the heart of man. Our textbook for discovering how the Spirit influences the heart of man must always be the New Testament. No position concerning the influence of the Spirit can be accepted which the Spirit Himself does not clearly set forth in the inspired word of God. We must limit our discussion on this subject, therefore, to the direction of the Bible, and thus guard ourselves against any influences of erroneous beliefs.

We cannot allow subjective religion to dictate our beliefs concerning the manner by which the Spirit works. In other words, one's good life or behavior must

not be allowed to be proof that the Spirit has been working directly in his or her life. If such is allowed, then we are faced with the dilemma that the Spirit works in the life of unbelievers and those who have not obeyed the gospel. Cornelius was a devout man of good character (At 10:1,2). However, he had not the Spirit for he was not a Christian. If the good character of those who have not obeyed the gospel becomes a standard to prove the presence and work of the Spirit, **then we are forced to accept the teachings of those who profess good characters.**

How then does the Spirit work? This discussion is not a study of the indwelling of the Spirit. How the Spirit works must never be dependent upon our understanding of the indwelling if we believe that indwelling refers to locating the Spirit. If one attaches the work of the Spirit solely to the indwelling, he will be faced with the dilemma of forcing the Spirit not to work where He is not personally located.

We must not "localize" the presence of the Spirit in the world solely to the presence of the saints. This teaching would infringe on the omnipotence of the Spirit. If one seeks to make the work of the Spirit dependent on the indwelling of the Spirit, then he should not confine either the presence or work of the Spirit to the presence and environment of those He indwells. The Spirit works beyond the presence of Christians, beyond the environment in which he lives. We must keep in mind that it is in God that we live, move and have our being (At 17:28). It is not in us that He lives, moves and

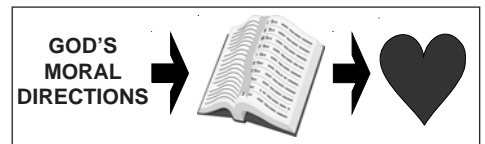
has His being.

Before we establish the bases or medium through which the Spirit influences our moral behavior, it is necessary to understand what is influenced and how it is influenced. Therefore, keep in mind that we are referring to the changing of the moral conduct or behavior of the Christian. How does God give us knowledge of what we must do? How is this knowledge implemented in the lives of those who know what God requires of them? We want to know how God has determined how we should know and obey His will in order to be pleasing to Him. Set aside for a moment thoughts concerning an indwelling presence of the Spirit. Think specifically concerning how any individual can know what God requires of us concerning knowledge and obedience to His will. How does God prepare us for heaven? I am redundant with these questions and thoughts simply because most people confuse discussions on the existence and work of the Spirit by their reaction to alternative views concerning the Spirit. In their reaction, they fail to get to the point of what the discussion is actually about. Therefore, when you read through the following material, please keep in mind that the discussion is first about how one discovers what is required by God to be pleasing to Him. Secondly, it is about determining how one's knowledge of God's requirements are implemented in our behavior.

The Bible teaches that God has always worked through word of revelation in order to communicate to man what he

must do to change his moral behavior in order to comply with the will of God. After all, we would not know what to do to please God if He had not revealed His will to us in written form. We cannot trust in our own urges and impulses because such would be subjective. God has always communicated His will to man through words of instruction. Even before the word of God was recorded, God spoke through the Fathers of the families in order to communicate His instructions to man (Hb 1:1). God has never used mystical urges and emotions in order to communicate to man that which is necessary to please Him.

Since God communicates to man through word of revelation, we must define what we mean by the influence of the Spirit on the heart of man. By **influence** we do not mean that the Spirit works through mystical urges or impulses. The Spirit's influences are always through means or medium. In the conversion of the sinner, the means of operation of the Spirit on the heart of the alien sinner is the word of God. In the edification of the saint, God continues to work through the preaching and teaching of the word of God.



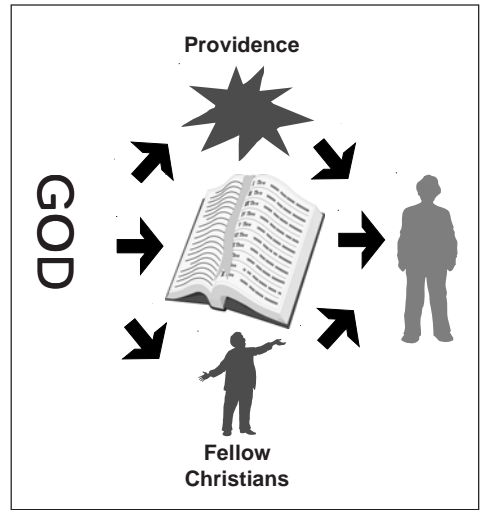
The **direct** work of the Spirit refers to the Spirit working apart from means or medium in order to influence the heart of man. In miracles the Spirit worked

directly on the material world. In inspiration the Spirit worked directly upon the minds of men. However, with the moral behavior of man, we must affirm that the Spirit works through means or medium in order to guard the free-moral agency of man. In influencing men and women to comply with the will of God, the Spirit works through the medium of the word of revelation in order to instruct us to follow after His directions. All men, therefore, must free-morally respond to and follow the instructions of God that He gives through His word.

Though God may work through His inspired word to direct man to do that which is necessary for salvation and spiritual growth, we would not say that this is the only manner by which God intends that we grow in the faith. God does not work exclusively through His word in order to influence the Christian. He works in people around us who have obeyed His will, and He works through the instructions of His word. The following are areas whereby God seeks to influence us in our lives on earth as His children:

A. God providentially influences our lives.

God does not work on man through “words only.” If He did, then the influence of the Spirit in the affairs of man would be greatly limited. **God, the Spirit, works providentially in the affairs of man.** In working in these affairs, man is affected. The Christian is affected. This is not God working



through word of revelation. This is God working in an indirect manner in order to work all things together for good (Rm 8:28). It is the Spirit working **on the world around the Christian in order to indirectly** influence the moral behavior of both the sinner and saint. Keep in mind, however, that this is not a direct work of the Spirit on the moral behavior of any individual. It is the work of God the Spirit in the affairs of man in order to provide man with an opportunity to respond to the events in his life. God’s work through providence is indirect through the means or medium of circumstances surrounding the individual.

B. God the Spirit works through the lives of others.

God the Spirit also works through the lives of others. **The lives of individual Christians are affected through the lives of other Christians.** The biblical teaching of Christian fellowship was

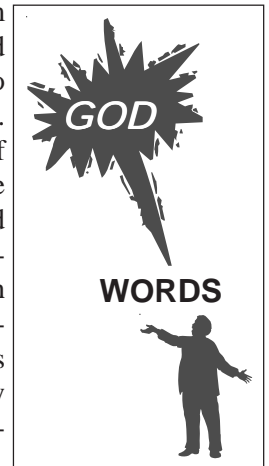
given for the purpose that God work on the hearts of individuals through the obedience of fellow Christians. When one remains in fellowship with fellow Christians, his life is affected, and thus changed. As evil companions corrupt good behavior, so good Christian companions affect one in a positive manner. This is the indirect work of the Spirit on the heart of the individual. Through the individual response of one Christian's behavior to the word of God, other Christians are influenced. This is what Paul meant when he stated, "***Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ***" (1 Co 11:1). This is what he meant in reference to the example of the Thessalonian church when he wrote of them, "***And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe***" (1 Th 1:6,7). We must credit this work to the Spirit, for it is the inspired word of the Spirit that directed the life of Paul and the Thessalonians to influence others.

The believer can influence the unbeliever by Christian conduct. This is what Peter meant in 1 Peter 3:1 when he commanded Christian wives to behave themselves in a Christian manner before their unbelieving husbands. Peter exhorted Christian wives to live godly before their unbelieving husbands in order that the unbelieving husband "***without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives***" Therefore, this is an indirect influence of the Spirit on the heart of the

unbeliever. Through the behavior of Christians, God works in the lives of unbelievers. This concept was also set forth by Jesus when He said of believers, "***You are the salt of the earth ...***" (Mt 5:13). God intends to affect and influence the world by the behavior of Christians. In this way the Spirit works to stimulate a response from those who are searching for a better life. When a sinner is affected by the Christian influence of the believer, the believer must "***be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks***" a reason for the hope that is in him (1 Pt 3:15). The Christian's life must be conducted in a manner by which one speaks the principles of God through obedience.

C. God influences man through word of revelation.

God has always influenced His people through words of instruction. Through words He sought to lead and guide Israel out of idolatry by revealing to them what they should do in order to please Him. Through words of instruction He sought to guard them from apostasy. Through words He communicated to the Jews in the first century to accept the gospel of Jesus.



1. Through words God appealed to mankind. During the days of Noah's preaching, God sought to turn mankind back to righteousness. His appeal was through the words of Noah's preaching. Through Noah, "*a preacher of righteousness*" (2 Pt 2:5), Christ "*went and preached*" to those of Noah's day (1 Pt 3:19,20; Gn 6). Through Noah's inspired words, the Spirit worked to turn the hearts of men to righteousness.

2. Through words God appealed to Israel. God's appeal to rebellious Israel can be summed up in what Nehemiah wrote in Nehemiah 9. God gave His "*good Spirit to instruct them*" (vs 20). Nehemiah said of their rebellion, "*Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against You, cast Your law behind their backs and killed Your prophets, who testified against them to turn them to Yourself ...*" (vs 26). In other words, the Spirit testified and appealed to them through the inspired words of the prophets. Nevertheless, Israel did not harken to the words of the prophets.

3. Through words God appealed to the Jews of the first century. Peter appealed to the Jews on Pentecost through words of inspired preaching. After Peter preached, Luke records, "*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart ...*" (At 2:37). "*And with many other words he testified and exhorted them ...*" (vs 40). "*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized ...*" (vs 41).

4. Through words God worked to continually build up the early church. When Paul last met with the Ephesian elders, he commended them to the in-

struction of the word of God. He said, "*I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified*" (At 20:32). James wrote to Christians. His exhortation was not to receive a direct influence from the Spirit in order to be built up. His exhortation was that they **receive** the word of God. He wrote, "*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls*" (Js 1:21). To receive the word of God is to accept it into one's heart. Receiving means submitting to God's word. Paul commended the Ephesian elders to the word of God. James said that it must be received into one's life in the sense that Christians must submit to the instructions of God.

Belief is produced by hearing, "*and hearing by the word of God*" (Rm 10:17). This is God's system of producing faith in the individual. Faith is not produced miraculously through the work of the Spirit. It is produced by the individual's hearing (study) of the word of God. Faith in the heart of the sinner and saint alike is produced by the inspired word of God. There can be no faith in the true and living God if one does not know God through His revelation to man.

The Spirit did not set up the inspired word as a means of conversion, and then circumvent this inspired word in order to directly sanctify the saint. It is the work of the Spirit to convert. Through the medium of the influence of inspired

words He touches the heart of the sinner. It is also the work of the Spirit to sanctify the heart of the saint. However, He does not work parallel to His work of touching hearts through word of revelation by directly generating in the hearts of men that which is required by God in order to be saved. If the Spirit has placed so much emphasis on the preaching and teaching of the word of God, then we would conclude that He works through the word of God in order to accomplish faith and growth in the hearts of men.

Because the Spirit in the Bible places so much emphasis on the work of the preached and taught word of God, does not mean that the Spirit and the word are the same. **Since the Spirit inspired the word to be written, He is given direct credit for the effect of what the word accomplishes.** In Hebrews 3:7 the Hebrew writer stated, "... *the Holy Spirit says*" The Hebrew writer then quoted Psalm 95:7-11 which was actually the written words of David. Since David was inspired by the Spirit to write the words, then the Spirit is the one who would deserve credit for Psalm 95:7-11. Paul exhorted the Ephesians to keep "*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Ep 4:3). He then stated that there was "*one body and one Spirit, just as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God ...*" (Ep 4:4-6). The Spirit is the foundation for unity simply because it was through the inspiration of the Spirit that the Ephesians were taught that there was one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God. The unity of the Spirit is maintained

by continuing to believe in the word by which the Spirit has communicated the oneness of truth. The Spirit, therefore, deserves credit for unity because He is the one who worked to reveal the fundamentals upon which unity is founded

When the Spirit is given credit for the effect of what is produced through the preaching and teaching of His inspired word, this does not mean that the Spirit and the word are the same. The belief that the Spirit and word are the same is an erroneous conclusion and one that is based on a misunderstanding of how God through inspiration seeks to convert the sinner and change the heart of the saint. The instrument by which He seeks to accomplish His purposes is not literally Himself. However, since the instrument of conversion and spiritual growth originated from God the Holy Spirit, then He deserves the credit. Since the word of God is the result of the inspired work of the Spirit, then it is the Spirit who must be given credit for the effect. (More on this later.)

Paul and all inspired writers received the word of God through inspiration. They also received the mystery of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ. This mystery was communicated to the churches through inspired letters. Paul wrote, "... *how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words ...)*" (Ep 3:3). He also wrote, "*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*" (1 Co 2:13). These were the words of inspiration that

Christians are to allow to dwell in them (Cl 3:16). By these words we are to be comforted. To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, *“Therefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Th 4:18). This is the *“implanted word which is able to save your souls”* (Js 1:21); the incorruptible word by which we are begotten (1 Pt 1:23). Through these words the Spirit instructs, reproves, corrects, comforts and teaches (2 Tm 3:16). These words are *“living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow ...”* (Hb 4:12).

Since God intended that the influence of His word be so powerful on the soul of man, we logically conclude that He would not need to directly influence the moral behavior of man through a subjective work of the Spirit. **Any teaching that says that the Spirit must directly, and thus miraculously influence the heart of man, minimizes the effectiveness of the word of God.**

If the Spirit does directly affect the heart of man, then we would question concerning the extent to which He does this work. I have seen religions that have completely supplanted the work of the Spirit on the heart through the Scriptures by their teaching that the Spirit directly does this work. In fact, many among the charismatic religious movement have rejected the word of God completely. They now affirm that the Spirit teaches them directly, and thus, have no need of the Bible. When men are ignorant of what God intended to do through the Spirit-inspired word of God, they will

invent for themselves all sorts of influences which God never promised. When men cease to be students of the word of God, they will seek any shortcut to spiritual growth.

If one believes that the Spirit influences the heart to a limited extent and the Scriptures also influence to some extent, **then there is always the question as to which influence is actually causing the change in moral behavior or which influence is greater.** The one who holds the belief that it is the Spirit of God working through the inspired word is often accused of maintaining a “Spiritless” faith. But such is an erroneous accusation in view of the fact that much of the accusation is based on a misunderstanding of the subject under discussion. What is under discussion is the moral behavior of man and how God affects this behavior. There is no question of the fact that the Spirit works through the medium of the Spirit-inspired Scriptures in the Christian’s life in order to change the moral behavior of the Christian. By maintaining this position we can always give God credit for any change in behavior simply because one has freely changed his life to obedient belief in and behavior of the word of God. Now how the Spirit would directly accomplish any other influence on the moral behavior of man, will always be questioned.

Consider this point from another angle. If the word of God is meant to be so powerful on the moral behavior of man, then why would there need to be a direct influence of the Spirit? If the word

of God is as powerful as the Spirit claims it to be, then there is no need for the Spirit to circumvent the Scriptures in order to activate the influence of the word of God in either the life of the sinner or saint.

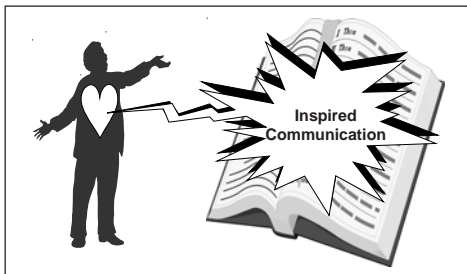
D. God guides man through word of revelation.

When God has dealt with man in the past to change or direct his moral behavior, it was through inspired words of communication.

1. The Spirit instructs through inspired words. In the Old Testament God always instructed and guided the moral behavior of His children by inspired word of revelation. “*God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets*” (Hb 1:1). God’s “*word was upon*” the tongue of David to direct Israel (2 Sm 23:2). God said to Jeremiah, “*Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them*” (Jr 5:14). God “*testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets ...*” (2 Kg 17:13; see vs 23). God directed Israel by His prophets who spoke forth the words of instruction (2 Pt

1:20,21; 1 Tm 4:1). This allowed the Jews the opportunity to exercise their free-moral agency and to determine their own destiny. When they were removed from the land of Palestine because of their disobedience, they could blame only themselves. God’s justice stood unchallenged because He had forewarned them through the spoken words of the prophets. Their guilt was upon their own shoulders because the prophets spoke the word of God to them in order that they change their pattern of behavior (See Ez 18).

We would conclude that God works on the moral behavior of man today in the same manner as He worked on His people for thousands of years before Pentecost in Acts 2. We do not have a greater advantage for moral development by a supposed direct work of the Spirit on our hearts than great heroes of faith as Abraham, David and the faithful of Israel. If Abraham were able in personal obedient faith to respond to the word of God to submit his moral behavior to God’s will, then certainly one can do the same today. Abraham never arrogantly claimed he had accomplished moral strength by his own will. He did not boast of great faith when he went to the mountain in obedience to God’s command to offer his son. Abraham did not gain his faith by meritorious works of law. His great faith was manifested in his response to the spoken word of God (Hb 11:8-10). Every man has the same opportunity today to obey as Abraham. Our advantage is that we have sixty-six books and letters of instruction that Abraham and the other Old Testament faithfuls did not have.



It is not that we have a greater ability today to grow spiritually than any obedient servant of God before Acts 2. The fact is that we have centuries of recorded history of how God has worked. We have the revelation of the gospel of the Son of God. Since the faithful of God's people remained true to God today because of the revelation of the Son of God, we would conclude that our faith has more reason to respond and remain than those who had no knowledge of the gospel before its revelation. One might say that the faith of Abraham was greater in the sense that he obeyed without a knowledge of the gospel, whereas we obey because we have that knowledge. Was this not in the mind of Peter when he wrote the following?

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into” (1 Pt 1:10-12).

The point from the preceding is that God has always worked through revelation of Himself and His instructions in order to guide man. His revelation has

thus been the foundation upon which men have built their faith. God through His revelation built the faith in the heart of man, but the faith was ignited as a result of God's revelation to man. It was not spontaneously generated in man by a direct work of God on the heart of man.

2. *The Spirit spoke words in visions.*

It is difficult to understand what actually took place in the event of a vision in the life of one who was blessed with the event. It was certainly a surreal happening wherein the one who experienced it could not determine whether the event was real or something of the mind only. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven, he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body (2 Co 12:1-4). The question is not that we understand what happened during a vision. The question centers around how God communicated in the vision.

When the Spirit directed the prophets and apostles through visions, He did not communicate in a manner to subjectively control their moral behavior. He communicated through the senses of man, allowing God's servants to exercise their free-moral agency. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth, *“for He will not **speak** on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will **speak**; and He will **tell** you things to come”* (Jn 16:13). Acts 8:29 says, *“Then the Spirit **said** to Philip”* Paul was to be a witness for Jesus of what he had **seen and heard** (At 22:15). Paul saw a vision in Acts 16. But in that vision a man *“**pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’**”*

(vs 9; see 27:22-24). While in Corinth “*the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision ...*” (At 18:9). John was commanded to write in a book (Revelation) of what he **saw** (Rv 1:11). It was the Spirit speaking through John to the seven churches of Asia (Rv 2:11). In all this divine communication by vision, words were used as the means of communication. The prophets were allowed to see visions. However, through words those visions were communicated to the people of God. God not only spoke in the vision, the vision was communicated to others through the words of the prophet. God did not communicate through notions and nudges.

3. The Spirit inspired words to be written. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 explains God’s system of guidance by inspiration. Verses 10-12 teach that the mind of God was made known to man by the Spirit

who knows God’s mind. But the Spirit made known God’s mind by a system of “*combining spiritual things with spiritual words*” (vs 13-KJV). This brings to mind again what Jesus said in John 16:13, that the Spirit would **speak** what He heard. The Spirit used words to communicate to chosen men in order to reveal the mind of God to man (See 1 Co 14:37; Gl 1:11,12; 2 Pt 1:20,21). The Holy Spirit still communicates to the alien sinner and the Christian today through these words. He does not minimize His inspired work through His word by directly influencing the heart of man in a subjective manner. Those who believe that the Spirit still imparts knowledge of God’s will directly to the believer often do not study their Bibles. But faith comes by hearing (studying) the word of Christ (Rm 10:17). If one wants to grow in faith, he must study the inspired word of the Spirit.

Chapter 3

The All-Sufficiency Of The Word Of God

The Bible teaches that the word of God is all-sufficient and able to bring one safely to heaven if obeyed. God intended that we be able to obey His instructions in the Bible in a manner that would allow us to have confidence before God in judgment. If we love in deed and truth, John says, “... *by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God*” (1 Jn 3:18-21). This is not to say that one can legalistically

obey the word of God in order to demand salvation that is based on meritorious works. Righteousness is not by works of the law (Rm 4:1-5). No one can ever obey law perfectly, and thus, no one can perfectly obey law in order to save himself (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). However, by trusting in God’s grace, one can change his moral behavior in response to the grace of God. Paul wrote, “*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness ...*” (Rm 4:5).

However, Jesus said, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death**” (Jn 8:51). This is what we must believe and affirm. God has “*given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue*” (2 Pt 1:3). By allowing **these things** (the instructions of the inspired Scriptures) to direct our moral behavior, we can have confidence that God is pleased. It is not that one works himself into salvation through obedience to God’s law. Paul stated clearly that through works of law no one will be justified before God (Gl 2:16). Paul’s argument in Romans 4 is that our salvation is based on a faith response to God. In appreciation of God’s grace that was manifested through Jesus, one is obedient because of a heart of thanksgiving. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “... *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ...*” (Ph 2:12). The Christian is already saved. He has not worked for his salvation. Since he is already saved, he must work it out. Without this obedience of one’s faith, one cannot be saved (Rm 1:5), “**for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works ...**” (Ep 2:10). We are not created in Christ Jesus **by** good works. We are created in Christ Jesus **for** good works. The reason for our existence as Christians is to carry out the work of Christ in our lives. Our good works, therefore, are an indication of our discipleship to Jesus.

Upon his arrival in Thessalonica, Paul first verbally communicated instructions to the Thessalonians. He later

wrote, “*Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification ...*” (1 Th 4:1-3). The Thessalonians could abound more and more by following after the inspired instructions that they had received from Paul. This was their sanctification or setting apart from the ways of the world. In other words, their lives were set apart from the world as a result of their free-moral obedience to the word of Paul’s instruction. If they could do such, we can do the same today.

In John 6:63 Jesus said, “***It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.***” As the body without the spirit is dead (Js 2:26), so the Spirit’s work in the life of the Christian is dead if one will not free-morally respond to the Spirit-inspired words of instruction that come to him through the written word of God. In John 6:63 **Jesus directly associated the life-giving work of the Spirit with the word of the Spirit.** Therefore, it is through the word that the Spirit produces life. The inspired word of the Spirit is able to live in us, and thus, give us spiritual life.

It was the Spirit who guided the speaking of both the Old and New Testament prophets (2 Pt 1:21). The same Spirit guided the New Testament writers (2 Tm 3:16). God has used the inspired words of the Spirit in order to affect and

change the moral behavior of man. Therefore, any credit for change in moral behavior in response to divine directions in the Scriptures must be seen as originating from God. This is true simply because one changes his life in response to what he believes God tells him to do.

God intended that the spoken and written word have a great impact on the minds and hearts of men. We must not minimize this intent on the part of God. It has always been the work of God to transcend the environment of man through the instruction of words. In this way, free-moral individuals have the opportunity to respond to God's instructions. In this way also, man will be held accountable for his own response to God's will. If one loses his soul in final judgment, he cannot blame God in any way. The following is a list of things that God seeks to accomplish through His word:

**WORK OF SPIRIT
THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES**

1. Produce faith (Jn 20:30,31; Lk 1:3,4; 8:12; Rm 10:17)
2. Sanctify the soul (Jn 17:17; Ep 5:26; 2 Th 2:13)
3. Convert the soul (1 Co 4:15; Js 1:18; 1 Pt 1:23)
4. Save the soul (At 11:14; 1 Co 15:1,2; 1 Pt 1:22; Js 1:21; Ps 19:7)
5. Cleanse the soul (Jn 15:2; Ep 5:26)
6. Purify the soul (1 Pt 1:22)
7. Quicken the soul (Ps 119:50,93; Jn 6:63; Ep 2:1,5)
8. Enlighten the mind (Ps 19:8; 119:130)
9. Give understanding (Jb 32:8; Ps 119:104,130; Ep 3:4; 2 Tm 3:15)
10. Lead one's life (Ps 73:24; 119:105; Lk 1:77-79; Hb 10:15-18)
11. Comfort the heart (Rm 15:4; 1 Th 3:2; 4:18)

12. Bear witness of Jesus and Christians (Jn 5:6-8, 39; Hb 10:15-18)
13. Produce spiritual growth (At 20:32; Cl 1:10,11; 1 Pt 2:1,2; 2 Pt 3:18)
14. Spiritually work in the Christian (Cl 3:16; 1 Th 2:13)
15. Produce spiritual fruit (Gl 5:22,23; see Cl 1:5-10 as a commentary on how the Spirit produces the fruit of Gl 5:22,23)
16. Strengthen the soul (At 20:32; Cl 1:10,11; 2 Tm 2:1,2; Rv 12:11; read Rm 10:17 in relation to Hb 11)
17. Control our lives (1 Tm 3:14,15)
18. Admonish (1 Co 4:14; 10:11)
19. Guard us from error (2 Tm 3:13-15)
20. Spiritually stir us up (2 Pt 1:12,13)
21. Exhort us (1 Pt 5:12)
22. Instruct our minds (Ne 9:20,26,30; 2 Tm 3:16,17)

The preceding works of the Spirit through the Scriptures manifest what the Spirit intended to accomplish through word of revelation in order to mold man's behavior into that which is pleasing to God. We must not underestimate what God intended to do in His work among men through the word of revelation. If we do, then we assume that the word of God plays a lesser role in the instruction of man than what God intended. Therefore, it is imperative when studying the work of the Spirit that one have a very clear understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning the effect of the Bible on the heart of man.

Through the Scriptures God intended that the man of God be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tm 3:17). Therefore, the word of the Spirit is able to furnish man with everything that God requires of him in order to direct his life in accordance to God's moral demands. In view of this fact, we

must ask ourselves if the word of God can stand all-sufficient in what it claims to do for man if there is a direct operation of the Spirit upon the soul of man. If the Spirit claims that He works on the moral behavior of man through inspired Scripture in the above manner, then what else must He supply for man apart from the Scriptures? This has always brought forth much discussion in religious circles. Nevertheless, we must respond with a fair answer to the preceding works that are listed in reference to the Spirit's work through the inspired word of God. If the Spirit works separate and apart from the word of God to accomplish what is listed above, then we must wonder how He accomplishes such and in what manner He brings about that which He affirms the word of God accomplishes. If the Spirit does work in areas where He said the word works, then we must allow the Spirit to define in the word of God how He so works. We do not have the option of feeling that the Spirit works in a certain manner simply because we wish to believe that He does. If the Spirit affirms that He works through the medium of the word to produce the preceding effects, then we must accept the fact that He does. However, if He affirms that He also works in the preceding manner in a direct way, then we must accept what He says on the matter without fully understanding how He so works.

The Spirit says that He comforts and strengthens through the word (Rm 15:4; 1 Th 3:2). He uses the word of God to bring comfort to our hearts in that we read of God's faithfulness. However, this

would not say that the Spirit also comforts in other ways that are not directly associated with the word. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "*Therefore comfort one another with these words*" (1 Th 4:18). Through the words of the inspired writers the Christian is comforted. However, in other ways the Spirit affirms that God comforts in a way as explained in 2 Corinthians 1. Paul wrote, "*Blessed be the God ... who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*" (2 Co 1:3-7). At the time Paul wrote this passage, he assuredly did not have the written New Testament to read and study for comfort. The comfort he received here, therefore, must have come from another source or sources. Though the first Christians did have some inspired writings for comfort, their comfort would have come through the words of inspired prophets and the gift of faith. However, we would not rule out the mystery of God in comforting Paul and others as they were so comforted in 2 Corinthians 1. How the Spirit works to comfort is not explained in the Scriptures. What is explained is the fact that the word of God brings comfort, as well as the Spirit through means we do not understand.

There are indirect means by which God brings comfort to the Christian. God comforts the Christian by the close fellowship of other Christians. He strengthens by the companionship of those who give us encouragement. This is comfort and strength apart from the word. How-

ever, it is indirect in the sense that the Spirit is not working directly on the heart of man to bring comfort. Nevertheless, Paul seems to state in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 that there is a comfort that comes from God in a manner that is not indirect. He seemed to indicate this also when speaking about peace of mind. He wrote, “... *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds though Christ Jesus*” (Ph 4:7).

We must understand, however, **that comforting and strengthening are not the changing of moral behavior.** One can be comforted or strengthened without being made more loving or forgiving or meek. I would not associate the comforting or strengthening of the individual in times of tribulation as a change in moral behavior. One can be lost for not being a loving person. However, one would not be lost for lack of being comforted enough in trial or strong enough in persecution. One may fall away and blame God for not being comforted or strengthened in order to stand faithful in the hour of trial. However, he or she would not be lost because of a lack of comfort or strength, **but because he or she left the Lord.**

The apostate will never have just accusation against God for falling from the faith. But we must remember that one can and will be judged for being an unloving or unforgiving person. For this reason we must separate the work of God in comforting and strengthening from those spiritual requirements that are necessary for the salvation of the individual. In order to produce spiritual require-

ments, the Spirit works through the medium of the inspired word.

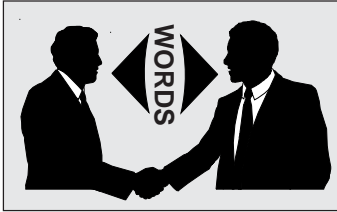
The word of the Spirit is able to give guidance to those who seek the will of God in order to be presentable and acceptable to God. In this sense, God meant for the Scriptures to furnish the man of God completely unto every good work (2 Tm 3:16,17) and spiritual requirement (2 Pt 1:3). The Scriptures are the Christian’s avenue through which he must approach the Father. They are the “*implanted word which is able to save your souls*” (Js 1:21).

If the Holy Spirit operates directly upon the heart of man to change his moral behavior, then He must work in a different manner than the changing activity of the word’s influence upon the submissive heart. **But if the word of the Spirit is unable to do the things it claims it can do effectively and efficiently, then the word is not all-sufficient.** If the word of God is not able to produce that for which it was intended, then it is not all-sufficient. In other words, the Spirit cannot claim through the word that the Scriptures are all-sufficient and at the same time be “subsidizing” the word with extra power. Either the word is able to do what it so claims to be able to do, or it cannot.

A. All-sufficiency of the word in the conversion of the sinner:

In reference to the conversion of the alien sinner, it must be affirmed that the Spirit works through the preached and taught word of God in order to bring man

to a knowledge of what he must do in order to be saved. If the Spirit operates directly in conversion in order to move the sinner to obedience, then we must ask, “What



does He do?” In answer to this question, the following are things the Spirit **will not** do in the conversion of the alien sinner:

1. *The Spirit will not violate free-moral agency in conversion.* The Spirit will not operate directly upon the moral behavior of man in order to violate man’s free-moral agency. If He did, then God’s justice would be questioned in the final judgment by those who heard the word and yet were not motivated enough by the Spirit to respond in obedience. If the Spirit did operate directly, this would make God a respecter of persons, for the gospel is always preached to many people who do not obey. If the Spirit supposedly operated directly, we would always wonder why those who did not obey were not motivated by the Spirit to obey. Since many who hear do not obey the gospel, then we must conclude that the Spirit does not work with respect of persons in order to motivate the alien sinner to obey.

2. *The Spirit will not deliver to us more revelation than what has already been delivered.* It is not that the Spirit is unable to deliver more revelation to man.

The fact is that He has delivered all that is necessary and all that God would have man know. Peter wrote, “... *His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness ...*” (2 Pt 1:3; Jd 3). If man needs more revelation for salvation or spiritual guidance than he now has, then the Bible is not all-sufficient. Because the Spirit affirms that the inspired word is all-sufficient, He is affirming that He will not deliver more revelation (2 Tm 3:16,17).

The fact is that there is only one gospel (See Gl 1:6-9). This gospel has been revealed (Ep 3:3-5). Once one obeys the gospel through immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the written word of God is sufficient to supply the believer with all that is necessary in order to be instructed in what God would have one do in order to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18).

3. *The Spirit will not lead one contrary to the word.* The Holy Spirit cannot and will not directly lead the individual contrary to the teachings He has given to man in the Bible. If He did lead man today contrary to His already revealed direction, then He would be contradicting Himself. If the Spirit directly leads in directing our work, then He contradicts Himself for He claimed that the Scriptures are able to furnish the man of God thoroughly unto every good work (2 Tm 3:17).

4. *The Spirit will not help us understand the Bible.* The Bible was written in order that we understand the mystery of God (Ep 3:1-6; 5:17; Rv 1:3). The Spirit does not need to help one under-

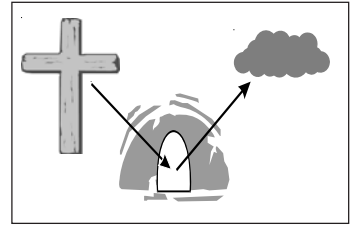
stand that which was written in order to help us understand the mystery of God. It is a subtle attack against the Spirit's ability to inspire the writing of the Scriptures in an understandable manner if we say that He is needed to help us understand His inspired writings. The doctrine of inspired interpretation is nowhere taught in the Scriptures. James stated that we should pray for wisdom (Js 1:5). However, wisdom is needed to apply knowledge that we learn from our studies of the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit affirms that the inspired word that has already been revealed and recorded is all-sufficient in order to accomplish the purpose for which it was written. Therefore, God penetrates the free-moral agency of the alien sinner through the all-sufficient word of revelation. If this word is all-sufficient—and it is—it is able to bring one to Christ. If this word is all-sufficient—and it is—then it is able to take one to heaven.

B. Work of the Spirit through the gospel in conversion:

In order for one to come into a covenant relationship with God, he must obey the gospel. When Paul went to the city of Corinth, he communicated the gospel to the Corinthians through the medium of words (1 Co 15:1,2). The Corinthians had not personally experienced the event of the gospel in Jerusalem. They had neither witnessed the crucifixion, nor the resurrection. They only

knew of the gospel through the communication of Paul's words. Today, all men are informed of the gospel that happened about two thousand



years ago through the written record of the Bible.

In order to be saved, men must come into covenant relationship with God according to the conditions that are revealed through the written word of God. Men must submit to obedience of the gospel (See Rm 6:3-6). In order for one to know what to do in order to submit, and subsequently come into this covenant relationship with God, he must be informed about the gospel. This instruction concerning the gospel comes to all men today only through the word of God. God has always intended that men free-morally respond to the written or spoken word of the gospel which must be obeyed in order for one to come into a covenant relationship with God.

1. It was prophesied that conversion would be in response to the preached and written record of the gospel. Under the Old Testament law, the Jews were physically born into a covenant relationship with God (Jr 31:31-34). God had originally made a covenant with Abraham (Gn 17:1-14). All males who were born of his seed and circumcised the eighth day were brought into this cov-

enant relationship (Gn 17:9-11). When these newborn babes were circumcised, they knew nothing of the covenant relationship that God had established with Israel. They knew nothing of God. Nevertheless, because they were born of the seed of Abraham and were circumcised, they were brought into a covenant relationship with God who had established a covenant with the nation of Israel. While they grew up they were taught to know God.

Jeremiah prophesied that the Old Testament system of establishing a covenant relationship with God would change. *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant ... not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers But this is the covenant that I will make ...: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me ...”* (Jr 31:31-34). In Hebrews 8:8-12 this prophecy is applied to the New Testament covenant that Jesus has established with Christians. Under the old covenant the newly circumcised Hebrew child had to be taught the law of God (the Old Testament) while he grew up. During this time of teaching he was in a covenant relationship with God. However, under the new covenant, **one is taught the law of God (the New Testament) before he or she comes into covenant relationship with God.** One is first taught the gospel, and then, he or she obeys the gospel by immersion in order to come into a covenant rela-

tionship with God. All who come into a covenant relationship under the new covenant, therefore, already know God because they have already been taught the gospel.

Jesus said, *“Come to Me ... and learn from Me ...”* (Mt 11:28,29). *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him ...”* (Jn 6:44). And how is one drawn to Christ? How does one learn of Christ? Jesus replies, *“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me”* (Jn 6:45). If anyone desires to come to Jesus today, he or she must be drawn by words of instruction concerning the gospel. This is what Jeremiah prophesied. When one is brought into a covenant relationship with God today, therefore, he has already been taught to know God. God’s law is already in his heart because he has already learned from the Scriptures who God is and what is required of him in order to establish a covenant relationship with God.

Faith in Jesus is produced in one’s heart by the record of Jesus’s life and miracles (Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17). When one hears and learns the gospel of Jesus, he is drawn to Jesus. When one asks what to do to be saved, the inspired word instructs, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...”* (At 2:38). There is nothing complicated about this, nothing mysterious. This was God’s prophesied system of bringing all men into a saving covenant relationship with

Him. This is what happened in the first century when the gospel was first proclaimed. In this same manner God works today through the preaching of the gospel in order to bring men into Christ.

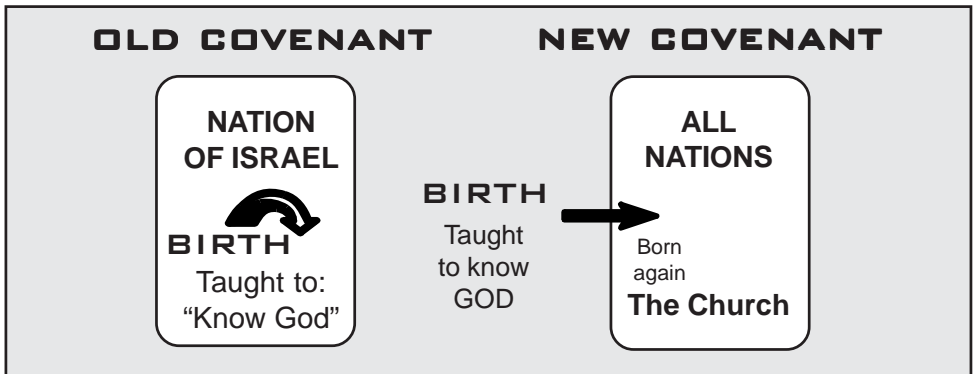
2. The New Testament teaches that conversion takes place through words of education. The New Testament is a record of how men and women heard, learned and obeyed the gospel of Jesus. In all these cases of conversion, there is no mention of a direct work of the Spirit to generate within the hearts of those who heard an urge to obey the gospel.

a. Words communicated the saving gospel message. Jesus commanded His disciples to **“preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mk 16:15; see Mt 28:18-20). This gospel was the **“power of God to salvation”** (Rm 1:16). Through the early evangelists, this message was preached (Ep 3:8). Men and women heard the gospel message and were born again by obedience to the preached gospel (Js 1:21). **Therefore, it was through the preaching of the gospel, not the direct operation of the Spirit, that men and women were**

brought into a covenant relationship with God.

b. The word of God is the seed that produces fruit. Jesus taught that the **“seed is the word of God”** (Lk 8:11). It is the nature of a seed to produce fruit. In the parable of the Sower, it was this seed that produced fruit when those who were represented by the good soil heard and obeyed (Mt 13:1-9,18-23). This corresponds perfectly with what Peter said in 1 Peter 1:23,25, **“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. ... this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”** Christians have been brought forth **“by the word of truth”** (Js 1:18). It is the seed of the kingdom that produces fruit in the hearts of those who obey God.

The seed of the word of God must be sown. When heard by sincere hearts, it brings forth fruit. A direct operation of the Spirit would negate the nature of the self-producing seed of the kingdom. If the seed of the word cannot produce within itself, then it is a sterile seed. Why would the Spirit refer to the word as the



seed of the kingdom if He has to germinate it in the heart of the alien sinner or the Christian? If the seed needed an outside force to make it germinate, then the use of the word “seed” as a metaphor has lost its meaning. The very fact that a seed is self-contained, and thus does not need an outside force to germinate, makes it the perfect metaphor to illustrate the self-contained work of the word of God on the hearts of man.

Paul brought forth fruit from the Corinthians “*through the gospel*” (1 Co 4:15). This fruit was produced by the preached seed. He planted the seed through the preaching of the gospel (1 Co 15:1,2). Apollos watered what Paul had planted. **God is given credit for bringing forth the increase because the seed originated from God** (1 Co 3:6). Paul produced fruit in Corinth because, “... *it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe*” (1 Co 1:21).

The Romans had also “*obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine*” which was preached to them (Rm 6:17). The seed is planted by preaching. It brings forth fruit through the obedience of sincere hearts. This is God’s system of salvation for the lost. It is the nature of the seed to produce the fruit. Once obeyed, sincere believers then grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18).

3. The example of New Testament conversions teaches conversion in response to words of education. In every New Testament example of conversion, individuals were led to Jesus through the

preaching or teaching of the gospel. Men were not brought to Jesus through the direct work of the Spirit. They were drawn to Christ by hearing the instruction of the preached gospel through words of communication (see Jn 6:45).

a. Acts 2: On the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, Peter “*standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said ...*” (vs 14). After some discourse,



Acts 2:37 reads, “*Now when they heard this ...*” “*And with many other words he testified and exhorted them ...*” (vs 40). “*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized ...*” (vs 41). Those who heard and believed were baptized and added to the saved (vs 41,47). They were saved by hearing and obeying the preached gospel which came to them through words of communication.

b. Acts 4: Luke recorded, “... *many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand*” (vs 4). Men and women here responded to the preaching of the gospel by words of communication.

c. Acts 8: In Samaria they “*believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized*” (vs 12). As in this case and others, no mention is made of a direct work of the Spirit generating a response in the hearts of those who heard the preached word of the gospel.

d. Acts 8: As the Ethiopian eu-

nuch journeyed from Jerusalem, he was **reading the words** of Isaiah 53 (vss 32,33). He did not understand what he was reading, so “*Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him*” (vs 35). This led to his conversion. There was no direct operation of the Spirit in this case. The eunuch needed a teacher. The Spirit thus sent Philip the teacher to the eunuch (vs 29). The Spirit could have directly revealed to the eunuch what to do to be saved. He could have inspired the eunuch to understand what he was reading. But the Spirit does not work in this manner. Only through the preaching and teaching of the word of God will men be able to hear and obey the gospel.

e. Acts 9: Paul was converted through the spoken word. Jesus appeared to him in a vision and told him to go to the city of Damascus “*and you will be told what you must do*” (vs 6). It was the preacher Ananias that Jesus sent to Paul to tell him what to do to be saved. Ananias said to Paul, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (At 22:16). Paul was not told to pray for the Holy Spirit to save him. He was told to be baptized by a preacher of God’s word. If it were the work of the Spirit to come and directly save him or tell him what to do to be saved, then we would expect Ananias to tell him to do just this. But he did not. Ananias did not because it is not the work of the Spirit to directly save individuals.

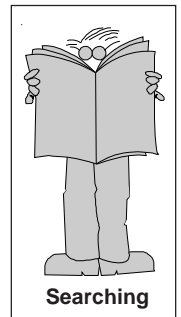
f. Acts 10,11: Cornelius and his household were converted through the

preaching of the word. Cornelius was charged by the angel to get Peter, the preacher (10:5,6), “*who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved*” (11:14). Peter had previously seen a vision wherein the Lord instructed him concerning the preaching of the gospel to all men. God wanted Cornelius to hear words whereby he might be saved (10:22). The Lord could have sent the Spirit directly to Cornelius to deliver these words. But this was not the way the Spirit worked in conversion. God sent the preacher who used words of communication in order to preach the gospel. Peter thus went to Cornelius and instructed him in the way of the Lord (10:33).

g. Acts 16: Lydia **heard** the preaching of Paul and his company (vs 14). She then gave “*heed to the things spoken by Paul*” (vs 14). She was not nudged by the Spirit. She was not directly influenced by the Spirit. She freely chose to obey the words spoken by Paul.

h. Acts 16: Paul and Silas “*spoke the word of the Lord*” to the Philippian jailor (vs 32). He obeyed those words the same hour of the night by immersion in water for remission of sins (vs 33).

i. Acts 17: The Bereans “*were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily...*” (vs 11). The Be-



reans were receiving the word because Paul was proclaiming the word (vs 13). They were not receiving it because the Spirit was working directly on their hearts in order to activate the word. They were simply receiving it because they had open and honest hearts as those on Pentecost in Acts 2 (At 2:41).

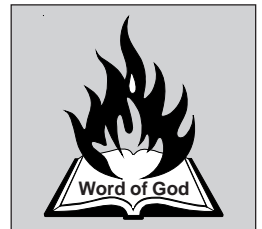
j. Acts 19: There were approximately twelve Ephesians to whom Paul preached in Acts 19. Verse 5 states, “*When they **heard** this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*” They obeyed what they heard, not something they felt. They thus knew what they obeyed.

In all of the above cases of conversion not one mention is made of the Holy Spirit operating “in conjunction with” the spoken word to bring about conversion or a response to the gospel. In every example it is always the case that men exercised their free-moral agency in order to either obey or disobey that which was said. The Spirit did not compel anyone to believe what he heard. Their conversions were as simple as the Corinthians, who “*hearing, believed and were baptized*” (At 18:8).

The Spirit worked with the preached word in the first century in a “confirming manner” (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). His miraculous work to confirm the word was for the purpose of drawing men’s attention to what was being said. **The fact that He worked for the purpose of miraculously confirming the word is proof that His work was not to directly influence the hearts of the hearers.** In other words, there would have been no

reason for the miraculous confirmation of the message of the gospel if the Spirit could simply have moved men’s hearts to respond to the message. Neither was it the Spirit’s work to miraculously move men’s hearts to respond to the preached gospel. Because it was not the Spirit’s work to directly move men’s hearts to respond to the preached message, necessitated the miraculous confirmation by miracles. The power was in the gospel, not in a supposed miraculous generation of the hearts of men to respond to the gospel (Rm 1:16). Now that the word has been confirmed, we do not need the miracles.

Nevertheless, many in the first century rejected the teachings of those early Christians, regardless of the miraculous confirmation. If we contend that the Holy Spirit chose to operate directly on a few chosen individuals in order that they respond to the gospel, then we have placed God in the position of being a respecter of persons. We must continually remind ourselves that any teaching that says the Spirit operates directly on the heart of man attacks the justice of God. How could God stand just in the judgment by condemning to hell someone like Barjesus whom the Spirit supposedly decided not to move to obey Paul’s spoken word (At 13:6ff)? If the Spirit does operate directly, then He failed in Acts 26:28 in not moving Agrippa to adequately respond. After



Paul had preached to Agrippa, the King said, “*You almost persuade me to become a Christian.*” Did the Spirit fail here? Why did He not “activate” the word enough in the life of this king if He is supposed to operate directly upon the heart of the alien sinner? Agrippa’s lack of response teaches that the Spirit does not operate directly on the hearts of those who hear the gospel. He does not generate a response in their hearts to respond to the preaching of the word of God. Because this is true, God the Spirit will not be held accountable in final judgment for the condemnation of those who have heard the gospel, and yet, did not respond by obeying the gospel.

The Spirit’s instrument of power in the hearts of men is invested in the inspired words of the Spirit. Great power is ascribed to the Scriptures. God said to Jeremiah, “*Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them*” (Jr 5:14). Jeremiah accepted the mission to preach the word of God to the nation of Israel. When he tried not to speak this word, God’s “*word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones ...*” (Jr 20:9). This is the word of God that “*is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Hb 4:12). This is the word “*which effectively works in you who believe*” (1 Th 2:13). It is the word which is able “*to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those*

who are sanctified” (At 20:32).

Through the medium of the preached gospel, the Spirit works on the heart of the sinner to bring him to obedience. The Spirit does not work to activate the heart of the sinner to respond, for the power of the gospel is able to convert the soul. Through the power of inspired revelation one can save his soul by obedience to the gospel. The saint can lay up the message of the gospel in his heart in order that he not sin against God (Ps 119:11). He can continue to stand in the gospel (1 Co 15:1,2). The means by which the sinner is brought to obedience is the preached gospel. The instrument of the Spirit to sanctify the soul of the saint is the inspired word of God.

In order to bring the individual into eternal dwelling in heaven, God first calls out of the masses of humanity people who will respond to the gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Once one obeys the gospel and comes into the fellowship of the saints, he is built up by the word of God. He is separated from the world by continual obedience to God’s word. God also providentially works in the life of the saint in order to work all things together for good.

From the above points it has been proved that obedience to the gospel, and subsequently obedience to the Scriptures are able to produce a character worthy of salvation. The gospel can produce a contrite spirit in the heart of the alien sinner. In order for the preached gospel to effectively work, the alien sinner must totally submit to the will of God. This is why there are so many pleas in the Scrip-

tures that men humble themselves in the sight of God (See 1 Pt 5:5-7). However, when the converted sinner comes into a covenant relationship with the Father, his relationship with the Father changes. In this changed relationship, the contrite heart can still be affected by the word of God in a manner to produce a character worthy of salvation. The Scriptures are all-sufficient to produce this character if submitted to by the faithful believer. Nevertheless, because of the saints' special relationship with the Father in this covenant relationship, the Father works in an often mysterious manner to affect and direct the life of the Christian. His ways are past finding out. His ways are mysterious simply because He does not and cannot explain them in a manner that can be understood by our earthly vocabulary and experience. Therefore, the fact

that His workings are beyond our experiential world, they are mysterious only to us. In this realm of God's work, we cannot be dogmatic. One might be fervent in believing that God works in ways we cannot understand. However, he would be presumptuous to affirm specifics that God does. We give room for discussion concerning the mysterious work of God in those areas that are beyond our comprehension. Nevertheless, we must maintain faith in the specifics of how God says He works as defined in His word. We are not so presumptuous as to empirically affirm the dew on the fleece at a specific time and manner. We walk by faith, not by sight, lest we walk by our own accord. True spiritual growth always comes to those who seek to walk by faith.

Chapter 4

The Language Of Indwelling

The New Testament clearly teaches that there is a special relationship between the Christian and the Holy Spirit. This relationship is defined as an "indwelling" of the Spirit. It is an indwelling relationship that one does not have with the Spirit before he becomes a child of God through obedience to the gospel. Therefore, there is something different in the Spirit's relationship and work with the Christian after he obeys the gospel. Though the Spirit works on the heart of the alien sinner before baptism through the spoken or written word, He indwells

the Christian in a special relationship after baptism.

A. The application of metaphorical language:

When discussing the indwelling of God in the Christian, we must be careful to not literalize metaphors of human location in reference to God, and thus, localize God. The very nature of words as "in," "here," "there," and "indwell" in our human vocabulary carry with them an earthly meaning of **location**. We are

either “here” or “there.” But God is “here” and “there” at the same time. How can we place God in a particular location? When we use words as “in,” “with,” “enter,” “upon,” etc., we often force an earthly and human characteristic or action upon God. However, when such words are used to refer to God, there must be a metaphorical meaning that is implied.

We do not serve a God who is confined to a location as we are so confined. Would we locate God in a temple? Would we, as apostate Israel did, place Him on top of a hill and call Him Baal? Literalizing beautiful metaphors in relation to God leads us to misunderstand the wonderful relationship God has with His creation. This relationship is explained with words that are of this world, but indicate something that is beyond this world.

It is true that the Holy Spirit used “words of location” to explain the work, being and presence of God. However, we must understand that the Holy Spirit was confined to the use of **our** dictionary. If He would have used a heavenly dictionary, we would not have been able to understand the Bible. One must understand, therefore, that earthly words fall far short of explaining heavenly concepts.

For the above reason, the Holy Spirit in inspiration used metaphors in order to explain those things with which we have had no experience. Simple words as “in” and “indwell” are often used in a metaphorical sense to explain something that is greater than our human experience. Something greater than the earthly definitions of the words is being conveyed

by the Spirit when these words are used in reference to the Spirit.

Biblical interpreters have often made an unfortunate error here. In failing to understand the inability of human words to define that which is beyond the human experience, they have humanized numerous concepts concerning God. This unfortunate practice has led to great confusion in our attempts to understand the nature and indwelling of God. By forcing God to conform to the definitions of our earthly words, we have created a god after our own image and after our own desires. However, we are not alone in failing to recognize the fact that God is beyond human description. The Jews also had difficulty in understanding metaphors that were used in relation to God. This is especially true concerning their tendency to localize God to Palestine and in a temple. Their localization of God is clearly brought out in their concept of the “God in a temple.”

When Solomon completed the temple in Jerusalem, he reminded the Jews, “***But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!***” (1 Kg 8:27; see 2 Ch 2:6). Solomon was right. Nevertheless, the Jews’ earthly understandings persisted in their history. God, through Isaiah, questioned Israel, “***Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build me? And where is the place of My rest?***” (Is 66:1). Israel persisted on localizing God in Jerusalem, and in particular, in the temple.

Unfortunately, they missed the metaphors, and thus, missed a true understanding of the omnipresent Deity who created them.

Since God is God, He does not dwell in a location, **for it is superfluous to affirm that He dwells here or there in His creation. He is!** And the fact that He is God means that He cannot be confined to “location.” He cannot be located somewhere in His creation. He is located everywhere. The words “here” and “there” refer to position of material objects or individuals in relation to one another. God was not “there” in the temple while I am “here” in my house. God is both “here” and “there” at the same time. Such is the nature of His existence. **God Is!** This is really the only explanation we have of His presence.

Stephen rebutted the Jews “localization theology” in Acts 7:48. “*The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands*” Stephen then quoted Solomon’s statements to remind the Jews that God never intended to dwell in a temple as they desired (At 7:49,50).

Paul made the same argument to the Greek philosophers who also had the concept of placing God at a particular location. He argued, “*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands*” (At 17:24). In the mythological religion of the Greeks, the gods were conceived to be in different locations at different times. The Greeks had a humanized concept of deity. They created gods after their own imagination, and thus, when they thought

of god they thought that god behaved as man. However, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament teach such a concept concerning the God of heaven.

Solomon, Stephen and Paul all maintained the same argument which was based on the statement that God made to Israel, “*Has My hand not made all these things?*” (At 7:50; Is 66:2; see Ps 102:25). In other words, God is saying that He could not dwell in something that is innate or material that He Himself had created. **How could that which is created, box in He who creates?** Our earthly understanding is that we build a house, and then, “dwell” in that house. However, God created the timber, the nails and all the construction materials. How do we think we can confine God by that which He has created? Israel could not confine God in a temple. Neither can we confine Him in any constructed or created location.

This is the reason the Psalmist wrote that the whole earth is full of His glory (Ps 72:19; see Hk 2:14). We cannot escape the presence of God, “*for in Him we live and move and have our being*” (At 17:28). We have our being **in Him**. He does not have His being in us. God is. His existence is not dependent on our existence nor on our imagination.

The fact that God exists means that He is omnipresent. We cannot help but be in His presence at all times. He is simultaneously here, there and everywhere. He cannot be localized on the far side of Pluto. He cannot be localized in a part of His creation. We do not escape His presence.

The nature of Jesus' incarnation argues the omnipresence of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul wrote concerning Jesus, "... *who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men*" (Ph 2:6,7). John affirmed that "*the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...*" (Jn 1:1,14).

Though we may not understand all the implications of the incarnation of the Son of God, it is evident that God "localized" in some way on earth within the form of flesh that could be handled and touched (1 Jn 1:1-3). The flesh could be touched, nevertheless, the Deity that is spirit, could not. At this point in time (the incarnation), a part of God (the Son) focused here on earth in a fleshly body for a special purpose. Such affirms that beyond the physical dwelling (the body), however, Jesus as Deity was not here or there. He was God in omnipresent existence in eternity. **What He was on earth was in contrast to what He was in eternity.** In incarnation He took on human characteristics, and thus, human location in respect to the position or relationship that people have with one another. Therefore, in the state of incarnation, God the Son was "here" or "there." But in the heavenly state, God the Son is neither "here" nor "there."

When considering the omnipresence of God, David felt extremely human in understanding. "*Such knowledge,*" he wrote, "*is too wonderful for me; it is*

high, I cannot attain it" (Ps 139:6). By inspiration David tried in Psalm 139:7-12 to help us understand this marvelous nature.

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

We are not the servants of a God who is confined to location in order to have a relationship with mankind. If one should so think that God must be in a particular location in order to be close, then God would ask, "*'Am I a God near at hand,' says the Lord, 'and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?'*" says the Lord; "*'do I not fill heaven and earth?'*" says the Lord" (Jr 23:23,24). God is present at all times—He is close—because in Him we live, move and have our being.

The omnipresence of God the Holy Spirit, is a difficult concept to understand since omnipresence is not a characteristic of man. Nevertheless, we must understand the nature of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the context of the om-

nipresence of Deity. **The metaphorical use of earthly defined words can take us only so far in comprehending the being and presence of God the Holy Spirit.** Our imagination must take it from there. When we discuss the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, we must not debate over our imaginations concerning the interpretations of metaphors. How can we possibly understand that which is beyond our experience? Arguing over metaphors that were meant to take our minds into the realm of the supernatural is futile. The extent of our argument often defines the level of our inability to appreciate the Holy Spirit's use of metaphor in order to explain His presence and relationship with man. The Bible states that the Spirit indwells the Christian. However, determining the nature of the indwelling leaves us to ask some questions about things we do not understand. To ask the questions, and subsequently not receive answers, does not frustrate us. We will never understand everything about the indwelling work of the Spirit. However, we do need to caution ourselves about attaching human definitions to words that the Spirit used to emphasize relationship. The problem often comes when the Spirit used our words to communicate relationship while we argue over location.

When we come to the Scriptures, we must therefore caution ourselves not to humanize God with our terms of location. Men in general often have a Jewish and Greek concept of God's presence and existence. In some cases we are still struggling to overcome a childish con-

cept of God who supposedly had long gray hair, an old looking face, and sat upon a great white throne. In our literalization of figures of speech in the Bible, and lack of recognition of great biblical metaphors, we fail to take our minds beyond this world. In literalizing the metaphors we have cheated ourselves of greater understandings concerning the nature and being of God and His relationship with His children.

B. Definition of key words and concepts:

Understanding the indwelling of the Spirit often puts us in the realm of the mystery of God simply because it is difficult for us who live in a physical world to comprehend the nature of the omnipresence of God in a spiritual realm. We do not understand those things of God's workings that cannot be revealed through the medium of humanly defined words. Therefore, we must not limit God's work in the affairs of man by our lack of understanding of His work in His environment. Sometimes, it is not so much the fact that God does not reveal certain aspects of His work, but that He cannot through our humanly defined vocabulary explain His work. Therefore, we must not frustrate ourselves by trying to understand that which we cannot explain concerning God's work in His environment.

In the Bible God has revealed some things in the age that is to come that will need further definition when we arrive at the time of fulfillment of these things.

I am assured that we will receive another dictionary in the world to come that will define concepts with which we presently have only a glimpse. We do not now fully understand the concept of heaven. However, someday our questions will be answered. There are things concerning God's relationship with humanity that we do not fully understand. However, we walk by faith and will soon have our questions answered. We must not, therefore, be so presumptuous as to claim that we now understand everything the Bible states, especially concerning those things that are yet to come. Paul surely had this point in mind when he wrote, "*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known*" (1 Co 13:12).

Therefore, in our investigation of the indwelling of God **we must caution ourselves not to add concepts where the Scriptures have not spoken.** We must not force our earthly definitions on the Spirit in order to claim that we understand everything about the person and work of the Spirit. This is often a major problem in the study of the indwelling and work of the Spirit. The religious environment in which we live too often dictates to us what we should believe. Bible students are too often too vocal with subjects about which God does not expect us to fully understand. Therefore, we must be cautious to limit our understanding of the Spirit's relationship with the Christian to the Scriptures only.

Most of the confusion in biblical studies usually flourishes in those areas

where divine revelation is only partial or even lacking. In those areas where there is little information, we seem to have an uncontrollable urge to fill in the gaps with our logic and deduction. We are certainly allowed to reason and deduct in biblical interpretation. However, we must realize that such logic and deduction are clearly understood to be human opinion. And since it is human, it is subject to human fallibility.

Good Bible students should always know their Bibles well enough to be able to rightly divide between theological speculation and revealed biblical facts. There is nothing wrong with speculation and opinion as long as we do not contradict clearly understood teachings. However, one must constantly guard himself against boldly presenting his speculations as accepted dogma that is supposedly derived from declarative statements in Scripture.

When discussing God's relationship with humanity, metaphors are used to express concepts for which we have no decisive human words. Therefore, we must guard ourselves from dogmatism in this realm of study. Because God's relationship with the believer is greater than the empirical experiences of man, the Spirit often used metaphors in revelation in order to capture the imagination of the Bible student. By giving us glimpses of revelation throughout the entire Bible of that which is beyond our world, the Spirit wanted to direct our thinking above the material world. Therefore, we should not seek to humanize great spiritual concepts that refer to the realm of the spirit world.

In our often trifle debates to literalize inspired metaphorical thought we have often failed to grasp the intimate relationship the Father, Son and Spirit want us to know that They have with us.

With the above in mind, therefore, the following are some definitions, or understandings, that must be noted concerning the subject of the indwelling relationship God has with the Christian.

1. “Indwelling”: In the New Testament there are four different Greek words that are used to reveal the idea of the indwelling of God. These are common words of the Greek language. They are used both metaphorically and literally. The context in which they are used must define whether a literal meaning or a metaphorical meaning is necessary.

a. *Oikeo*: This word means “to dwell in.”^{26:Vine} It means to “live, dwell, have one’s habitation.”^{18:Arndt & Gingrich} Thayer stated that it means “to dwell in.”^{24:Thayer} This is the concept that either literally or metaphorically, habitation is established in a relationship with someone or some thing.

b. *Katoikeo*: This word means to “live, dwell, settle (down)”;^{18:Arndt & Gingrich} “to dwell, to settle, inhabit”;^{24:Thayer} “to settle down”;^{49:Young} “to inhabit, dwell in.”^{48:Abbott-Smith}

c. *Meno*: This Greek word means “to remain”^{49:Young}; “to remain, abide”;^{24:Thayer} “remain, stay, abide”;^{18:Arndt & Gingrich} “to stay, abide, remain.”^{48:Abbott-Smith} This word is often used to refer to that which abides or remains within.

d. *Enoikeo*: This word means “to dwell in”^{48:Abbott-Smith}; to “live, dwell (in).”^{18:Arndt & Gingrich} Vine adds that *enoikeo* is used “with a spiritual significance only.”^{26:Vine} Thayer states that with *en tini* (“in you”) it is “everywhere metaphorically” used in the New Testament with the dative of person.^{24:Thayer} He defines the word “to dwell in one and influence him (for good).” Few interpreters have clued in on what Thayer was trying to say when he emphasized the metaphorical use of this word in reference to the indwelling of God. In his definition of the word, Thayer was stating that one should look beyond the literal understanding of what is actually stated and concentrate on the metaphorical use of the word. One should study closely some of the passages he gives as examples of God indwelling the saints (See Rm 8:11; Cl 3:16; 2 Tm 1:5,14).

All of the above Greek words are used in the New Testament to define the indwelling of different things, individuals or concepts. Sin dwells (*oikeo*) in us (Rm 7:17,20). Satan dwelt (*katoikeo*) in the city of Pergamum (Rv 2:13). Those who love their brother abide (*meno*) in the light (1 Jn 2:10). Those who believe will not abide (*meno*) in darkness (Jn 12:46). Paul talked about the will to sin which dwelt (*oikeo*) in him (Rm 7:18). Then there is the righteousness that dwells (*katoikeo*) in the new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3:13). The truth (or teachings) abides (*meno*) in Christians (2 Jn 2,9). Faith dwells (*enoikeo*) in the Christian (2 Tm 1:5; 3:14,15).

The difficulty often comes in determining whether a metaphorical use is made of the above words or a literal sense is meant when used in reference to God. We must agree that the above words are often used in a metaphorical sense in reference to the indwelling of concepts. But they are also used in this way concerning the indwelling of God. For example, in Matthew 23:21 Jesus stated that God *katoikeo* (dwelt) in the temple. However, what Jesus meant was that God metaphorically dwelt in the temple. Both Stephen (At 7:48) and Paul (At 17:24) stated that God **does not *katoikeo* (dwell)** in temples made with hands. In other words, God does not literally or personally dwell in man-made temples. God was not literally in the temple of the Jews. The temple only represented His presence with the Jews.

Because Greek words that are translated “dwell” are often used metaphorically, the biblical interpreter is challenged to be as consistent as possible when interpreting passages wherein this concept is stated. For example, the Greek word *enoikeito* is used in Colossians 3:16 in reference to the indwelling of the word of Christ. *Enoiketo* is certainly used metaphorically in this passage. In other words, the Bible is not literally inside an individual. The word indwells the believer insofar as its principles control one’s life. Consider *enoiketo* as it is used in Romans 8:11 and 2 Corinthians 6:16 in reference to the Holy Spirit indwelling Christians. Did Paul use the word figuratively in Colossians 3:16 with reference to the word of Christ, but literally

in Romans 8:11 and 2 Corinthians 6:16 with reference to the Spirit? Could it not be that the Spirit indwells the Christian insofar as His revealed principles of truth permeate and control the life of the one who has voluntarily submitted to the Spirit’s directions?

The context must define whether the preceding Greek words are used in either a literal sense or a metaphorical sense. One would certainly find himself in a contradictory situation in various biblical texts to say that the words always refer to a literal sense. The same would be true if we affirmed that their use is always metaphorical. The fact that the words are used in both a literal and metaphorical manner challenges us to always allow the context to define the use of the words.

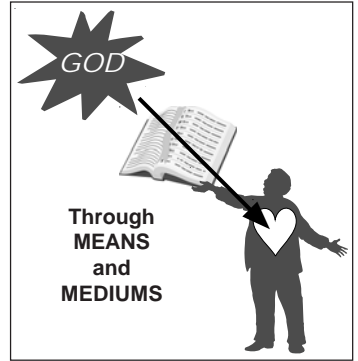
In reference to the phrase “in you” (*en humin*), Thayer stated that in the dative of person the phrase *en humin* is **everywhere metaphorically used**. Reference is “to dwell in one and influence him (for good) : *en tini* in a person’s soul, of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:1; 2 Tim. 1:14.”^{24:Thayer} Therefore, in many passages where this phrase is used the metaphorical understanding of the phrase should be understood. For example, Christ is “in you” (*en humin* - Cl 1:27), God is “in us” (*en hemin* - 1 Jn 4:15,16), the signs of an apostle are “in you” (*en humin* - 2 Co 12:12), the word is “in you” (*en humin* - Cl 3:16), the Spirit is “in you” (*en humin* - Rm 8:9,11; 1 Co 3:16). The metaphorical use of *en humin* emphasizes the **influence** which is exerted over or in the individual that is indwelt. The Scrip-

tures dwell in us because of their influence over us.

2. **“Personal”**: This word is commonly used in theological studies to define the indwelling of the Spirit in the body of the Christian. When the phrase “personal indwelling” is used reference is to the actual, real and literal presence of the Holy Spirit residing in the physical body of the Christian. As the spirit of a man dwells in the physical body, so the Spirit of God resides in the body of the believer. However, we would caution ourselves in the use of words and phrases as this which are not used in the New Testament to define spiritual concepts. The word “personal” is not used in the New Testament to define or identify the nature of the indwelling of the Spirit. The New Testament simply states that the Spirit dwells in the Christian. He dwells in us. This is personal. However, the personal indwelling relationship does not explain how He indwells. Neither does the word “indwell” explain the **nature** of the indwelling. As Bible students, therefore, we must accept the truth of the Spirit’s indwelling. Understanding the implications of His indwelling has proved to be a little more difficult to understand. Though the word “personal” is not used in the Bible in reference to the indwelling of the Spirit, it is a word that describes the close and unique relationship the Saint has with the Spirit. No better word could possibly be used, and thus, most Bible students are content to use the word to refer to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the Christian.

3. **Medium and means**: These two

words are commonly used in discussions concerning the indwelling of the Spirit.



By medium or means, it is understood that the indwelling of God is through the representation of something. In other words, it is stated that the Father dwells in the Christian. However, the Father is in a heavenly environment. Therefore, the Father must indwell through proxy or the representation of something or someone other than the Father Himself. Thus the Father is said to dwell in the Christian through the representation, or medium, of the truth which permeates the will of the indwelt individual. The concept of indwelling, therefore, would at least refer to man’s submissive relationship to God who has given His law to man and commanded obedience.

4. **Manner of indwelling**: The fact of the indwelling of God is without question. This is a fundamental teaching of the New Testament. **How** God indwells the Christian is subject to some discussion. It is not arrogant investigation to wonder or question how God indwells the saints. God does work in His own ways. Deuteronomy 29:29 does teach that God conceals some concepts that He has not revealed. However, it is not presumptuous to wonder and consider those things

that have been revealed to us. Romans 8:14 states that the Spirit leads us. Are we to presume that everywhere we go the Spirit has led us there? If this is true, then how would we answer the Spirit supposedly leading us into situations wherein we should not be? Therefore, we must investigate **how** the Spirit leads us lest we blame the Spirit for putting us into situations that are the result of our own bad decisions.

When the Scriptures talk of God dwelling in the Christian, our first inclination is to ask how. Though we may not be able to answer all the questions

concerning the indwelling of God, at least we must be assured of those things that the Bible clearly states. When a truth is clearly stated, then we must accept that truth, regardless of whether we understand all the implications of the truth. When the Bible states that the Spirit indwells the Christian, then we accept such without question, though we do not understand everything about how He indwells us to work for our benefit. We simply know that He will do what He is suppose to do in reference to the Christian's walk in life.

Chapter 5

The Indwelling Of God

For many decades there has been a controversy in the religious world concerning the indwelling of the Spirit. Brents stated, "While good and true men differ as to **how** the Spirit is received, all agree that it is received and in some sense dwells in every Christian."^{8:597} The New Testament does teach the fact of the indwelling. However, the controversy surrounds the manner by which He indwells. Winters stated, "But the **fact** of the indwelling Spirit does not tell us the **method**, the **manner**, or the **how**. The problem, as I see it, does not lie in the fact, but in the method."^{10:11} Determining the manner by which the Spirit indwells has been a good discussion that has too often caused too much division. Since we are speculating concerning those things that lie within the realm of

the presence of God, then I would suggest that we set aside our dogmatism for a moment. We can define our presence, since we are in body located at any particular place at a specific time. However, when we discuss the presence of God the Spirit, then I would suggest that we not maintain dogmatic views that are matters of opinion lest we speak presumptuously for the omnipresent Holy Spirit.

Some Bible students have stood for the position that the Spirit, literally, actually and "personally" indwells the body of the Christian. J. W. Roberts presented the following thoughts on this position:

The proposition that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian only through the Word is a theological judgment or con-

clusion, since no such statement is set forth as a conclusion or proposition in any passage of the Bible. If it is a true proposition, it is true only because it is a necessary inference drawn or deduced from all the statements of the Bible. Since the Bible obviously states the indwelling of the Spirit, the above proposition can be established only by denying the plain meaning of the biblical statements and demanding a metaphorical meaning of the language or affirming that the language is metonymy. If the statements about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are not to be understood literally, then it must be because other truths or propositions force a different meaning from the literal.^{50:n.p.}

Roberts is correct in stating that there is no declarative statement that proclaims that the Spirit indwells through word of God. This conclusion comes only from a summation of scriptures from which deductions are made in reference to the indwelling of the Spirit. If we understand the indwelling to be metaphorical, then what is lost in the meaning of the indwelling of the Spirit? Since it is in God that we live, move and have our being, then certainly we cannot say we are far from God. There is no such thing as the Christian being distant from God. How can one be distant from Him in whom we live, move and have our being?

L. R. Wilson would represent the position of those Bible students who believe that the Spirit indwells the Christian through the instrumentality of the word of God. After a review of passages men-

tioning the indwelling of the Father and Son, He wrote,

Truly there is a difference between the Holy Spirit and the Word of God the Word of God, however is "living and powerful". It is a revelation of the Divine truths given by holy men of God, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to make known God's will to man. When we receive these truths, these principles, these ideals into our hearts and lives, and make them a part of us, the Holy Spirit will and does come in and dwell within us. The Holy Spirit being one in the Godhead, when we receive the Holy Spirit we also receive God the Father and God the Son.^{53:233}

In the following points I want to set forth thoughts concerning both views of the indwelling of the Spirit. There are valid points with both teachings. However, there are also areas that must be subjected to further discussions. The areas of discussion, however, often evolve around our lack of understanding of the Spirit's being and presence. In other words, we would not presume to make a problem out of something God never intended that we should completely understand in the first place. Neither would we establish as a test of fellowship something that is still open for discussion. We must encourage a spirit of love and unity as we continue our discussions of these most interesting revelations of the Spirit.

A. Understanding the indwelling of the Spirit:

It is not that we cannot understand the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The problem of understanding the indwelling is often confused by the deductions of man that have confused the issue. One man's deductions may conclude one thing, and another man's deduction another. When we resort through the deductions of men, we must understand that deductions can often be flawed. Add to this the fact that discussions concerning the Holy Spirit are often highly emotional. In discussing emotional subjects, the problem of trying to be as objective as possible concerning what the Bible actually says on a matter is often difficult.

In order to better define the positions that are held by good Bible students on this subject, consider the following points:

1. *Indwelling through the medium of the word of God:* This first position affirms that the Spirit does not literally indwell the Christian in a direct and personal manner. It is affirmed that the Spirit indwells representatively through the medium of the Spirit-inspired word of God. Sewell explained,

The words of the New Testament are the words of the Spirit; and when these words dwell in us and become the ruling principle of our lives, controlling all our purpose, words, thoughts, and actions, then certainly the Spirit of God and of Christ is dwelling in us; but if we do not keep up all these things, I know of no principle upon which we can claim that the Spirit of Christ and of God dwells in

us.^{51:640}

Winters added to this point by stating,

It seems to be that everyone understands that God indwells the heart by or through means, or as Paul states it, "through the Spirit." His mediate or indirect dwelling does not deny or change the fact. So it is with the Holy Spirit. He dwells in the children of God, but He does so mediately, through the truth, the word of God.^{10:18}

Lemmons also wrote,

God personally dwells in us as his will finds acceptance in our hearts. Christ personally dwells in us as his teachings are followed by our faith. And the Holy Spirit personally dwells in us as we follow the leading of the Spirit through the word. ... God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit indwell Christians, but neither of them dwell inside the Christian in person.^{9:In introduction, n.p.}

Most will agree that the Spirit indwells the Christian as His word permeates the life of the Christian. However, there are other considerations that must be understood in reference to the Spirit's indwelling. Milligan asked,

"But if it [the Spirit] operates on the heart of the Christian only by means of the word of truth, and through the ordinary events of God's providence, then why does it sustain to him a relation different from that which it sustains to the unbe-

liever? Why is it **given** to us; and why does it **dwell** in us?⁷52:282,283

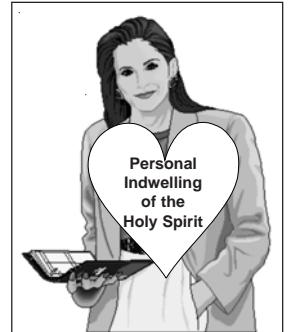
Milligan's questions could somewhat be answered by adding that the Christian's relationship with the Spirit is **a relationship of submission**. Because of the submissive spirit of the individual, the Spirit is able through the direction of the Scriptures to influence and direct the life of the individual. The unbeliever does not have the spirit of submission, the spirit of sonship. However, we would infer that the Spirit's relationship with the Christian in the general sense is more than through the word alone. As Milligan stated, the Spirit is given to the Christian wherein the Spirit has a relationship with the believer that He does not have with the unbeliever.

It is an undeniable truth that the Spirit indwells the Christian. Indwelling through the permeating Scriptures in one's life is also true. As one submits to the will of God through the direction of the Spirit-inspired word of God, the Spirit is in this way indwelling the obedient. However, memorization of the Scriptures does not constitute indwelling. One can have a knowledge of the Scriptures, and yet not be changed by the Scriptures. Knowledge without obedience is the same as faith without obedience. In the eyes of God, faith without works is dead (Js 2:17). In the same tenor, knowledge of the Scriptures without obedience is dead. There is no indwelling of the Spirit through the medium of the word of God in those who do not have a spirit of obedience to the word of God.

Gaius had the spirit of obedience. John wrote to him, "*For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth*" (3 Jn 3). The truth was in Gaius because he **walked** in the truth. Within him was the spirit of obedience to the truth. Therefore, the Spirit-inspired truth is within one only when he manifests in his life the spirit of an obedient walk through the direction of the word of God.

2. Indwelling of the Spirit in a personal, literal sense: This position is usually held in conjunction with the preceding concept of the indwelling through the word of God. However, the belief here is that the Spirit of God is actually and literally in an individual. The Spirit maintains an "indwelling relationship" with the believer that He does not maintain with the unregenerate sinner. This position is affirmed on the basis of a literal understanding of the word "indwell" and "in" as they are used in the New Testament in reference to the Spirit's indwelling. Thus, the Scriptures are literally stating that the Spirit of God is in every Christian throughout the world.

This belief is based on a rule of interpretation that states that **a word or expression must be taken in the literal sense unless the context dictates that**



such should be understood figuratively. This is a general principle of biblical interpretation that should be followed in understanding the Bible. However, it is not always applicable to biblical studies, especially in the context of scriptures that deal with the divine nature of God and those things that are beyond this physical world. Those words and phrases that speak of God cannot be understood first literally and then figuratively. There are no human words that adequately or fully define the divine nature of God. In the context of God's nature and work, therefore, **words or phrases should be first understood metaphorically unless the context dictates that they should be understood literally.** We must understand in a metaphorical sense those words and phrases that are used to explain the nature of God and His work lest we limit the nature and work of God to the definitions of our vocabulary. This simply means that we must not confine the work and presence of God to our understandings of the physical world.

I would also add that the whole text of Scripture be allowed to determine if a word or concept is to be understood in a metaphorical sense. The whole text goes beyond the context, and therefore, must be considered when studying biblical concepts that permeate the totality of Bible teaching on any specific subject. When the Scriptures state that the Spirit dwells in the Christian, therefore, these statements must be understood in the whole text of the Bible's definition of the indwelling of God. If the whole text of

the Bible dictates a metaphorical understanding of the indwelling of God the Spirit, then that understanding must be taken to individual contexts. In other words, **the entire Bible must be the commentary on any one passage of scripture.**

The position concerning the literal indwelling of the Spirit is not without its challenges. Fuchs stated,

One of the biggest mistakes of those who teach the doctrine of the literal indwelling is that they do not understand the representative indwelling. They make arguments against the representative indwelling based upon assumptions that are grounded in the literal indwelling doctrine. For instance they assume the word, "dwell", is always literal and assume that the word of God dwells literally (at least for the sake of argument) when they make arguments concerning the word dwelling in one by memorization. The word dwells in one by influence, in a representative manner, not literal [sic].^{19:n.p.}

Fuchs' objection may also be missing the point of the metaphorical indwelling relationship of God with man. Though it is true that God indwells through the permeating influence of the Scriptures, it is also true that the Spirit is trying to communicate sometime greater than a literal understanding of the word "indwell." There is more to indwelling than Scriptures alone. There is more to indwelling than presence alone. **The indwelling of God is a relationship that God the Holy Spirit has with His chil-**

dren that cannot be completely explained with a literal understanding of words. It is an indwelling that the Spirit has with the believer that He does not have with the unbeliever. It is a unique relationship that the sanctified of God enjoy with the Spirit of God that is not maintained between God and the unbeliever.

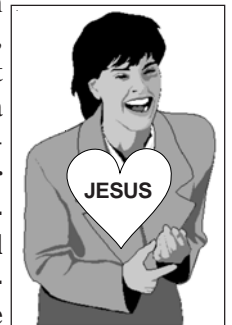
B. The fact of the indwelling of the Spirit:

It is a clear biblical teaching that God indwells the Christian. Whether this indwelling is literal or metaphorical will probably continue to be debated. Even if it is metaphorical, there is a presence of the Spirit with or in the believer that cannot be explained by a literal understanding of words that explain such. The indwelling of the Spirit in the believer cannot be disputed. The **fact** of the indwelling is true. **How** God indwells will challenge our thinking for some time to come. The fact that the Spirit does indwell the believer as His word permeates and directs our lives does not answer all the statements made concerning the indwelling in the New Testament. With reference to the Greek words under point B, the following concepts on the indwelling of God must be understood:

1. The Father indwells the Christian: In 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul referred to Exodus 25:8 and 29:45,46 in order to state that God, the Father, dwells (*enoikeo*) in the Christian as He did in Israel (See also Lv 26:12; Ez 37:27; Jr 31:1). Paul argued that as Israel submit-

ted to God's will, He dwelt in them. The Corinthians had to submit in order to be controlled by God's will. John said that "*God abides [meno] in us*", and that "*whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides [meno] in him*" (1 Jn 4:12,15). In John 14:10 Jesus said that "*the Father who abides [meno] in Me does the works.*" Jesus used the same word in verse 17 in saying that the Spirit of truth "*dwells [meno] with you* [the apostles], *and will be in you.*" Therefore, as the Father dwelt in the incarnate Christ as explained in verse 10, so He dwells in the apostles in verse 17. At the time Jesus made the statement of John 14:10, however, the Father was in the heavenly environment. The Father was both in the heavenly environment and at the same time in Jesus who lived in the earthly environment. The nature of God's omnipresence is manifested in this indwelling relationship between the Father and Son at the time of incarnation.

a. God permeates and controls lives through His instructions. There is nothing in the above scriptures that refers to a literal, personal indwelling of God, the Father, in man or Christ. The Greek words used in the above contexts, therefore, would best be understood with a metaphorical meaning. **The Father indwells [meno] believers as His will permeates and controls their lives. He**

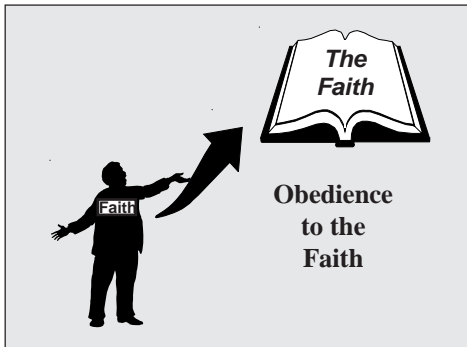


indwells in this manner as the will of Jesus on earth permeates and controls through the will of God the Father.

However, a metaphorical understanding of the passage would take our minds beyond this view. God was with and in the people of Israel. The Father was with and in the incarnate Son. Deity is now with and in the people of God in a relationship wherein the saint is directed by God. Knowing the closeness of God in this relationship is a most comforting thought of New Testament teaching.

b. God abides in those who love. John's statements in 1 John 4:12,13 harmonize with the above thoughts. John stated, *"If we love one another, God abides in us"* *"By this [our love of one another] we know that we abide in Him ... because He has given us of His Spirit."* John is saying that God abides in us if we love one another. However, the opposite would teach an interesting truth. **If we discontinue loving our brother, God will discontinue abiding in us.** The nature of His indwelling in this context, therefore, seems to be contingent upon our loving our brother.

c. The Father abode in Christ



and abides in the Christian. God was not literally in Jesus while Jesus was incarnate in flesh on this earth. Only the Son was incarnate, not the Father or the Holy Spirit. Jesus was the personal representative of God's truth on earth. The Father was in heaven while Jesus was on earth (Jn 14:12). In John 14:10 Jesus explained how the Father indwelt Him while He was on earth. *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."* Jesus here teaches that the Father was dwelling in Him as He worked the works of the Father and spoke the words of the Father. Indwelling in this context, therefore, meant to work and speak in harmony with Deity.

In this same sense God would indwell the Christian. As believers allow their lives to be directed by the word of God, God indwells them. The Father works through them. Those who believe on Jesus and abide in His word abide in God. Jesus explained, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me"* (Jn 17:20,21).

2. Jesus indwells the Christian. Jesus and John affirmed that both the Father and Son dwell in the obedient believer. Jesus said, *"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him"* (Jn 6:56). *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit*

of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (Jn 15:4-6; see 1 Jn 2:6,28; 3:6,24; 4:13). Paul said that Christ dwells (*katoikeo*) in our hearts through faith (Ep 3:17). This statement agrees with what he said in Galatians 2:20. "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*" Christ was living in Paul because he "died with Christ" (Rm 6:7). He allowed Christ to direct his life through His word of instruction (Jn 15:7). The interpretation of Galatians 2:20 is Romans 6:13. "*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*" One presents his life as an instrument of righteousness when he allows God to permeate and control His life through the instruction of the word of God.

Both the Father and Son are now in the believer. However, this is not a literal indwelling as we would humanly understand the Greek words *meno* and *katoikeo* that are used to express this indwelling. Since both the Father and Son are now in the heavenly environment (Ep 1:20; Hb 8:1-4), **these words must be understood metaphorically.** The Father and Son, therefore, must indwell representatively, that is, through means.

a. Jesus makes His home in the obedient. At least the Father and the Son abide in the Christian as the Christian has submitted his will to the commands of God. Jesus said, "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he*

who loves Me" (Jn 14:21). "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*" (Jn 14:23). The Father and Son make their home in the heart of the one who has submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus who instructs and leads through His word (See Jn 12:48). Connect this thought with what Paul said in Colossians 1:27, "*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" To the Colossians Paul also wrote, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ...*" (Cl 3:16).

b. Jesus indwells through the faith. Faith and love move one to obey the commandments of Jesus (Jn 15:14). His commandments are Spirit-inspired from the Father. Winters rightly stated, "*But faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Thus we must conclude that Christ dwells in Christians mediately, by faith which comes by hearing the word, precisely in the same manner as God the Father dwells in them.*"^{10:18} When one submits to the word of Christ, both the Father and Son make their home in his heart. **God thus indwells as one allows his life to be controlled by the commandments of Jesus.** It is the **obedient**, therefore, to whom Jesus spoke the following words, "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*" (Jn 6:56).

There is a difference between faith and "the faith." Faith refers to those who accept "the faith" through which God

indwells. In the sense that we submit to the commandments of Jesus, Jesus dwells in our hearts **through the faith**. Paul wrote, “... *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*” (Ep 3:17). The Greek article “the” is in the text here before the word “faith.” Therefore, the text should literally read, “*through the faith.*” “The faith” is the sum of all that God has revealed to man. This is the truth of the gospel, the totality of God’s life-giving actions and principles of grace by which men are to be saved. It is one’s personal faith that is the motivation for obedience to the faith. Therefore, when one is moved by faith, he obeys the faith. When this occurs, then Christ dwells in one’s heart through the faith.

c. Jesus indwells the obedient.

One must voluntarily allow Jesus to dwell in his heart. Jesus said, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*” (Rv 3:20). If one does not accept and obey the word of Christ, God does not dwell in Him. John wrote, “*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son*” (2 Jn 9; see 1 Jn 3:24). This passage teaches that as one keeps the will of God, he has both the Father and Son. Therefore, obedience to God’s word is directly connected to the “having” (indwelling) of God.

d. Jesus indwells those who abide in His commandments. By continuing to hear the commandments of

Jesus, Jesus will continue to abide in the one who is obedient to what he hears. Jesus **commands** us to abide in Him as He so commanded the apostles, “*Abide in Me, and I in you*” (Jn 15:4). “*If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered...*” (Jn 15:6). Therefore, Jesus warned, “*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*” (Jn 15:7). In order for Christ to abide in us, we must obey instructions as Paul’s statement in Colossians 3:16 concerning submission to the word of Christ, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*” As Jesus, Paul is here giving an imperative command. In order for Jesus to abide in the heart of the believer, His commands must be kept. In this sense, therefore, the indwelling of Jesus is commanded.

The preceding imperative commands concerning indwelling make sense only if we understand that the individual believer can make a voluntary response to the commands of Jesus. This makes the indwelling conditional. It is conditioned upon the voluntary response of the believer to the word of Christ.

3. The Holy Spirit indwells the Christian. The Father and Son dwell in the Christian in a representative manner, that is, not literally or personally, but through the representation of the Spirit. Lanier adds,

The Father and the Son dwell in us representatively. Paul tells us that “we are

built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” (Eph. 2:22.) From this we learn that God the Father dwells in us as the representative of the Holy Spirit and our text shows that Jesus dwells in us in the representative of the Holy Spirit so the first and second persons of the Godhead do not dwell in us personally, but they dwell in us representatively, in the person of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead.^{53:202}

Though one might disagree with this interpretation of Ephesians 2:22 (more on this later), it is affirmed that the Father and the Son dwell in the Christian through the representation of the Spirit. There is no scripture that specifically states that the indwelling of the Spirit is literal or personal, though we would assume a literal and personal indwelling of the Spirit by literally interpreting statements that refer to His indwelling. The definition of how this indwelling exists is beside the point in view of the biblically stated fact of the indwelling.

In a real sense the Holy Spirit indwells as He controls our minds through the influence of the word of God. This is not a subjective control, but a control through the individual’s submission to Spirit-inspired direction of the word. We can never separate the Spirit from His inspired word. One can never separate the word from the Spirit. This is **not** to say that the Spirit is the word. It is **not** to say that the Spirit’s work is limited only to the word. It **is** to say that as the word of the Spirit permeates and directs the behavior of the individual, that person is

being led by the Spirit. That person is being indwelt by the Spirit.

God has revealed His will to us through the Spirit-inspired word. When our lives manifest the nature and characteristics of God as explained in that word, then we can truly say that God is in us. We can in this sense also affirm that His Spirit is in us. Boles stated,

As God and Christ dwell in us through the Holy Spirit, so the Holy Spirit dwells in us through his agent, the word of truth. “My little children, of whom I am again in travail **until Christ be formed in you.**” (Gal. 4:19.) **For Christ to be “formed” in us is the development of the spiritual life; this life is developed by the Holy Spirit through his agency, the word of God.** All growth of the regenerated life and character conforms to the laws of the Holy Spirit in all of his workings. When the word of Christ dwells in Christians, the Holy Spirit dwells in them. The Holy Spirit and the word of God are inseparable; the word of God is the word of the Holy Spirit. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16) is the way for Christ to dwell in us; it is the way for the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.^{6:208}

We would not limit the work of the Spirit to the influence of the word alone. Neither would we limit the indwelling of the Spirit only to the sense that the Spirit indwells as the word of God permeates the Christian’s life. The Scriptures teach a real indwelling of the Holy Spirit, though one must understand that words

as “literal,” “actual” and “personal” to define this indwelling are words that are not found in the Bible. By using these words, we still have difficulty understanding the nature of the indwelling, for we are dealing with a union between God of the spirit world and individuals of the physical world. How can earthly words fully explain this mystery?

Keep in mind also that our words too often carry with them unbiblical connotations that are often brought over from the misguided religious world in which we live. Nevertheless, the Spirit’s presence with and in the Christian is a divine mystery. It is a concept accepted on the basis of trusting in God’s initiative to work as He desires, regardless of our finite understandings.

It must be emphasized again that there is no scripture that directly links the work of the Spirit with the personal indwelling of the Spirit. In other words, what the Spirit does is not dependent on “where” the Spirit is. The Spirit has always worked in the lives of God’s people. However, the Scriptures teach that He has an indwelling relationship with the Christian in this age. From what is revealed in the New Testament, it is apparent that He did not have this relationship with all God’s people before the establishment of the church. However, the Spirit’s work in the lives of God’s people before Acts

2 was not hindered though He did not have the unique relationship with the people of God before the cross as He maintains today with all Christians. For this reason one must always understand that what the Spirit does in relation to the Christian is not contingent upon the indwelling of the Spirit.

The above must be affirmed lest we place the Spirit in a dormant state in the history of the world before Pentecost. We know that He was active before Acts 2. He was active not only in a miraculous way in Israel, but also in forming the behavior of men through inspired words of direction. No part of the Godhead has been inactive since the creation of the world. Though the particular works of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have changed, their works have always existed.

We must also not consign the Spirit to dormancy after Acts 2. He was miraculously active in the first century. However, He continues to work today in a non-miraculous manner in the lives of Christians throughout the world. He continues to work in the world outside the presence of the personal presence of the saints. God the Spirit continues to work in order to bring God’s eternal plan of salvation to a conclusion in the history of the world.

Chapter 6

Key Passages On The Indwelling

We must continue to remind ourselves of the miraculous indwelling context of the early church. The miraculous gifts were abundantly present in the work and edification of the early Christians. It would be logical in our biblical interpretation, therefore, to first understand passages in the New Testament in their first century context before we apply them to ourselves today. We are secondary recipients of the New Testament letters. We must strive to rightly divide what first applies to the context of the first century, and then what applies to our context today.

A. Key passages on the indwelling of God:

The following are key passages on the indwelling relationship the Spirit has with Christians. We must caution ourselves to understand these passages **exactly for what they say without reading into them preconceived ideas**. It is always a difficult task of the interpreter to allow the Bible to speak for itself. Nevertheless, we must understand these passages in their historical context before we make an interpretive application to ourselves today.

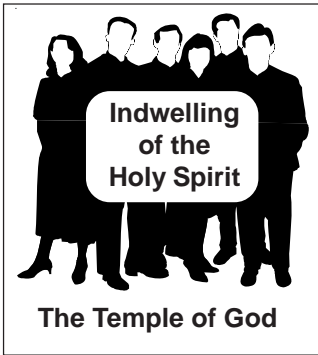
1. Matthew 28:18-20: In this passage Jesus said to baptize the disciples **“in the name of the Father and of the**

Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Some have misunderstood this passage by saying that Jesus is here giving instructions on something that must be said at the time one is baptized. The fact is, however, that He is revealing to us what happens when one is baptized. The Greek word “in” (*eis*) in this passage refers to **relationship**. The language of the passage indicates that when one is baptized, he is baptized into a relationship with **God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. It is not that one comes into a special relationship with only one manifestation of the Godhead. **When one is baptized, he is brought into a close relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.** From what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, therefore, one comes into a special relationship with the totality of the Godhead, not just the Holy Spirit.

The Godhead always works in harmony as one. Therefore, the Spirit’s relationship with the Christian should not be understood in a way that makes the relationship of the Father and Son any less with the Christian than the Spirit. The work of the Spirit in the life of the Christian must be viewed as the work of God, for the Spirit is one with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. 1 Corinthians 3:16: The Corinthian church **as a whole** was the temple of God. Paul said, **“... you [the whole church in Corinth] are the temple of God.**

... the Spirit of God dwells in you.” The Spirit, therefore, indwells the church as a whole, though this does not



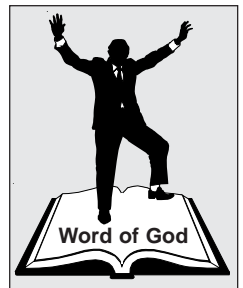
mean that this is the only place of His dwelling. The metaphor, “temple of God,” is taken from the Old Testament. The Jews often viewed God’s presence to be in the temple, though this was only a figure of His dwelling in Israel. People are the church, which is the resident “place” of God on earth, though God is in heaven. Emphasis in 1 Corinthians 3:16 is on the church group, not the individual members. Therefore, the Spirit indwells the individual members of the church as He indwells the entire body. Paul’s emphasis is in recognizing the church as a whole as God’s place of residence on earth because it is the church of His people. God was in the Corinthian church, not in the pagan temples.

3. 2 Corinthians 6:16: Paul wrote, “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them.’” In 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul quotes from Ezekiel 37:27. (The entire verse is a reference to the concepts that are taught in Lv 26:12; Ex 29:45; Ez 37:27; Jr 31:1.) The pronoun “I” in Ezekiel 37:26 must refer to the Godhead as it refers in the context of Ezekiel 37. Paul argues against the

Corinthians’ association with the pagan temples of Corinth. The Corinthian Christians were in a covenant relationship with God because of their obedience to the gospel. God was in them. They were in God. Therefore, Paul argued that because God was in them, they must not be “unequally yoked with unbelievers” (2 Co 6:14). They must, “Walk in the Spirit ...” (Gl 5:16).

4. Ephesians 2:22: To the Ephesians Paul wrote, “... in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” As in 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul here refers to the corporate body of believers, the church, as the spiritual dwelling place of God. The church is a “spiritual house” (1 Pt 2:5). It is the spiritual habitation of God on earth. As Christ dwells in our hearts through the faith (Ep 3:17), so God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit indwell the church as the church exemplifies the nature of God in the world.

a. “Are being built”: This phrase in Ephesians 2:22 indicates that the Ephesian church was in the process of building. It was not something that had happened



at one time in the past. They were growing spiritually. They were growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:18). Paul had earlier spoken personally to the Ephesian elders and said to them, “So

now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, **which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified**" (At 20:32).

b. "In the Spirit": The phrase "in the Spirit" in Ephesians 2:22 refers to **the spiritual nature of the indwelling relationship**. This phrase in the New Testament would best be translated with the words "by" or "through" the Spirit. The passage is discussing a "habitation" relationship of God with the church. The emphasis in the passage is on the relationship of Deity as a whole with the church. The church is a spiritual habitation in which God spiritually dwells. This phrase corresponds to the holy temple **in the Lord** in verse 21. The Lord in verse 21 is not expressing instrumentality. Emphasis is on where the temple is holy, that is, in its relationship with the Lord. Emphasis in the context of Ephesians 2:22, therefore, is on the church of believers being built up as the spiritual dwelling place of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The spiritual dwelling place of the Ephesian church was being built up **by** the Spirit. Since we must first interpret the meaning of this passage in its historical context, we would conclude that the Spirit was working in the Ephesian church to build them up. They had no Bibles to read. However, on many occasions Paul had visited them and laid hands on them in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we would conclude that the Spirit was building them up through the

use of the miraculous gifts of those on whom hands had been laid. The Spirit still builds churches today. He builds through the instrumentality of the word of God to which Paul had commended the Ephesian church (At 20:32). Churches that do not rely on the word of God will not be constructed on the foundation of truth. They will be tossed to and fro in a world of false teachings (Ep 4:11-16).

5. Colossians 2:9: Of Jesus Paul wrote, "*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" **This passage cannot be stating that all that is the Father, Son and Spirit "bodily" and literally indwelt Jesus while He was on earth.** At His baptism, the Father spoke with a voice that "*came from heaven*" (Mt 3:17). The Father was in heaven while the Son was in the flesh and on the earth during Jesus' baptism. Nevertheless, the Father **indwelt** the Son. In this sense, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can indwell but at the same time not be in the **physical location of the one who is indwelt.**

Consider this concept in relation to the Spirit, who at Jesus' baptism, "*descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him [Jesus]*" (Lk 3:22). Are we to understand that all that the Holy Spirit is, was confined to the body of a dove? Certainly not! Such thinking fails to understand the nature of the omnipresence of Deity. The passage does not teach the incarnation of the Spirit into the bodily form of an animal. What it does say is that "**like** a dove" the Spirit signaled His

presence with the Son on earth. However, because the Spirit signals His presence with the Son does not mean that He left His presence with the rest of the world. He was still with John the Immerser who at this time was baptizing Jesus. In other words, at this particular event and time in history the Spirit was not confined to the location of a dove's body.

This is a most profound concept of God which we who are subjected to time and location find hard to understand. Because of our inability to understand such concepts of omnipresence concerning the nature of God, we should be cautious about binding our understandings of physical locations on God. In other words, **for the Father, Son and Spirit to indwell, they do not have to indwell according to our understanding.** To say that They must indwell according to our understanding is to bind our earthly understandings on that which is not of this world. Nevertheless, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit indwell the Christian at least on the basis that the Christian has submitted his life to the will of God.

What Paul meant in Colossians 2:9 was that the Father, Son and Spirit are so one in nature, purpose and character, that where one is in "location" (a reference solely to the time of the incarnation), there are the others also. The completeness of the nature, purpose and character of the Father indwelt the Son while the Son was "located" on earth in the body of a man. The word "dwells" in Colossians 2:9 is in the **present tense**. In other words, at the time of Paul's writing the

statement, the fullness of God dwelt in Jesus. The fullness of God was in Jesus while He was bodily on earth. The same fullness is in Him in His resurrected state in eternity as He now exists.

In a similar sense, the Father, Son and Spirit indwell the obedient believer. When one's nature, purpose and character coincide with that of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it is true that God indwells the believer. However, if we force the omnipresence of God to conform to the human concept of location, we will often misunderstand this aspect of the indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We must remember that God is omnipresent. This places God everywhere at all times. In this sense, the Christian has a special relationship with God who is here and personally present in his life. However, because God is "here" and "in" us does not mean that He is not "there." The indwelling of God does not "dislocate" Him from being somewhere else. Some have affirmed that because the Spirit indwells the Christian, He is therefore not anywhere else. Such manifests a misunderstanding of the omnipresence of God by structuring God according to our human vocabulary.

6. 2 Timothy 1:14: *"That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us."* In the context of this statement no written Scriptures were in common circulation. The "good thing" that was committed to Timothy would refer to the truth that was committed to him, which truth he preached by the inspiration of the Spirit.

Paul here instructs Timothy, an inspired prophet, to keep this truth alive by inspired preaching. Verse 6 of the same chapter is actually a commentary on this passage. Paul commanded Timothy, “*Stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*” Timothy was to guard the “good thing” by stirring up his miraculous gift of prophecy. The “good thing” could be kept only if Timothy bravely stood up against opposition and preached. In the context of 2 Timothy 1:14, therefore, reference is to the miraculous indwelling of the Spirit to guide Timothy to proclaim the truth. He had been intimidated to not use his gift which he had received by the laying on of Paul’s hands. The letter of 2 Timothy was meant to stir Timothy into action.

7. James 4:5: James stated, “*Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’.*” The translation of this verse has long been debated. The *New King James Version* affirms from the above translation the belief that the word *pneuma* (spirit) refers to the Holy Spirit. The *American Standard Version* translators, on the other hand, rendered the passage with the God-created **spirit of man** as the correct reference to *pneuma*. “*Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?*” This is certainly a correct understanding since God is the Father of our created spirits (See Nm 16:22; Ec 12:7; Zc 12:1). This is probably the correct rendering and understanding of the verse since James is asking a rhetorical question. In other words,

God did not create a spirit for man which was prejudiced toward sin.

I would have no difficulty in applying the passage to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The same rhetorical question could be asked by James. Would the Holy Spirit within us lust or yearn jealously? James implies the negative answer, “certainly not!” Regardless of how the verse is translated, the deducted answer is still the same. God is not the author of a “spirit” that is inclined to envy. Nor does the “Spirit” incline one to envy.

B. The indwelling of truth:

In reference to our spiritual growth, we often maintain a legal perspective concerning how growth takes place. **We relegate the Scriptures and our behavior to a memory-knowledge relationship which too often digresses to a legalistic concept and practice of Christianity.** We often feel that the more we know of the Bible, the more we will spiritually grow. Unfortunately, this is not the case. One can have a great knowledge of what the Bible says, and yet not put into practice what he knows. John wrote of his joy concerning Gaius in 3 John 4 “*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*” Gaius walked in that which he knew. The Christian has a spiritual relationship with the inspired Scriptures. They are his source of life and guidance. If he walks by the instruction of God’s word, then he will spiritually grow.

God promised that His laws would be written on the hearts of those with

whom He would establish the new covenant (See Jr 31:31-34; Hb 8:10; 10:16). His laws would be written in their hearts in the sense that those who would choose to come into a covenant relationship with Him would be obedient to the conditions of the covenant. Through the medium of the Scriptures, those who were to be born into covenant relationship with God would already **know** God. They would have an intellectual knowledge of Him, but most importantly, they would have identified with Him through the spirit of understanding. His truth would be **in them**.

The New Testament fully explains this relationship the Christian has in a covenant relationship with God. The truth is in the Christian (1 Jn 1:8; 2:24; 3:9). It is in the Christian as he walks in it (1 Jn 2:4). By walking in the light of the truth the Christian knows that he is a son of God (1 Jn 2:5). He knows such by his obedience to the truth (1 Jn 3:10).

1. *The Scriptures bring life to man.*

The truth is spirit and life (Jn 6:63). Our relationship to the Scriptures, the word of God, is not a matter of passages and pages of precept upon precept. The Scriptures are eternal values and virtues that are meant to regenerate us out of a vain manner of life. Through these passages and pages are conveyed virtues and values that affect our eternal destiny. We must not be deceived into believing that there is something legalistic about obeying passages and precepts that have been revealed by God in Holy Writ. These eternal values permeate and control the

submitted spirit. Behavior is changed. Destinies are changed.

2. *The Scriptures bring the mind of Christ to all men.* It is a biblical truth that the word of God dwells in us. Paul commanded, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ...*” (Cl 3:16). By allowing the word of Christ to dwell in us, we in turn have the mind of Christ (1 Co 2:16). The New Testament does not teach that the word dwells in us through the medium of something else. The word of God (the mind of Christ) dwells in us as our lives are spiritually controlled by the principles of God’s will. The word is not literally in us. Its principles are in us.

3. *The Scriptures bring to man the indwelling God.* There is a true essence to the concept that the Spirit indwells the Christian through the medium of the Spirit’s inspired word. The Bible does not say that the Spirit, the Father and Son dwell in us through the permeating affect of the Scriptures. This exact statement is never made. However, the fact that the Scriptures directly control the life of the submitted believer is conclusive evidence of the fact. I consider it a fair conclusion to affirm that God indwells through obeyed truth. As one’s life is moved to holiness, it is understood that God is in his life. The Spirit of sonship is the spirit of obedience to the will of the Father.

4. *The Scriptures bring to man indwelling truth.* Jesus stated, “*Your word is truth*” (Jn 17:17). John added, “*... the Spirit is truth*” (1 Jn 5:6). Since we cannot separate the Spirit from the word, both the Spirit and the word are truth.

John adds that the truth “*abides in us*” (2 Jn 2). It takes little deduction to conclude that the Spirit in this sense abides in Christians through the medium of the indwelling truth. This is not memorization of Scripture. This is not a total knowledge of all Scripture. **Emphasis is on one’s submission to God’s values as revealed in Scripture.** Winters concluded, “Since the Spirit works through the truth, and since the truth dwells in Christians, it is logical to conclude that the Spirit dwells in Christians through the truth.”^{10:19}

It is the above aspect of the Spirit’s indwelling that is often difficult for some to comprehend. A student can memorize and recall all points of a teacher’s outline and lecture. He can make a perfect score on the final exam. However, a student can do this without capturing the spirit of the teacher’s nature. Thus, the teacher’s life and spirit are never followed by the student.

In the same way an individual believer can memorize and recall numerous scriptures. He can do such without ever capturing the spirit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is not produced because the student distances himself from the Originator of the instruction. On the other hand, submissive students produce the fruit of the Spirit, not only because they have grown in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18), but because they have first humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Pt 5:6). This is the difference between the “intellectually” motivated student and the student who is truly “led by the Spirit”.

The intellectually driven person focuses only on the head. The Spirit led person focuses on both the head and the heart. Brents concluded,

Reading and feeding upon this spiritual food [the word of God], the children of God are “filled with the Spirit” – not because the Word is the Spirit, for it is not – but because the Spirit is ever present in the inspired Word, and the service appointed therein is God’s ordained means of giving them the Spirit. Hence, says Paul: “Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.” (Col. 3:16).^{8:647}

The truth of the preceding point does not take the place of the indwelling of the being of the Spirit. The point is that the indwelling Spirit seeks to mold our lives through our submission to the word that He inspired to be written. The Spirit seeks for the humble heart in which to abide and work.

a. The indwelling word: To the hardened Jews, Jesus said, “*But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe*” (Jn 5:38). A very important concept is set forth here by Jesus. The Jews knew the Scriptures. Verse 39 of John 5 states, “*You [Jews] search the Scriptures*” The Jews knew of and had memorized the prophecies concerning the Messiah. However, **their unbelief blocked their interpretation and application of the Scriptures.** In this manner, **the word did not abide in them**, though they intellectually knew their Bibles.

Because of the Jews' rebellious attitudes, Jesus said to them, "... *you do not have the love of God in you*" (Jn 5:42). Their lives could not be changed because of their attitudes and not because of their lack of knowledge. The same is true of the Christian. One may have a "knowledge of the truth," but because of a rebellious attitude fail to produce the fruit of the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. The love of God is not abiding in the one who is insubmissive to the truth. This is why John declared, "*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments*" (1 Jn 5:2).

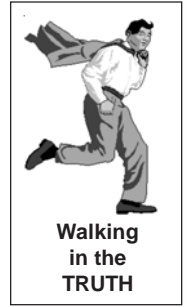
The truth, therefore, does not indwell through knowledge. Truth indwells when it becomes a part of one's life. Faith without works is dead (Js 2:17). Knowledge without obedience is likewise dead (See Hb 4:1,2). The truth must actively motivate and permeate our lives before it can be said that it dwells in us.

b. The indwelling seed: The above is what John is discussing in 1 John 3:9. "*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*" The word of God, the seed, abides in the Christian (1 Jn 2:14). When this seed abides in the Christian, the Christian is abiding in the Father and Son (1 Jn 2:24). Christians, therefore, are not leading a life of sin simply because they are submitted to the seed of the kingdom. Their lives are being controlled by the Spirit-inspired Scriptures.

c. The walk in the truth: The

Christian life is a walk in the truth. John wrote, "*I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father*" (2 Jn 4). "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth*" (3 Jn 4). Paul exhorted, "*Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule ...*" (Ph 3:16). "*Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God*" (1 Th 4:1). Christians must walk in the light (1 Jn 1:6,7). This walk is the proof of their sonship.

A Christian does not prove that he is a Christian because of the fruit of the Spirit in his life. Such would be spiritual arrogance. The religious believer of the denominational world would and does submit the same evidence for the Spirit working in his life. However, he has never obeyed the gospel and come into a covenant relationship with God. A child of God can and must submit the evidence that he has obeyed the gospel by immersion. One's spirit of obedience to the commandments of God must be the proof that one is a child of God. "*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments*" (1 Jn 5:2). Obedience to the commandments of God separates the child of God from those who may



manifest the fruit of the Spirit but have not obeyed the gospel revealed by the Spirit.

The indwelling of the Christian by the Spirit of God is the reward for the Christian's covenant relationship that he has established with God. John gives one condition for abiding in the Father and the Son. He says, "*If what you heard from the beginning* [the truth of the gos-

pel] *abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father*" (1 Jn 2:24). "*Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him ...*" (1 Jn 3:24). Those who do not "*abide in the doctrine of Christ*" do not have God (2 Jn 9). Those who abide in the teaching will have both the Father and Son. It is imperative, therefore, to guarantee our sonship by abiding in the teachings of Jesus.

Chapter 7

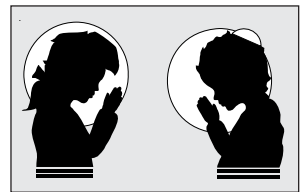
The Work Of God In Response To Prayer

It is in the area of prayer that we understand how God works in our lives today. An investigation of the prayers of the inspired biblical writers defines areas in which God works in the lives of the saints. In other words, if a particular prayer were made or requested to be made by an inspired writer in the Bible, **then it is reasonable to conclude that God works in the area for which the request was made.** If an inspired writer requested that prayers be made for a particular reason, **then it is logical to conclude that God works in the area of the prayer request.** It is for this reason that the subject of prayer helps us to understand how God works in the lives of Christians today.

It would not be logical to say that the New Testament writers asked for actions on the part of God through prayer which they believed God would not perform. Neither would we conclude that God had deceived the inspired writers to ask things He never intended to answer in the first

place. It would not be logical to believe that the things for which the biblical writers asked fellow Christians to pray could not be answered by God. Jesus said, "*Ask, and it will be given to you ...*" (Mt 7:7). Jesus did not give the Christian a senseless expectation when He said to the disciples, "*... whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*" (Mk 11:24). The very fact that He asked Christians to pray is evidence that God works in our lives in order to answer our prayers. We must believe that we receive the answers to our prayers when we follow Jesus' instructions to ask.

Christians, therefore, must develop a sincere life of prayer to God that is based upon a belief that God truly works in their lives (Js 1:5,6). We must aspire in expectation for God's answers to our



prayers. Therefore, as we study the Bible in order to determine how God works in the life of the Christian, one must study those things for which inspired writers were directed by the Holy Spirit to ask and pray.

The key points that follow define areas in which God works in the Christian's life because the inspired writers directed the saints to pray in these areas. Each request for prayer that is made is an indirect definition of how God can and will work in the Christian's life. Though we may not understand the mystery of how God would bring about an answer to prayer, we must accept the fact that God works in such areas simply because of the Holy Spirit's inspired record of these prayer requests. We should also be encouraged to make such prayers. Not only did the inspired writers make these prayers, but they also encouraged others to pray to God on their behalf in order to unleash the power of God in their lives.

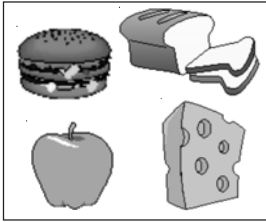
We must remember, however, that all prayer is answered according to the will of God. When we pray concerning the changing of the normal occurrence of natural law, we must understand that God often wills that we endure our present environment in order that our characters be prepared for heavenly dwelling. In other words, the answer to our prayer may be that God allows us to suffer physical adversity in order to prepare us to be a more serviceable minister on earth and a greater resident of heaven (See 1 Pt 1:6,7). Our prayers, therefore, may not be answered as we would want them answered.

A. God restores health.

2 Kings 20:1-4 records the fact that King Hezekiah was sick and near death. Isaiah came to him and proclaimed, "*Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live'*" (2 Kg 20:1). As a result of this pronouncement by Isaiah, Hezekiah "*turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord ...*" (2 Kg 20:2). The pronouncement of Isaiah was that Hezekiah would die. The message was from God, and thus, we would conclude that his death would certainly occur. However, Hezekiah prayed that he would not die. The result of Hezekiah's prayer was a second proclamation from God. God said, "*Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father; 'I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you'*" (2 Kg 20:5). God worked in the sick body of Hezekiah in order to restore to health whatever infirmity he had. We do not know how He did this. We simply know that God is able to work in the bodies of the sick in order to bring about a restoration of the body. He can do this, and yet, do it in a non-miraculous manner. In other words, this restoration of the physical body by God would not be considered a miracle simply because such was accomplished in a different manner and for a different purpose than miracles. Nevertheless, Hezekiah's healing was the work of God. Christians must believe, therefore, that if it is according to the will of God, God can raise up the sick in answer to their prayers (See Js 5:13-16).

B. God provides the necessities for life.

In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus explained those things which God does for those who have put their trust in



Him. The emphasis in the context of Matthew 6 is on the fact that God will take care of those who care for Him. *“Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”* (Mt 6:30).

Jesus taught that we should pray for our daily bread (Mt 6:11). If we are to pray for such, then certainly God is able to provide for that which we need. God is able to work in the lives of those who trust in Him to provide the necessities of life.

C. God opens doors for evangelism.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries”* (1 Co 16:9). When Paul came to the city of Troas he said, *“... a door was opened to me by the Lord”* (2 Co 2:12; see At 19:8-10). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have*

faith” (2 Th 3:1,2).

We do not know how God non-miraculously opens these doors in order that the gospel be preached to the lost. However, the inspired Paul here affirmed that God is the one who is to be given credit for opening the doors. Therefore, we must conclude that God can work in ways whereby opportunities can be made for the preaching of the gospel to the lost. Because He does this, it is imperative that Christians continually pray that doors be opened for the preaching of the gospel.

D. God provides escapes from temptation.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape ...”* (1 Co 10:13). We do not profess to know how God makes the way of escape. Our lack of knowledge concerning how God provides the escape, however, does not mean that He does not so work in our lives. It may be that God provides the wisdom that is necessary in order to perceive the way of escape (See Js 1:5,6). Whatever He does, we must



believe that a way of escape is provided if we will take it. If we are to believe what the Holy Spirit is here saying through Paul, then we must assume that God works in our lives in order to provide escapes.

E. God delivers from evil workers.

While in prison, Paul was confident that God would deliver him from evil works. He wrote to Timothy, “*And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom*” (2 Tm 4:18; see Pv 2:6,8,12,16; 2 Th 3:2; 2 Tm 3:11; 4:17). Paul believed in the power of prayer to deliver him from prison. He wrote to Philemon, “*But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you*” (Pl 22). Paul asked for the prayers of brethren for he had faith that God would in a non-miraculous way work in order to answer those prayers. “*Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us ...*” (2 Co 1:9-11). Peter also believed that “*the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment*” (2 Pt 2:9).

These deliverances for which Paul and Peter prayed, and for which they asked the brethren to pray, were not miraculous deliverances as Peter was de-

livered from prison by an angel in Jerusalem (At 12:1-11). They were non-miraculous works of God where God was performing a work that was not perceived through the senses, but through faith. The fact that the early saints prayed for deliverance, therefore, is evidence that God works in some ways that are beyond our sense perception.

F. God raises up evangelists.

Jesus commanded that we pray for more evangelists to go into the harvest. “*Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*” (Mt 9:38). In reference to his own life, Paul said, “*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry*” (1 Tm 1:12). If Jesus commanded us to pray for evangelists to enter the harvest, then we must believe that in some way God can raise up evangelists. Paul was put into the ministry through the direct work of Jesus who appeared to him on the Damascus road. However, God works in non-miraculous ways in order to raise up evangelists. For this reason, therefore, Christians must pray for more evangelists.

G. God works in order that the faith of Christians not fail.

Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith not fail. “*But I have prayed for you [Peter], that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren*” (Lk 22:32; see

1 Co 10:13; Ps 125:3). We do not understand how God could keep Peter's faith from failing. However, Jesus prayed for Peter, and since Jesus made the prayer, we would assume through faith that God was able to work according to the request of Jesus that Peter's faith not fail.

In the same manner, Epaphras prayed for the faithfulness of the Colossian church. "*Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*" (Cl 4:12). Since Epaphras prayed that the Colossian church would stand perfect and complete, then we would assume that in some way God could answer this prayer. God thus works in our lives in order that we stand perfect and complete. He works in order that our faith not fail. And thus it is our faith that trusts in His work in our lives.

H. God works to aid the work of the saints.

God works for those who work for Him. Paul requested of the Christians in Rome, "*Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints*" (Rm 15:30-32). As stated before, God can work for His saints in order to



deliver them from those who would work evil against them. In this request for the Roman Christians' prayers, Paul assumes that God is able to make his service acceptable to the saints. In some way, therefore, God works in order to make acceptable the labors of the saints.

I. God works to bring evangelists to the saints.

Paul asked the Roman brethren to pray for him on his journey that it might be possible for him to come to Rome. "*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you*" (Rm 1:9,10). After the same manner Paul prayed that it might be possible for him to be with the Thessalonian brethren. He wrote that he and other evangelists were "*praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith*" (1 Th 3:10). Since Paul prayed that in some way God would make it possible for him to go to Rome and Thessalonica, then we would assume that He would fulfill this request. According to Paul's journeys in Acts, God answered the prayer to go to Rome by taking him to Rome at the expense of the Roman government. He was in the custody of a Roman commander to be taken to Rome for trial. In this way, therefore, God answered the prayer to get him to Rome.

J. God protects the saints in times of trial.

Solomon wrote, *“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe”* (Pv 18:10). *“Whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe”* (Pv 29:25). Since God can make things safe for the saints, then we would not be wrong to pray for such. However, we must also realize that God does allow the saints to undergo great trials, sufferings and death. Paul strengthened the churches by teaching them that *“we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”* (At 14:22). It is through tribulation that characters are prepared for eternal dwelling. James wrote, *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience”* (Js 1:2,3). Therefore, it is necessary that Christians undergo trials in this life in order to be prepared for eternal dwelling in the presence of God (See 1 Pt 1:6,7). However, because God can make it safe for the saints, then the saints should pray for this work of God in their lives.

K. God changes adversity.

Paul was confident that God could turn adversity into good things. He wrote to the Philippian church concerning the trials he was having in Rome in reference to those who jealously spoke out against him while he was in prison (Ph 1:12-18). Concerning what had happened, he wrote, *“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through*

your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Ph 1:19). He knew that God could in some way turn the work of Satan against Satan, and thus work things together for good (Rm 8:28).

L. God works to bring forth fruit in order to glorify Jesus.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:11,12 Paul wrote, *“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul prayed that God bring results from all the goodness and the work of faith of the brethren in Thessalonica (See 1 Co 3:5,6; 1 Th 1:2-8). We would assume, therefore, that God works in the lives of Christians in order to bring forth fruit from their labors. Paul also prayed that the name of Jesus be glorified in the work of the Thessalonians. Therefore, God works in order to glorify the name of Jesus through the fruits of the labors of Christians (See 1 Co 1:31; 1 Th 2:20).

We must emphasize again the fact that God must work in answering prayer in the areas where inspired writers prayed and commanded that we should pray. God may not answer a prayer in the manner we think He should. He may not answer a prayer when we think He should. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit inspired the

New Testament writers to record the preceding requests and examples of prayer in order to reassure the saints that God works in the lives of the saints. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that God works in these areas in order to work for the Christian. To say that God does not so work is to accuse the Spirit of misguiding the inspired writers into making futile prayers and asking for futile prayers to be made on behalf of the saints.

We would also add as a practical application of God's work in answering the prayers of the saints that we cannot keep a ledger of His activities. God's work will not computerize. Christians cannot produce a "balance sheet" on the work of God. The mystery of how He brings about all things to work together for good is His department. He simply reassures us that He does work and that He works on behalf of Christians. Paul wrote, "*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose*" (Rm 8:28).

Sometimes we seek to do the work of God by carrying out our own plans and programs. We try to work everything in the church with well organized plans and programs in order to produce results. Efforts are often held in check by detailed shepherding and unscriptural lording over the flock. No space is left for God to work in the plans and programs simply because men have calculated every detail that is to be accomplished. Everything is neatly directed by subservience to plans on paper. In such structured organization God sometimes has a hard

time getting on our agendas in order to work all things together for good.

It is good that churches plan and organize with God what they want to do in evangelism and benevolence. This is certainly what the early church did in Acts 6 in reference to the needs of widows. However, we must not organize God out of our efforts to do His will. If members work simply to carry out a plan on paper, then something is wrong. Organization is meant to channel God's work in the lives of the membership into focusing on specific needs. Organization is not for the purpose of stimulating or mustering recruits into file to march according to the orders of those who are seeking to lord over the flock. We must never order God out of His work by ordering the saints into conformity with the wishes of man.

We would thus conclude by saying that there is a mystery about God's work that we do not pretend to understand. We worship a God whose ways are past finding out. We are not so logical and analytical as to submit God to "systematic theology" and reduce His work to a mathematical equation. All His work cannot be reduced to human intellect and understanding. The reality of His work in our lives must be perceived by faith. The work of Deity in the Christian life cannot be accounted for through simple empirical evaluation.

The God who is here is a God whose workings cannot be reduced to all that men can understand. Therefore, we dare not create a god in our own image of human logic and deduction. A god whose

workings can be calculated through human reasoning is a god who is not worth following. Such a god is of human invention and certainly made impotent by the extent to which the human mind can conceive. We serve no such god.

We can understand God's work by understanding His own explanation of how He works. And how He works is revealed in the Bible. We dare not affirm that God works beyond the limits that He places on Himself in the Bible. We dare not affirm that God would do for man those things that He has not promised or declared He will do. Therefore, we would not create a god after our

own desires who would relieve us of spiritual responsibility. A god that would condone the theology "should we sin that grace may abound" is as dangerous to our eternal salvation as the god who cannot work beyond our power of human reason and deduction. Both are false gods. Both will lead one astray from the one true God who is revealed through the Scriptures. Though our understanding of His marvelous revelation always leaves something to be desired, we must put our trust in this God and the mystery of His wondrous workings. We would thus not presume to understand all His working.

Chapter 8

Sanctification Of The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit maintains a special relationship with the Christian today which was not characteristic with God's people before the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. The Old Testament gives little information concerning the work of the Spirit in Israel. His work was primarily directed toward that special group of prophets who ministered to the needs of the people of Israel throughout their history. Today, however, the Spirit works among all believers. Though He does not work in a manner to directly change moral behavior, He works for the benefit of the Christian in ways that are past finding out.

If one recognizes that the Spirit worked miraculously among the churches in the first century, then he must be care-

ful to rightly divide all passages that speak of the work of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner in the first century church and His work in the twenty-first century church. In the absence of the inspired written New Testament in the first century church, the Spirit worked miraculously through the gifts in order to aid the church in evangelism and edification. Therefore, it is logical to assume that when we read New Testament passages that were directed to churches with the miraculous gifts, we should be careful to first understand those passages in the context of the early Christians. **We cannot make every passage in the New Testament concerning the work of the Holy Spirit applicable to our situation today.** If we do, we will rob the first cen-

tury church of the Spirit's miraculous work in establishing the church. Our misapplication of Scripture would also lead to many misunderstandings of the Spirit's work today.

In the following points concerning works assigned to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, it has been my approach to first understand the New Testament in its historical setting. Doing this does not make the New Testament a dead letter today. This is simply an effort to follow Paul's directive of rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tm 2:15). We justly follow this biblical hermeneutic in understanding the application of the letter of Revelation. If we try to force every principle and historical statement of Revelation to apply to our historical situation today, we would miss a correct understanding of the message of the book. If we can rightly apply the contents of Revelation to their historical setting of persecuted Christians in the first century, then we can rightly apply passages concerning the Holy Spirit to their historical setting of the miraculous age of the Spirit in the first century. If this makes the New Testament dead, then one is asking for more than God promised concerning the work of the Spirit. And if we ask for more than what God promised, we are in a dangerous predicament of doing what Peter said of some in 2 Peter 3:16 concerning the twisting of difficult passages in Paul's writings. He wrote that some "*who are untaught and unstable twist [the teachings of Paul] to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*"

We must **study** the subject of the

Holy Spirit's work in the life of the Christian. We must also **correctly apply** what we learn. I have found that the intimidation of the denominational world has often been so great in this area, that good brethren have adopted not only the terminology of the denominational world in explaining the work of the Spirit, but also the theology of a religiously misguided world. As the influence of these concepts becomes greater in the church, this intimidation becomes greater. The Christian's ignorance of the work of the Spirit because of his lack of study on this subject has led to a great deal of misunderstandings of the Holy Spirit.

We must never underestimate the intimidation of a religiously misguided world that has been carried astray by emotions and superstitions. It is always the tendency of the individual to succumb to the religious environment around him in an effort to be religiously accepted. When everybody is believing and practicing a certain behavioral principle, it is difficult for one to stand alone against what he feels is biblically not correct.

We live in a world wherein the charismatic movement has claimed a vast majority of the "christian" world. Brethren who live in areas where this movement has great influence are often intimidated into conforming to the beliefs and behavior that is prevalent in the society. However, we must warn ourselves not to be led astray by that which we cannot define in the word of God. Our minds must be captivated by God's word to the point that every belief and behavior of man is brought under the subjection and judg-

ment of the Scriptures.

Some have firmly maintained the following concept concerning the sanctification by the Spirit:

We believe that the Holy Scriptures teach that in order to be saved, we must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind, and is effected in a manner above our comprehension, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in order to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel, and that its proper evidence is found in the holy fruits we bring forth to the glory to God.^{56:9}

I do not agree with this statement. I believe it does not teach or convey a biblical concept of the work of the Spirit in either conversion or the life of the Christian. It was made by J. G. Bow, in the book entitled, *What Baptists Believe and Why They Believe It*. There are some who deny the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the sinner, but maintain the belief that the Spirit directly affects the moral behavior of man after conversion. The only difference between the two positions as to when the Spirit directly affects and controls the moral behavior of man is the **time** when each operation occurs.

The supposed mysterious and direct work of the Spirit in the conversion of the sinner is a belief that attacks the justice of God. It is a belief that would nullify the power of the gospel in the conversion process. It would deprive man of his free-moral agency and place the blame on the Spirit for those who did not

accept the direction of the word to be converted. Such would make God a respecter of persons. This teaching would even lead to the discouragement of those who could not feel a nudge or awaken to the Spirit's direct calling. Some have thus turned away from religion because they could not find solutions to the problems of their frustrated lives. Those religious practitioners who promote the direct operation of the Spirit in the conversion of the sinner, are demanding more than what God has promised.

The same can be said of those who teach the same doctrine but in relation to the Christian life. They promote an expectation on the part of the Spirit, which, when not delivered, discourages those who do not find the peace and life change which they so desire. Being therefore frustrated "with the Spirit", they turn from God altogether. They blame the Spirit for not changing their lives enough to guarantee faithfulness. They blame God for the suffering and heartaches in their lives which He supposedly is to relieve through the direct work of the Spirit. They blame God for all their problems when they should be blaming Satan. This "pointing the finger at God" mentality is derived from a misunderstanding of who is responsible for suffering in our lives and who is responsible for unholiness. Satan is to be blamed for the suffering. We personally are to be blamed for the unholiness.

The following points, therefore, are set forth in order to help us take another look at some very important passages in the New Testament concerning the work

of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. The following are spiritual works accomplished by the Spirit in the life of the Christian. The indwelling relationship which the saint has with the Spirit results in these benefits.

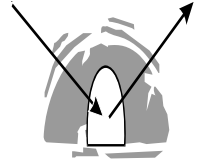
Sanctification is both a **onetime event** in the Christian's life which occurs at baptism and a **continuing** process that carries on throughout the believer's life. One is set apart and cleansed of sin at baptism by the blood of Jesus. Through growth in holy living the Christian is continually set apart from the world throughout the Christian life.

Sanctification in the New Testament has two different but related meanings. First, the word is used to mean something that is **set apart for a holy purpose**. In the Old Testament the Sabbath day was set apart (Gn 2:3; Ex 31:13; Dt 5:12; Ez 20:10-12). Jesus was also set apart as a sacrifice (Jn 10:36; 17:19). Secondly, and in reference to the Christian's life, sanctification refers to **making one holy through the purifying of one's soul**. This is the subject of this point.

Because of the tremendous influence of Calvinism in the religious world today, the doctrine of the direct work of the Spirit in activation or renewing of the moral behavior of the Christian has become an accepted belief. Calvin taught that once one was saved, he was always saved. In order to have transformation in Christian behavior, therefore, the Spirit had to operate directly on the soul of man in order to make change in moral behavior. However, consider the following points:

A. Sanctification in conversion:

When the believer's sins are washed away in the waters of baptism, he is sanctified by the blood of Jesus. This is expressed in the New Testament by the use of the **aorist tense**. This Greek verb tense emphasizes a one-time action that has occurred in the past. Notice how Paul uses this tense in 1 Corinthians 6:11 in refer-



ence to the Corinthians' sanctification at the time of their conversion. "*But you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*" The Corinthians' sanctification occurred at a point in time in the past. The same aorist tense concerning sanctification is used in reference to the apostate in Hebrews 10:29. The apostate "*counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing ...*" (See Hb 13:12). Through the blood of Jesus, sanctification is accomplished "*by the Spirit of our God.*" Therefore, the blood of Jesus cleanses the sinner of sin (Ep 1:7; Hb 13:12; 1 Jn 1:7). This onetime sanctification at conversion is "by the Spirit." Paul explains that the Spirit by the word sanctifies the church. Jesus gave Himself for the church "*that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water [baptism] by the word*" (Ep 5:26).

Is it the Spirit's work to "apply" the blood? Is it the Spirit's work to make the soul of man "approachable" to God because of the blood of Jesus? The an-

answer to these questions is difficult simply because this sanctification of the soul of man takes place in the spiritual realm. It is the blood of Jesus that makes forgiveness possible (1 Jn 1:7). It would be the work of the Spirit to apply the blood in a manner to make the soul of man approachable to the Father. Whatever the case is here, this is certainly something that takes place in the spiritual realm. **We know these things take place simply because the New Testament states that they take place.** Our knowledge of this sanctification comes only through the Scriptures. We would have no idea of these things taking place in the relationship between the converted and the Creator if it were not for the Scriptures. Boles wrote,

The power of the Holy Spirit, both in conversion and sanctification, is so blended with the force of the word of God that no intelligent mind can separate them. No one can logically express an article of faith that does not come through the word of God. The Holy Spirit and the word of God are inseparable.^{6:192}

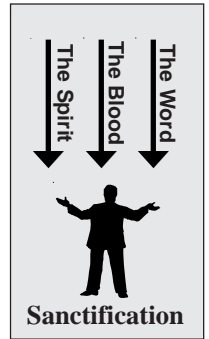
Sanctification in conversion is through obedience to the gospel. Jesus said, *“Therefore everyone who has **heard and learned from the Father comes to Me**”* (Jn 6:45). **Through hearing and learning the gospel men and women are brought to repentance.** They are brought to submission through the word of God. In obedience to the gospel, sins are washed away by the blood of the Lamb (At 22:16). There is nothing mys-

terious about this. There would be mystery on our part only in understanding what takes place in the spiritual realm with the soul’s cleansing by the blood of Jesus through the Spirit in relation to God. However, this has nothing to do with man’s part in salvation. This has nothing to do with one’s free moral agency. This has nothing to do with the individual’s changing of his attitude and behavior to submit to the call of the gospel. Sanctification by the blood of Jesus is the work of God the Holy Spirit. Sanctification occurs when the alien sinner obeys the gospel which has been communicated to him through the word of God.

One can learn the gospel and obey the truth of the gospel without having the Spirit. Knowledge of and obedience to the gospel does not mean that the Spirit indwells. The sinner can memorize all passages in the New Testament concerning God’s directions for moral behavior. However, the Spirit does not indwell the one who has not submitted to the gospel by immersion. Therefore, at the point of conversion in baptism, one comes into a spiritual relationship with God that did not exist before his conversion. This relationship comes as a result of one’s submission to the will of God in his life.

B. Sanctification in Christian living:

The obedient believer is sanctified,



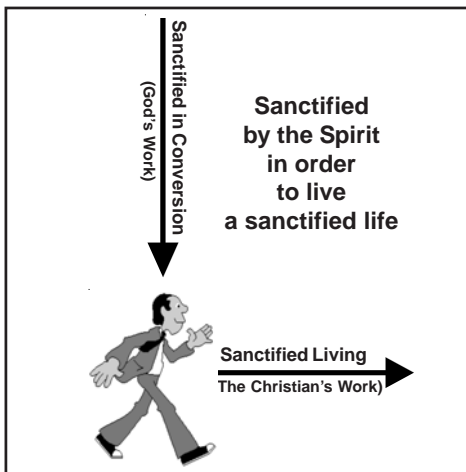
or cleansed of sins, at the time of baptism. This is a onetime happening expressed by the aorist tense of Greek verbs. However, there is a continual sanctification that takes place in the Christian's life that is often expressed by use of the **perfect tense** of the Greek verbs. **This tense expresses something that happened in the past but the results of that happening continue unto the present.**

Paul wrote in order to urge the Thessalonians to continue their sanctification. He wrote, "*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God ...*" (See 1 Th 4:2-7). To the Corinthians he wrote, "*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who **are sanctified** [perfect tense] ...*" (1 Co 1:2). Both the Corinthians and Thessalonians were sanctified at the time of conversion. However, Paul places responsibility directly on their shoulders

to continue the sanctification process by their obedience to the **inspired commandments of God**. This is what Paul instructed Timothy, "*Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified** [perfect tense] and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work*" (2 Tm 2:21). Jesus affirmed this continuing sanctification by the truth. He sanctified Himself in order that His disciples "*may be **sanctified** [perfect tense] **by the truth***" (Jn 17:19). By use of the perfect tense, therefore, sanctification started at one time in the past, but had continuing results in the present. This use of the word "sanctification" in relation to the perfect tense, therefore, indicates that this is the Christian's efforts to separate himself from the way of the world. As one grows in keeping himself from the world, he continues to be one who is set apart from the world.

Sanctification in the Christian life began at conversion. This sanctification continues through one's obedience to the direction of God. Hebrews 2:11 states, "*For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified [perfect tense] are all of one ...*" (See also the perfect tense in At 20:32; 26:18; Rm 15:16; Hb 10:10,14 where the perfect tense is used in reference to sanctification).

Hebrews 10:14 states, "*For by one offering He [Jesus] has perfected forever those who are **being sanctified**.*" Christians are in a process of being sanctified. In the context of this verse, the sanctification has been made possible through the bodily sacrifice of Jesus. Hebrews



10:10 states, “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

We must conclude by stating that 1 Corinthians 6:11 teaches that there is a onetime sanctification that occurs at the time of one’s baptism. Paul refers to this sanctification in Ephesians 5:26. “... *that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.*” However, there is also a progressive sanctification in the transformation of the individual by his obedience to the commands of God. This transformation is guided by the inspired Scriptures. Notice how Paul in Ephesians 4:17-32 lays the responsibility of this sanctification on the shoulders of each Christian.

THE SANCTIFYING CHRISTIAN WALK

... you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles ... you have not so learned Christ ... if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus ... put off ... your former conduct ... be renewed in the spirit of your mind ... put on the new man ... putting away lying ... not give place to the devil ... let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth ... do not grieve the Holy Spirit ... be kind ... forgiving

God has communicated His word to us in order to direct our behavior. John wrote, “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue*

to believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 Jn 5:13). The following point is set forth in order to explain how “these things” give us eternal life and continue our belief in the authority and power of Jesus.

C. The means by which sanctification occurs:

Sanctification is a progressive work. The word “sanctification” means to “set apart.” This setting apart occurs in a moment of time at baptism when one submits his life to the lordship of Jesus. However, the continuation of the “setting apart” in the Christian’s growth in holiness is a lifetime project. One’s character is continually transformed throughout his life to conform to the nature and character of Jesus. This spiritual growth is a process of continuing one’s separation from the mentality and practice of worldly thinking and behavior. The more one is set apart from the world, in a sense, the more holy he is. This transformation is directed by the word of God and is regulated by the submissive will of the Christian to God.

The following scriptures explain the sanctification of the saint that begins at the time of obedience to the gospel and continues throughout life. Each scripture identifies aspects of sanctification in relation to the life of the Christian.

1. John 17:17: Jesus said, “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*” In the context of this statement, Jesus was speaking to the Father in prayer

concerning the sanctification of the apostles. Their sanctification, or separation from the world would be produced by the truth. Therefore, sanctification or holiness is brought about by the truth. The revealed truth of the Spirit of truth is the medium through which holiness is formed in the life of the Christian. Obedience to the truth separates one from the world. One is sanctified by his voluntary obedience to the truth.

Jesus was not speaking of some mysterious sanctification that would come as a result of knowledge. One does not sanctify his life through a knowledge of the Bible. Sanctification (being set apart) comes when one implements in his behavior what he knows. Sanctification by the truth is the result of walking in the truth. John wrote, *“For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth”* (2 Jn 3).

2. Acts 15:9: Peter stated in reference to the Gentiles, *“... and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”* The Greek article is present in the phrase “by faith.” It should thus be translated, “by **the** faith.” The faith is the truth of God that has been revealed to man. Jude referred to the faith in this manner when he wrote, *“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jd 3). Jude 3 and Acts 15:9 correspond perfectly with what Jesus said in John 17:17. Christians are

sanctified and purified by the truth, which is the faith that has once and for all been delivered to the saints. This is precisely what Peter said in 1 Peter 1:22. *“... you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit”* When one submits his life to the truth, he separates himself from the world. In this manner, it is the truth that sanctifies.

3. Ephesians 5:26: In reference to the church as a whole, Paul wrote, *“... that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”* When one takes up the *“sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*, he guards his life from unholiness by living according to the word of God (Ep 6:17). The obedient are initially purified (cleansed) of sin in the waters of baptism (At 22:16). The obedient voluntarily set themselves apart from the world at the time of baptism by obedience to the gospel. The alien sinner by obedience sets himself apart from the world in submission to the truth of the gospel. As a Christian after baptism, the believer continually sets himself apart from the world as he strives to live the holy life in submission to the will of God. In this sense Jesus is saying in John 17:17 that men are sanctified in the truth.

It is the Spirit who works through the truth to bring men to obedience to the gospel. In obedience to the gospel one is then cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus (Ep 1:7). In one’s walk in the Christian life, it is the Spirit working through the truth to transform the moral behavior of the individual into the image of Jesus. There is nothing mystical or mysterious

about this work of the Spirit to lead men by the truth. Our transformation is accredited to the Holy Spirit simply because He is the One through whom the truth came to man (See Jn 14:26; 16:13).

4. 1 Thessalonians 5:23: “*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely.*” In this verse sanctification is **passive**, that is, God is doing the sanctifying of the individual. (The passive voice is also used in 1 Co 1:2; At 20:32; 26:18.) The passive voice in this context does not refer to God subjecting the individual or sanctifying without conditions. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter **commanded** that Christians are to sanctify Jesus in their hearts. They are commanded to set aside Jesus in their hearts. In order to harmonize the “passive” sanctification of God with the “commanded” sanctification of 1 Peter 3:15 by which Christians are to set apart Jesus in their hearts, we would conclude that through the God-originated truth the Christian voluntarily submits to divine instruction. When he does this, God cleanses the inner man of sin. However, the obedient individual sets himself apart from the world by his obedience to the truth. This is the sense of Jesus’ plea to the Father to sanctify the disciples in John 17:17. “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*” God does the sanctification through the truth. The individual is passive in the process of being sanctified in the inner man by God. However, this sanctification by God cannot happen unless the individual submits to the truth in order to separate himself from the world. It is this meaning of sanctification that Paul con-

veys in 1 Thessalonians 4:2-7, “... *each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification ...*” (1 Th 4:4). Paul then instructed them in the 1 Thessalonian letter from what to abstain (See also 1 Tm 2:15; Hb 12:15). Therefore, God expects us to be sanctified by the truth in the sense that we follow the instructions of the word of God which have come to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

5. 2 Thessalonians 2:13: Paul wrote, “... *God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*” The *American Standard Version* reads, “... *sanctification of the Spirit ...*” However, it must be noted that the article “the” is not in the Greek text here, nor is the capitalization of the word “spirit.” This is where the translator’s interpretation must play a part in the rendition of the passage.

One can remove the article which would make the reading say, “*sanctification of Spirit ...*” Again, the word “spirit” is capitalized only because the translator might think that reference is to the Holy Spirit. If we removed the capitalization, the passage would read, “... *sanctification of spirit ...*” Reference in the passage, therefore, would be to the sanctification **of the human spirit** which is in complete harmony with John 17:17 and Acts 15:9. The *Revised King James Version* reads, “... *God has from the beginning chosen you for salvation through sanctification of spirit and belief in the truth.*” Paul’s statement in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 makes more sense with this

translation because reference is to the sanctification of the spirit of man concerning his salvation. This places responsibility on man to separate himself from the ways of the world.

The Greek word *eis* is actually used in the prepositional phrase “**for** salvation.” The Thessalonians were thus chosen **unto** salvation. Not only were they chosen unto salvation in Christ, they were also striving unto the eternal salvation which is yet to be revealed. A parallel passage might be Romans 13:11 where Paul said that “*our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*”

2 Thessalonians 2:14 states that the Thessalonians were called through **the gospel**. They were called unto the glorious salvation of heaven through the gospel of truth, by which they sanctified or purified their spiritual nature by conforming to the will of God in obedience to the gospel. This is what Jesus was stating in the statement, “*Sanctify them in truth*” (Jn 17:17). This is also what Peter stated in 1 Peter 1:22, “*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*” 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14 and 1 Peter 1:22 are parallel passages. Both are discussing sanctification or purification of the soul or spirit of man through obedience to the gospel.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 points to a time when God chose (aorist tense) the Thessalonian Christians unto (*eis*) salvation. The Greek word *eis* here thus refers us to that for which they were chosen. The Christian is thus striving toward eternal salvation. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 identifies heaven as the salvation to which

Christians strive. Therefore, Paul explains in this passage that the Thessalonians responded to the gospel and were immersed for the remission of sins (a one-time event). By continual striving they moved toward their heavenly reward. In this one passage, therefore, is mentioned the onetime sanctification of the Christian (conversion) and the progressive sanctification (maturing growth) of the Christian in seeking the goal of heaven.

6. 1 Timothy 4:4,5: Paul wrote, “*For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*” This passage teaches the “setting apart” of something by the word of God. Paul says that all foods should be received with thanksgiving, for every creature “*is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*” One would not contend that this passage refers to making creatures holy. The teaching here must surely be that the word **teaches** that all creatures are acceptable by God to be eaten. However, since the phrase “*sanctified by the word*” is used here in reference to sanctification of creatures, we would be just to assume that the same concept of setting apart is used elsewhere to refer to the separation by the word of those who submit to God. The obedient are sanctified because God through His word proclaims them to be sanctified. When one fulfills the conditions for coming into a covenant relationship with God, God through the Spirit-inspired word proclaims that one is sanctified. This is at least the teaching of John 17:17. This is also Paul’s meaning in 2

Thessalonians 2:13-15. It is correct to say that Christians are sanctified by the word of God in the sense that the word teaches that they are set apart for God. Once one submits to the word of God and the conditions for salvation, then the word proclaims that one is sanctified.

The subject of sanctification encompasses several things in relation to man's relationship with God. In the spiritual realm we are first sanctified by the blood

of Jesus upon obedience to the gospel. When one thus comes into a covenant relationship with God, he is directed by the word of God to separate (sanctify) himself from the world. Sanctification is a continuing process. As one walks in the light of the truth, he is continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7-9). As one submits his life to the instructions of the word of God, he continually separates himself from the ways of the world.

Chapter 9

Strengthening Of The Holy Spirit

Paul wrote that God will not allow us to be "*tempted beyond that you are able*" to endure (1 Co 10:13). There are two interpretations one may make of what Paul taught in this statement. The first is whether God directly works on the heart of the Christian to prevent him from falling because of temptation. The second is whether He works in the environment to not allow any situation around the Christian to test the Christian beyond what he can endure. It is probably the most common belief that God works in the environment of the Christian to guard him from being tempted beyond what he is able to endure. In this way the free-moral agency of man is protected. This position also does not force us into making God a respecter of persons. In other words, the apostate Christian could accuse the Holy Spirit of not making him strong enough to overcome temptation.

The above principle applies to the

work of strengthening through the Holy Spirit. If we say that the Spirit works directly on the heart of the Christian in a way to strengthen him from falling, then we must be prepared to first wonder how He so works without subjectively controlling the emotional behavior of the Christian. Milligan recognized our inability to explain such when he said, "If it be asked **how** the Holy Spirit accomplishes all this [comforting, strengthening, etc.] in our hearts, we must, I think, again confess our ignorance, and humbly acknowledge our inability to answer the question."^{52:281} If the Spirit does work directly in the area of strengthening, Milligan is correct concerning our understanding as to how the Spirit works to accomplish such in the heart of the Christian. Nevertheless, Milligan affirmed his position by stating, "It seems probable moreover that the Holy Spirit operates on the hearts of the saints directly, or at

least by ways and means unknown to us, in order to strengthen our infirmities, and cause the word of truth to become more productive in fruits of holiness.”^{52:282} Milligan’s statements represent the belief of many in discussions concerning the strengthening of the Spirit. Though it cannot be understood how the Spirit works to comfort and strengthen, He works. We do not have to understand how the Spirit works in order to understand that He works.

If the Spirit operates directly on the heart in strengthening the Christian, one also must be prepared to answer **why are some overcome by temptation and subsequently fall from the faith.** The possibility of apostasy is a reality. People do fall from the faith because they lose heart. They are overcome by temptation. If the Spirit works directly on the heart of the Christian in the area of strengthening, then we would wonder what responsibility the Spirit must carry if the Christian falls. Is the Spirit to be accused of failing the Christian? Is He to be held accountable for the fall of the Christian? These are concepts that we must consider in developing our understanding of the strengthening of the Christian through the Spirit.

The work of the Spirit to strengthen the Christian either apart from or in conjunction with the Scriptures is a work beyond our comprehension. We are not in the position to understand or deny this work. However, whatever one’s theology may be on the subject, he must take into consideration the arguments that present themselves by the apostate Chris-

tian who falls because of a lack of strength. In affirming any doctrine, one must seek not to infringe upon or contradict fundamental truths. We must always bring to our attention fundamental truths in relation to any teaching concerning the strengthening of the Holy Spirit. These fundamental truths must form our understanding of the work of the Spirit in those areas where there is little revelation or little understanding on our part.

We may not understand all that transpires when God makes it possible that we not be tempted above that which we are able to endure. However, through the Scriptures we at least can prove the Spirit works on man through the medium of the Holy Scriptures. Consider the following cases where the Spirit worked through the preached word in order to build up and strengthen the disciples:

A. The Ephesians were built up.

When Paul left the Ephesian church he placed the responsibility for their growth upon them and their relationship with the word of God. “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up ...*” (At 20:32). When he wrote to the Ephesians he commanded them to be strong. “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*” (Ep 6:10). Titus 2:11,12 would be a commentary passage on the work of the Scriptures in the lives of the Ephesians. “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness*

and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” It is through the teaching of the word of God that we are spiritually built up. Through this same word we are taught to deny ungodliness.

Ephesians 3:16 is a very important passage concerning the strengthening through the Spirit. Paul prayed, “... *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might [power] through His Spirit in the inner man.*” Consider this passage in the **historical context** in which it was originally written. The preposition “with” in reference to power emphasizes the instrumental use of power. This power is exercised “in the inner man”, thus, this phrase would be locative. **The passage would therefore be saying that one is strengthened in the inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit.** If reference is here to the use of the miraculous gifts, then the Ephesians would have received strength from the confirming nature of the miraculous gifts.

Another important grammatical point concerning Ephesians 3:16 would be the preposition “through.” Some translations unfortunately translate the Greek *dia* which is used here with the English preposition “by.” The NKJV is correct with the translation “through.” It is the same preposition used by Peter in 1 Peter 1:22. “*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through [dia] the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren ...*” The Spirit does not work directly in conversion to purify the souls of man. He works **through the word of truth** as

Peter explains. Through the Spirit-inspired truth the Spirit works in conversion. 1 Peter 1:22 would be parallel to the thoughts of Ephesians 3:16. **Through the miraculous power of the inspired preaching of the truth to the Ephesians, they were strengthened in the inner man.**

Paul does not explain in Ephesians 3:16 **how** the Spirit strengthens. However, we would assume that He at least strengthens through the medium of the word of God. The Ephesians were to allow the Spirit’s power through the preaching of the word to strengthen them. Paul’s emphasis on accepting this power is explained in Ephesians 6:10-20 where the Ephesians were to take up the armor of salvation.

Ephesians 3:17 would agree with the above point. Paul continued, “... *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*” Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rm 10:17). Thus, Christ dwells in one insofar as the word of God produces faith in the inner man of the obedient believer. A commentary passage on this thought would be Romans 16:25. “*Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began.*” Paul added, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Ph 4:13). Jesus does strengthen us. Through the power of the gospel He has constructed a foundation upon which the Christian stands (1 Co 15:1,2). Through growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, He con-

tinues to strengthen those who have put their faith in Jesus (2 Pt 3:18).

One must always consider verse 16 of Ephesians 3 with verse 20. *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us....”* God’s power works in the Christian. This power was manifested through the miraculous gifts in the first century church. However, the power of God’s environment continues to work today. It is not visible as it was through the miraculous. Nevertheless, this power works for the benefit of the Christian. *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hb 4:12).

B. The Colossians were strengthened.

Paul prayed that the Colossians *“be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (Cl 1:9). His prayer was that they *“walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power ...”* (Cl 1:10,11). These are passages of exhortation, that is, passages that encouraged the Colossians to continue faithful. Colossians 2:6,7 states, *“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been*

taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” The Colossians had been taught the word of God. They were increasing in the knowledge of the word because of the work of the inspired prophets who worked among them in teaching and preaching. Therefore, upon the foundation of the word of God they were being established.

C. The Thessalonians were established and strengthened.

Paul wrote, *“And may the Lord ... establish [strengthen] your hearts blameless in holiness before our God ...”* (1 Th 3:12,13). How did the Lord establish their hearts? In the same chapter, Paul stated that He sent Timothy *“to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith”* (1 Th 3:2). In this case, it was through the preaching of the inspired word of God by Timothy that the Thessalonians were established and encouraged. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 is a conclusive verse concerning this power of the word to build up the Christian. *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”* The point is that because of the belief on the part of the Christian, the word of God can permeate his life and direct his ways. Through this medium, the Holy Spirit establishes and encourages Christians. Through the preaching of the Spirit-inspired word of God, the

Spirit works in order to strengthen churches.

Through the revelation of the word of God, Christians study, and thus, are strengthened by what they learn from the faithfulness of others. They read of other faithful people of God who were delivered by the providential work of God (Hb 11). They are thus strengthened and encouraged. Christians are also strengthened by their companionship with one another. They encourage one another to be faithful (Gl 6:1,2; Hb 10:24,25).

Though Christians are strengthened indirectly by influences from outside,

they are also strengthened by God's work in their inner person. We are not informed as to how God accomplishes this work. We are simply told through the Scriptures that God the Spirit works to strengthen our resolve in times of trial. The disciples of Jesus find great encouragement in this promise, and thus in times of trial, they rely on the inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit to take them through tough times. God will not allow His children to be tempted beyond what they can endure. And thus, He strengthens His children in times when they need endurance.

Chapter 10

Comfort Of The Holy Spirit

Credit for comforting in the New Testament is given to God. The entire spectrum of Christianity—the atonement, forgiveness, the revelation of God's word, Christian fellowship, hope of heaven—are all from God. Continual study and learning of the depths of these and related subjects in the word of God bring tremendous comfort to man. When one is in Christ, therefore, his continual remembrance of such great concepts renews his soul with comfort. For this reason God expects personal Bible study of every Christian. He has commissioned the preaching and teaching of the word as a source of encouragement for Christians. The following scriptures describe how God has and does comfort Christians:

A. God comforts through the influence of personalities.

Paul wrote, "*For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding ...*" (Cl 2:1,2). Paul indicated that those in Laodicea and those who heard of his laboring, but had not seen his face, were comforted **by him**. He labored "*that their hearts may be encouraged....*" The Colossians were also comforted by the presence and teaching of Tychicus. Tychicus was sent to them by Paul "*that he may know your circum-*

stances and **comfort your hearts**” (Cl 4:7,8). Paul also sent Tychicus to the Ephesians “*that he may comfort your hearts*” (Ep 6:22). Tychicus comforted them through preaching and teaching. He was the agent through whom God worked to comfort hearts. Concerning Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark and Justus, Paul said that these were men “*proved to be a comfort to me*” (Cl 4:7-11). Through the faithful work of preachers and teachers of the word of God, God comforts the hearts of Christians.

B. God comforts through the coming of brethren.

Through the same medium as pointed out in the preceding point with the Colossians, the Thessalonians were encouraged. When Paul was in Thessalonica, he “... *exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children ...*” (1 Th 2:11). When he left Thessalonica, he “*sent Timothy ... to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith*” (1 Th 3:2). When Paul heard of the Thessalonians’ faith, he was also comforted. “*But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love ... we were comforted concerning you by your faith*” (1 Th 3:6,7). It was through the good reports brought by preachers that the Thessalonians were comforted. Emphasis on individuals being the medium through whom God comforts is also explained in 1 Thessalonians 5:11. “*Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you are doing.*”

“*Comfort the fainthearted*” (1 Th 5:14). By revelation of things concerning the resurrection, Paul instructed the Thessalonians, “*Therefore comfort one another with these words*” (1 Th 4:18). In 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17, Paul wrote, “*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ ... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.*”

The comforting of the Thessalonians was through two means. First, it was through the medium of preachers who exhorted with the preaching of the word and the bringing of good reports. Secondly, it was through the inspired revelation that Paul sent to them. Through the medium of the presence of individuals who preached the word of God in Thessalonica, Christians are comforted.

C. God comforts by providentially bringing Christians together.

In 2 Corinthians 7:6,7 Paul wrote, “*Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.*”

In this passage **credit is given to God for comforting.** Paul also answers the manner or medium through which one is comforted. Paul wrote, “*Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest*

desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.” Paul was here comforted by God in two ways. First, he was comforted by the coming of Titus. Titus’ presence brought him comfort. Secondly, he was comforted by hearing of the tender affections the Corinthians had for him. He knew that the Corinthians had been concerned for his situation. When they were told of His well-being, they were also comforted. Paul wrote, *“Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort”* (2 Co 7:13). The Corinthians’ comfort of Paul **came from God**. However, it came through the person of Titus and the knowledge of the Corinthians’ concern for his well-being. We could say that it was God’s providential working that brought Titus to Paul. Therefore, in this way we must give God credit, as did Paul, that the comfort originated from God.

The above example may explain what Paul discusses in 2 Corinthians 7:3-7.

I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. For indeed, when we came to Macedonia our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consola-

tion with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me so that I rejoiced even more.

In the context of 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 Paul looks to the Father as the *“God of all comfort”* (2 Co 1:3), because God comforted him in his affliction. 2 Corinthians 7:6,7 explains how God comforted Paul. He was comforted by the coming of Titus. Because of this comfort from God in this way, Paul said that Christians were able to comfort one another (2 Co 1:4). 2 Corinthians 7:6,7 is a commentary of 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

D. God comforts by working in the environment of the church.

After Saul’s conversion, the early church had peace and was edified. *“And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied”* (At 9:31). The early church was **comforted by the fact of Paul’s conversion**. The lack of stress under persecution equals comfort.

The word which is translated “comfort” in Acts 9:31 is from the same Greek word that is used in John 14:16 where it is translated “helper,” “counselor,” or “comforter.” This is a word that was commonly used as a legal term to refer to an advocate or legal counsel. However, in the context of Acts 9:31 the word refers to supplication or entreaty. Though this is the only time this word is used in Acts, in other scriptures it is translated “exhortation,” “consolation” and “en-

treaty.” The word is also used in Romans 15:4 where Paul states, “*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and **comfort** of the Scriptures might have hope.*” This passage teaches that the disciples were comforted (consoled) by the inspired Scriptures that were written beforehand.

It is significant to note that the comforting work of the Spirit in Acts 9:31 resulted in the **multiplication of the saints**. Therefore, the early disciples obediently walked in the will (fear) of the Lord and the entreaty or exhortation of the Spirit. As a result, the church grew.

E. God comforts through His word.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:18 Paul concluded a section of revelation concerning the final coming of Jesus by stating, “*Therefore comfort one another with these words.*” Paul had just revealed that the dead in Christ had not perished. They were alive and would come with Jesus at the time of Jesus’ final coming. We thus have Paul’s written revelation of 1 Thessalonians concerning what will happen when Jesus comes again. This record has come to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, exhorts us to comfort one another with this inspired record of this

revelation concerning the final coming. It is the responsibilities of all disciples to talk among themselves concerning the coming of Jesus, for in such discussions there is comfort.

F. God comforts in His own ways.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17 Paul wrote, “*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.*” We do not know how God comforts in the way Paul here describes. Paul mentioned throughout his communication to the Thessalonians how God comforts in an indirect manner. However, in this statement Paul seems to indicate that in some way God “comforts our hearts” in a direct way. This comforting does not refer to our salvation. It affects our mental attitudes in time of duress. God has given us “everlasting comfort” in the sense that we know that our salvation is secure because of His grace. However, He also comforts our hearts in times of struggle in ways that we do not understand. We simply accept the fact that He does because He has said so in His word. The fact that He says He comforts us is enough to know that there is comfort from Him.

Chapter 11

Fruit And Leading Of The Holy Spirit

When one becomes a Christian, he brings himself into a relationship with all

of God’s people and into an environment of God’s work among His people. It is

in this new fellowship that God provides comfort through different means. Those outside Christ do not have the privilege of comfort that comes as a direct result of the close fellowship in Christ that is enjoyed by Christians. The Holy Spirit is given credit for this comfort because it has been through the Spirit that the church continues to grow and be edified by the preaching and teaching of the word of God. When one grows in his or her understanding of the work of God in our lives, there is great comfort to know that God is always present and working in the life of the Christian. God is a father who is close.

When one submits to the lordship of Jesus in his life (See At 2:36; Rm 10:9,10), he voluntarily brings his life into submission to the will of Christ. In humble obedience to this will, one's life is transformed in behavior (See Jn 14:15; 15:14). When we submit to the lordship of Jesus, our walk is after the direction of the Spirit in the word of God. As the Christian obeys and lives after the Spirit-inspired Scriptures, the fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in his life because he is being led by the Spirit.

A. The fruit of the Spirit:

Paul commanded that we “*walk in the Spirit*” (Gl 5:16). Walking in the Spirit is obeying the word of the Spirit. From this walk one brings forth the fruit of the Spirit. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Gl 5:22,23).

... if one wishes to be spiritually minded he must follow the revelation given by the Spirit, the truth given in God's word, rather than seeking for the Spirit to enter in and take control. Obeying the Spirit's message, the truth of the gospel, not the Spirit Himself working directly in one, is that which makes one spiritually minded. This is a vital point in understanding the work of the Spirit and every student of the Bible should have a firm grasp of it.^{10:30}

The word “fruit” refers to a source from which the fruit comes. **Fruit is borne out of something that can produce.** Direction and guidance concerning divine values and principles are known and set forth in the Scriptures. **We cannot know what we ought to be to please God unless such is communicated to us through revelation from God.** In this way, therefore, spiritual attitudes that are to be produced in our lives as a result of our walk after the Spirit-inspired Scriptures are credited to the Spirit for being produced. Hence, the “fruit of the Spirit” of Galatians 5:22,23.

One could argue that more than origin of the fruit is in the thoughts of Paul in Galatians 5. It could be argued that the actual production of the fruit is foremost in his thoughts as he contrasts the works of the flesh with that which is **produced** by the Spirit. In this

<p>FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT Love Joy Peace Longsuffering Kindness Goodness Faithfulness Gentleness Self-control</p>
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sense, therefore, the Spirit is not only the source, but the aid in producing the fruit in one's life. Sayers stated, "The thought of being able to bear the fruits of the Spirit by our own strength is at once corrected by '*As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself*'.^{57:185} Sayers gives the following illustration:

We cannot produce an echo; but we can produce the **sound** that reverberates the consequent echo. The fruits of the Spirit are borne not of the "echo" brought into being by the original sound, but the original sound is the Spirit at work in our lives producing the echo, the fruits. Even as the echo is a natural response to the positive sound, so is the fruit of the Christian, otherwise a burden, borne with much ease, consequent to and resultantly as the Spirit works within.^{52:185}

Paul's main emphasis of Galatians 5:22,23 is the product, the fruit of the Spirit. Spiritual behavior in the life of the Christian must be credited to that from which it originates. The person who is bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit is doing so because of a submitted life to the Spirit-directed instructions of God's word. Because one is growing in holiness in his submission to the Spirit's leading, all credit for growth must go to the Spirit, and ultimately, to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one. The Spirit is credited for the fruit because He is the origin of the inspired guide, the word of God.

We must emphasize the fact that there are those who have the Spirit but do not

have the fruit. They were properly converted by sincere obedience to the gospel. However, because of a lack of will or discouraging circumstances, they failed to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18). They ceased spiritual growth soon after baptism. Such would clearly manifest that the fruit of the Spirit is not "injected" by the Spirit. If the producing of the fruit were subjective, that is infused by the Spirit Himself, then we would wonder why an unloving Christian would even exist. We must affirm, therefore, that one voluntarily produces the fruit of the Spirit in his life as he submits to the direction of the Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures.

Under this discussion of the fruit of the Spirit, we must also consider the fact that the fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in the lives of those who are not in a covenant relationship with God. There are good people in the world who have not obeyed the gospel. Nevertheless, they manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. In fact, some often manifest the fruit of the Spirit in a greater manner than some who are in a covenant relationship with God. Would we conclude that the Spirit is working in the lives who are not in a covenant relationship with God in order to produce the fruit of the Spirit? Such a conclusion would negate the advantageous relationship the Spirit has with the one who has obeyed the gospel. The point is that the fruit of the Spirit cannot be an external evidence of one's being a child of God. We must also conclude that the Spirit does not have subjective control in the life of the Christian

to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is still dependent on the obedience of the Christian to the will of God.

B. Led by the Holy Spirit:

The fruit of the Spirit is produced in the lives of those who are led by the Spirit, and thus, walk by the Spirit. To be “*led by the Spirit*” (Rm 8:14; Gl 5:18) and to “*walk by the Spirit*” (Gl 5:16,25) mean the same thing. Paul uses the phrase synonymously in Galatians 5:16 and 18. “*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh ... But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*” This is the same thought as John’s “*walking in the light*” (1 Jn 1:6-9). The meaning of “walking in the light” was explained when John explained his greatest joy. This joy was to hear of his children “*walking in the truth*” (2 Jn 4). When one walks in the truth, he is continuing his obedience to the truth. He is thus led by the Spirit-inspired truth. He is walking in the light.

Paul wrote, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*” (Ep 2:10). God created good works wherein we must walk as Christians. Paul also said,

“*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (Ph 2:12,13). Paul did not say that the Christian works for his salvation. He said to “work out” your salvation. We have been created in Christ, not by good works, but **for** good works. In Christ, therefore, it is our responsibility to work out the works that God has assigned us to do through His word of instruction. These good works or directions came through the inspirational work of the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16). Therefore, the Spirit led the church in the first century by the inspired apostles and prophets who gave them inspired directions concerning what Christians must do (See 1 Co 12:28; Ep 4:11,12). He still leads the church today. When we follow the instructions of these inspired men as they are recorded in the Bible, we are being led by the Spirit.

Today, we have an inspired guide for being led by the Spirit. We “walk in the Spirit” or are “led by the Spirit” when we follow the Spirit’s direction through the inspired Scriptures. There is nothing mystical about this. There is nothing mysterious about doing what the Spirit has said to do in the Scriptures. By the Spirit-inspired word we are built up (At 20:32) in order that we may grow unto salvation (1 Pt 2:2).

The above is exactly how God worked in the Old Testament. God said to Israel, “*I am the Lord your God, who*



teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go” (Is 48:17). How did God lead Israel? In the same way He leads the Christian today. “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Ps 119:105). God led Israel through inspired instructions. The Psalmist wrote, “*You will guide me with Your counsel ...*” (Ps 73:24). This is how God leads. He has always led in this manner.

God intends to lead men to Him through revelation. Zacharias stated that God visited Israel in order “*to give knowledge of salvation to His people ... to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace*” (Lk 1:77-79). Through revelation of the gospel of truth God guides men today to the way of salvation. Through the inspired Scriptures He leads them to a spiritual life in Christ.

Paul wrote, “*Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ*” (2 Th 3:5). The Lord directs through the instructions of revelation. When we walk in the light, we are on the path of working out our salvation. Our hearts are being directed by the Spirit. In Galatians 5:25 Paul wrote, “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*” The word “walk” here is different from the word that is used in verse 16 of Galatians 5. In Galatians 5:25 the word is a military term that refers to one walking in file or order. Paul is thus exhorting the Galatians to obediently march after that commitment to which they gave themselves. They must walk in the order of God’s commands. The same thought is stated in different

words in Philippians 1:27. “*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ ...*” Both the Philippians and Galatians were to walk according to the word of God to which they had committed their lives. In this way, God was directing their hearts.

C. The seal and earnest of the Holy Spirit:

In 2 Corinthians 1:21,22 Paul wrote, “*Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us in God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit.*” Verse 22 in the *American Standard Version* reads a little different than the *King James Version*. “*Who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*” The *King James Version* is probably more interpretive with their translation than the *American Standard Version*. Nevertheless, whether the “deposit” (earnest or guarantee) is the Spirit (KJV) or it is something the Spirit gives (ASV), is subject to debate. This same concept is stated again by Paul in Ephesians 1:13,14. “*... you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee [earnest] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory.*” The following are important teachings that come from the above scriptures:

1. The seal of the Holy Spirit: Paul affirms that God has **anointed** us and **sealed** us. The word “seal” is from *sphragidzo* which emphasizes a **mark**

made by a seal. 1 John 2:20 & 27 is a commentary of the anointing of God that was a mark of identification of Christians. This anointing, John wrote, “teaches you concerning all things.” Here is the **miraculous gift of prophecy** from the Holy Spirit that was prevalent in the lives of the Corinthian brethren as it was in the lives of John’s readers. The Corinthians were thus sealed **with the Holy Spirit of promise**. They were marked as God’s people by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in this context.

We must keep in mind that a seal is something that is visually perceived. In order to be a seal, the seal had to be witnessed. This brings up the point as to whether the seal was meant to be a mark of identification for those of the world who beheld Christians, or was it for God. If it were to those who witnessed the believers in the societies in which they lived, then the seal would have to be empirically perceived by those in one’s neighborhood. If the seal were meant to be for God, then neighborhood perception would not matter. God would know those who were His.

The phrase “Holy Spirit of promise” must always refer us back to the fulfillment of the promise in Acts 2:1-4, and then, back to where the promise was originally made in Joel 2:28. **All work of the Holy Spirit must find its origin in the fulfillment of the promise of Joel 2:28.** The anointing and sealing of the Corinthians and Ephesians is a fulfillment of this promise. They are included in Peter’s statement of Acts 2:39, “*For*

the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” The promise of Joel 2:28, therefore, finds its fulfillment in the Corinthians, Ephesians and every Christian since Acts 2.

The seal was a public display that God was with His people. The miraculous outpouring on Pentecost, the laying on of the apostles’ hands, the miraculous gifts, and their Spirit-guided lives after the word of God were all manifestations of the Spirit’s seal. Every manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the early Christians was a mark that they were of God. Today, Christians’ adherence to the truth is a public display (the mark of the seal) that they are of God and not of the false religions of the world. God puts His stamp of approval on us when we walk submissively to His directions.

2. The deposit of the Holy Spirit:

The words “deposit”, “earnest” or “guarantee” are other figurative words that are used to explain the same thing as the seal of the Spirit. Though the figure indicates different aspects of the Holy Spirit’s relationship with the Christian, both words are set in the same context of meaning. The deposit (earnest or guarantee) of the Holy Spirit in the context of the early church was the miraculous work of God that was a manifestation of the environment of the supernatural. **It is this environment to which Christians are headed in the new heavens and earth.** The miraculous, therefore, of the first century was a foretaste and pledge (a deposit) of that which is to come.

The word “sealed” and the word “earnest” are simply two different words expressing the same thought by two different figures of speech. The words “earnest” and “seal” both denote miraculous operations of the Spirit. Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. The words “Holy Spirit” and “power” are not two different things, but two words expressing the same thought. The same is true of “sealed” and “earnest” in II Corinthians 1:22. Both terms are used in connection with the miraculous operation of the Spirit.^{5:181}

Some have interpreted the word “earnest” of Ephesians 1:14 to refer to a “down payment.” However, this is not exactly stated by Paul. The word is not used in the texts of Corinthians and Ephesians to convey this idea. Better words would be “guarantee” or “pledge.” Concerning the definition of the Greek word, Vine wrote, “In general usage it came to denote a pledge or earnest of any sort; in the N.T. **it is used only of that which is assured by God to believers; it is said of the Holy Spirit as a Divine pledge of all their future blessedness,** 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; in Eph. 1:14, particularly of their eternal inheritance.”²⁶ **Therefore, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this age of the Spirit is the manifestation of that blessed inheritance which is to come.** The presence of the Spirit in the lives of the early Christians assures us that we have a great inheritance which is yet to come. Through the giving of the Holy Spirit, and all blessings that result from His giving, God has pledged or guaranteed that greater things are yet to come.

Some would assuredly affirm that we limit the work of the Spirit in our lives by constantly directing our attention to the Scriptures which have been inspired by the Spirit. We must keep in mind, however, that we cannot confidently affirm that which the Scriptures do not explain nor promise. We might classify that which is beyond the Scriptures as the mystery of God at work. One cannot argue with this point. Nevertheless, we must guard ourselves from going astray after our imaginations. We can do this only by staying close to the Spirit-described work of the Spirit in the Scriptures. In this way we are assured that what the Spirit does in the Christian life can be scripturally proved by what He says He does.

If the Spirit is to play a direct and miraculous role in the Christian’s life today as some affirm, we wonder why this emphasis is not placed on the work of the Spirit in the New Testament. The New Testament is loaded with exhortations to do this or that or to behave according to given commandments. “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments*” (1 Jn 5:3; see Jn 14:15; 15:14). Why do not the sacred writers **saturate** these exhortations with emphasis on the Spirit to help one keep the inspired instructions if the Spirit is to work as some claim? A few scriptures taken from context cannot prove the tremendous overemphasis some place on a supposed direct work of the Spirit on the heart of man.

On the other hand, there are those statements by the Spirit in Scripture that

lead us to wonder concerning His work which is not specifically defined. We are not so analytical as to confine the work of the Spirit to our human deductions. We would assume that the Spirit is doing His work regardless of our understanding. **We will be confident in what He does only by measure of what He explains in the Scriptures.** We will also allow liberty of thought and belief in those areas that are still open for discus-

sion. One should not be so presumptuous as to think that we can understand all the work of God. We would have to be God to understand the totality of the work of God. It is for this reason that we must assume that God the Spirit is doing His work in our lives regardless of our understanding of how and when He is doing it. It is the Spirit who blows as the wind where He wills, not where we will.

Chapter 12

Work Against The Holy Spirit

Work against the Holy Spirit is work to stop the Spirit's efforts to bring about the salvation of men and edification of the church. This work against the Spirit can either be in hindering men from coming to Christ or hindering men to grow in Christ. All efforts to hinder the Spirit's work, therefore, must be viewed in the context of Satan's trying to keep lost men lost and cause saved men to become lost. The following are New Testament teachings concerning Satan's efforts to disrupt the Spirit's work:

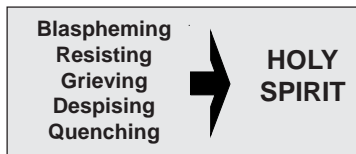
A. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit:

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is something that is done by unbelievers. It is their effort to reject the gospel by

assigning to Satan the work of the Spirit to reveal the truth to man.

The texts of Jesus' explanation of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit are Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:28-30 and Luke 12:10. In the contexts of these statements the biblical interpreter must realize two things: (1) The Holy Spirit was working through Jesus in His incarnate state to work the supernatural power of God in the environment of men (See Lk 5:17; 6:19; 8:46). (2) In the context of these statements of Jesus the rebellious Jews had made accusations against Jesus by saying, "*This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons*" (Mt 12:24).

The accusation of the Jews and Jesus' statement in Mark 3:30 explain the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Mark recorded that Jesus pronounced the accusation as blasphemy "*because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'.*" **The blasphemy was that the Jews assigned the**



work of the Spirit through Jesus as originating from Satan. This is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. When one takes the stand that the miraculous work of God, either through miracles or inspiration, is of Satan, then he blasphemes against the Holy Spirit.

It is blasphemy against the Spirit because it was the work of the Spirit to cause the occurrence of miracles and inspiration of the spoken and written word (Mk 16:20; 2 Tm 3:16). Both in miracles and inspiration, the Spirit is seeking to bring men to Jesus. Therefore, any effort to assign these works of the Spirit to Satan, is a work against the Holy Spirit. Jesus therefore stated, “... *but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven*” (Lk 12:10). It will not be forgiven simply because the one who blasphemes **will not accept that which he assigns to Satan.** He is refusing that which will save his soul. It is the gospel that saves. If one refuses the soul-saving gospel by assigning its origin to Satan, God cannot save him in his deception.

The above is the reason Jesus said, “*Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him*” (Mt 12:32). During Jesus’s **earthly ministry** one could speak against Him. Many of the priests spoke against Jesus. However, after more consideration and the events and preaching of the apostles, “*a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith*” (At 6:7). They had rejected Jesus during His personal ministry, however, they accepted the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and

prophets of the church. Their sin, therefore, was forgiven because they accepted that which brought the forgiveness of sins. However, if they would have carried on with their rejection, they would not and could not have been forgiven. They could initially reject Jesus. Nevertheless, it was their last chance to believe the Spirit-inspired message through the apostles and prophets.

In the same sense, one blasphemes against the Spirit today by assigning His work of the first century to Satan. If one rejects the Spirit’s call through the inspired record of the gospel (the New Testament), **he cannot be forgiven.** He cannot be forgiven simply because he refuses that medium through which he can be begotten of God (1 Pt 1:23). If one believes that the gospel originated from Satan, then he will not obey the gospel. Therefore, all religions that do not accept the Bible as the word of God, are sinning against the work of the Holy Spirit, for God reveals the gospel through His written word to all men.

B. Resisting the Holy Spirit:

Resisting the Holy Spirit is something that is carried out by those who were once in or are in the fold of God’s people. This is a reaction of individuals in the flock who stand against the instructions of God through His word. They become apostate because they reject God’s commandments.

Resisting the Spirit simply means rejecting either the spoken or written word of God that has come to us through the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit. There are two examples of this in the Bible. Acts 7:51 introduces us to this teaching. Stephen said to those Jews who rejected his preaching and were about to stone him, “*You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.*” Stephen was stating that both Israel and the Jews of his audience resisted the Holy Spirit because they were resisting what he was saying to them. Whenever one resists the truth of the Spirit, he is resisting the Spirit.

1. *Israel resisted the Holy Spirit:*

The phrase in Acts 7:51, “as your fathers did,” refers us to those in the Old Testament who resisted the Spirit’s work during the Old Testament period. Stephen uses the Greek word *antiptete* which means “to fall against” or “to rush against.” It is a strong word in this context and clearly defines the concept of Israel’s resistance to the Spirit even to the time of the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. Stephen asked these rejecting Jews, “*Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers*” (At 7:52).

Samuel said of Israel, “*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord*” (1 Sm 15:23). Jeremiah proclaimed, “*Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord*” (Jr 8:9). Nehemiah also explained, “*Yet for many years you had pa-*

tience with them, and testified against them by your Spirit in your prophets. Yet they would not listen” (Ne 9:30). This is resisting the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “*All too well you reject the commandments of God ...*” (Mk 7:9; see Jn 12:48). He who rejects the Spirit-inspired word of God, resists the work of the Holy Spirit through the word of God.

Stephen was full of the Spirit (At 6:5; 7:55). He spoke by inspiration of the Spirit. When the Jews, therefore, resisted his inspired speaking they were resisting the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament prophecy came by the will of God through the inspiration of the Spirit (2 Pt 1:21). When the Jews resisted the word of God, they were resisting the Spirit.

2. *The Jews who were contemporary with the early church resisted the Spirit.*

In Acts 7:51 Stephen also said that those Jews of his audience were resisting the Spirit. Luke records in Acts 6, “*Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedman ... disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke*” (At 6:9,10). The Greek word “resist” in verse 10 means “to stand against.” In other words, those of the Synagogue of Freedmen could not refute the inspired words of Stephen. They could not refute Stephen, therefore, they determined to physically attack him. By this action they were resisting the Holy Spirit.

Paul also gives the example of those who are “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tm 3:7). They “*resist the truth; men*

of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith" (2 Tm 3:8). When one resists the truth, he is resisting the Spirit through whom the truth came to the apostles (Jn 14:26; 16:13).

3. Men can resist the Holy Spirit today. Those who refuse to listen to the inspired word of God are resisting the Spirit. Those who refuse to study their Bibles are resisting the Holy Spirit. Those who pervert the teachings of the Spirit-inspired Scriptures are resisting the Spirit (See 2 Pt 3:15,16). Those who reject the application of the truth to their lives are resisting the Holy Spirit.

C. Grieving the Holy Spirit:

By manifesting a calloused attitude toward the Spirit-inspired Scriptures, one grieves the Holy Spirit. Therefore, resisting the Holy Spirit is the same as grieving the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit is resisted, He is grieved. God grieved over rebellious Israel during their forty years in the wilderness. *"For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways'"* (See Ps 95:7-10; see also 78:40; Hb 3:10,17). Israel *"rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit"* (Is 63:10). By rejecting the word of God they grieved the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is grieved by any action on the part of the Christian that is contrary to His inspired instructions.

We must understand the meaning of Ephesians 4:30 in the context of Israel's grieving of the Spirit in the Old Testament. *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit*

of God" In the context of Ephesians 4:25-32 Paul is instructing the Ephesian Christians to live according to the Spirit-inspired behavioral patterns he is writing. Therefore, the Ephesians, as well as we today, can grieve the Holy Spirit if we do not live according to the instructions concerning holy living as commanded in scriptures as Ephesians 4:25-32. Anyone who lives in a manner that is contrary to the instructions the Spirit has brought to us through the inspired word of God, is grieving the Spirit.

D. Despising the Holy Spirit:

Despising the Spirit is similar to blasphemy of the Spirit, that is, rejecting the teaching and work of the Spirit in this age of the Spirit. The Hebrew writer defines apostates, thus, *"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"* (Hb 10:26; see 6:4-6). The one who has *"counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing,"* do, as the American Standard Version translated Hebrews 10:20, *"despite unto the Spirit of grace."* When men do this, they cannot be forgiven for they have rejected the sacrificial blood of Jesus that can cleanse them of sin.

By rejecting the word of God, one despises the Holy Spirit. Such is what Israel did. God said that He would consume them *"because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel"* (Is 5:24). This concept is stated

only once in the New Testament. Paul wrote, “*Do not despise prophecies*” (1 Th 5:20). The Thessalonians were encouraged not to do what Israel did. They must not reject the inspired instructions of God which in their historical context came through the inspired preaching of the New Testament prophets. If they rejected the preaching of the inspired prophets in their midst, they were despising the work of the Spirit. Therefore, anyone who would despise the word of the Spirit is despising the Spirit.

E. Quenching the Holy Spirit:

Paul wrote, “*Do not quench the Spirit*” (1 Th 5:19). Quench is from the Greek word *sbennumi*. The word comes from the idea of a flame that is being put out. The same word is used in Matthew 25:8 in reference to the lamps of the five foolish virgins which were “going out.”

In the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:19 Paul is commanding the Thessalonians not to despise prophecies. In other words, they are not to discourage or reject the inspired preaching of the word by their preachers. The word of God is as a fire (Jr 23:29). Any time one rejects or discourages the preaching of the Spirit-inspired word of God, he is quenching the Spirit. He is putting out the fire of the word of God.

One can know if he is working against the Spirit in the manner of blasphemy, resisting, grieving, despising or quenching. It is not a subjective guess

or opinion that one is working against the Spirit when he refuses to be obedient to the word of God. One consciously knows and can identify his work against the Spirit when he has a knowledge of the commandments of God, and yet, refuses to be obedient. Others can see his work against the Spirit. One despises, resists, grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit by openly rejecting the application of the word of God to his life.

Most Christians do not behave according to their own expectations. They intellectually know what to do. However, they are usually striving to do what the Scriptures instruct them to do. Such striving to grow without reaching the level demanded by the Scriptures is not quenching the Spirit. Simply because one has not spiritually grown to where he knows the Scriptures want him to be does not mean that he has resisted, despised, quenched or grieved the Spirit. He may not have tried enough to grow. However, if he is not openly working against the knowledge of and application of the word to his life, he is not resisting the Spirit.

In the context of the above works against the Spirit in the New and Old Testaments, reference concerning grieving, resisting, despising and quenching of the Spirit is always to those who are manifesting open rebellion in their lives against the word of God. When one refuses to intellectually accept and apply the instructions of God as a pattern of life, he is resisting, grieving, despising and quenching the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 13

Understanding Revelation

Too many people today are trying to understand the Bible with as little effort as possible. The word “study” seems to frighten people when it comes to interpreting and applying the will of God to their lives. Matthew, Mark and the other inspired writers of the Bible received the truth through inspiration. It will take nothing short of perspiration on the part of the Bible student to understand the truth. This does not mean that it is difficult to understand those things that are fundamental for our salvation. It does mean, however, that we must apply diligent Bible study principles in order to be good students of the word of God. There is no cheap way to understand the Bible. There is no easy road to biblical interpretation. If one does not understand the Bible, the only way to understand it is through diligent Bible study.

Many people often have a difficult time understanding the Scriptures. In fact, one of the most common prayers that is offered by some is a prayer for a correct understanding of the Scriptures. It is the belief of many that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to help the Christian understand the Scriptures.

There is also the prevalent belief today that God continues to reveal new truth to man through the Holy Spirit. It is affirmed that the Scriptures are out of date, and thus, there needs to be more truth revealed to us today that applies

directly to our situation. It is believed that the Bible does not furnish the Christian today with spiritual guidance that is relevant to his modern living situation. Therefore, it is necessary that God continue to reveal truth to man in order to cope with new historical problems in these modern times.

There are also those who have maintained the view that the Bible cannot be interpreted or understood by ordinary individuals. Interpretation is reserved for priests and popes who deliver to the ordinary members an inspired interpretation of the Scriptures.^{39:63-77} It is taught by the Catholic Church that the truth of the word “is of necessity hidden from other persons. It is only known through divine revelation given to the Church, which is the sole guarantor of the fact. It carries with it absolute absence of error”^{40:256} Thus, interpretation is reserved for the officers of the Catholic Church and their interpretations are to be infallible.^{40:259,260}

A derivative of, or reaction to this doctrine which is propagated in the religious world is the concept that the Holy Spirit inspires every individual member to understand the Scriptures. It is affirmed that the Holy Spirit “... comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.”^{41:44} It is believed that the Spirit guides us to understand the Scriptures that we might ob-

tain the truth revealed therein. It is affirmed that the work of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is to guide the Christian into a greater understanding or interpretation of the Scriptures.

I believe we should rethink some of our statements that are commonly made in prayers concerning our understanding of the Scriptures. Does the Bible teach that the Spirit should “help us understand the Scriptures”? Do the Scriptures state that we should pray that the Spirit “lead us to a better understanding of the word of God”? Since the Bible makes no such promises, I believe that we should be careful as to how we pray concerning the Spirit’s promises concerning our understanding of the Scriptures. I have noticed that some make statements in prayer that they often have not seriously considered. Prayers for divine inspiration are actually being made, though I do not believe that the ones making the prayers actually believe such. However, the manner by which statements are often made in prayers is actually a request from God for inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

Ellen G. White of the Seventh Day Adventist affirmed a special “illumination” of the Scriptures. In this “illumination” she was affirming inspired understanding or interpretation of the Scriptures. She affirmed what many are saying today concerning the supposed work of the Spirit in aiding the Christian to understand the Scriptures. She claimed inspiration. If we would consistently follow through on the statements made by some in prayer today, they are also praying for inspiration.

If the Holy Spirit does help through inspired understanding of the Scriptures, then we could not make any mistakes in interpreting the Scriptures. But we do. And the fact that we do differ and make mistakes in interpreting the Bible is proof that the Spirit does not inspire understanding of the Scriptures. Or if He does, He is doing a bad job of it.

As a student of this book, you may have disagreed with me concerning certain points of interpretation. Both of us are sons of God, having the Spirit of God. However, the fact that we disagree concerning points of interpretation of selected passages is evidence that the Spirit is not leading either of us to produce an infallible interpretation of the Scriptures. I will not be so presumptuous as to claim that what I affirm in this book is an inspired interpretation of the Scriptures concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. I have prayed for wisdom, but not for inspired interpretation.

Consider the predicament of the unbeliever. If the believer must have the aid of the Spirit in order to understand the Scriptures, then what about the unbeliever who picks up a copy of the Scriptures and searches for God’s mystery of salvation for himself? If the believer must have the aid of the Spirit to understand the Scriptures, then it stands to reason that the unbeliever must have the same help as the Christian or he is hopelessly unable to understand what God would have him do to be saved. After all, it is more important for him to understand what to do to be saved than for me to understand all of what John was

writing in the book of Revelation.

It would be illogical for one to write a letter to a friend and then go to that friend in order to interpret what was written. The same would apply to God's letters to man. Why would God write inspired letters to man that pertained to his salvation, and then have to send the Spirit in order that the letters be understood? Cannot God communicate to man in a manner that can be understood by man?

Paul wrote letters to numerous churches and individuals. However, he did not have to go to those churches and individuals in order to interpret his letters to those churches. **Neither did he make any promises in the letters that the Spirit would aid them in understanding what he wrote.** The promise is just not there. Why would we be so presumptuous as to affirm that the Spirit does something that He does not claim to do in His inspired writings?

In fact, Paul wrote a letter to the Thessalonians concerning various teachings, specifically teachings that dealt with the final coming of Jesus. He addressed these teachings in the letter of 1 Thessalonians. However, the Thessalonians misunderstood some of the teachings of the 1 Thessalonian letter, believing that Paul taught that Jesus was coming immediately in their lifetime (See 2 Th 2:1ff). He therefore wrote a second letter in order to correct their misunderstandings concerning the final coming of Jesus. My question is, **Why did not the Spirit guide them into a correct understanding of the first letter?** If it were the work of the Spirit to inspire interpre-

tation, then why did He fail in the Thessalonians' understanding of the first letter concerning the final coming?

James wrote, "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him*" (Js 1:5). There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom may help us apply knowledge. **Wisdom will help us understand the application of the knowledge we receive through diligent Bible study. God gives wisdom, not knowledge. The miraculous gift of knowledge has passed away** (1 Co 12:8; 13:8). This miraculous gift does not exist today. However, some seem to be praying for this gift in the way they word their prayers. God does not give miraculous knowledge today as was given through the miraculous gift of knowledge in the first century. However, He does give wisdom to those who ask.

In Colossians 1:9 Paul refers to the gift of knowledge that was in the church of Colosse. "*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" How were they being filled with the knowledge of His will? Peter had commanded, "*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pt 3:18). Both the church in Colosse and Peter's readers were growing in knowledge through the inspired epistles that were being written to them by the two apostles. Their study of those epistles increased their knowledge. How-

ever, through the gift of knowledge they were also being taught by their inspired prophets. In their historical context, Paul and Peter were exhorting them to **listen to their prophets**. Because they did not have the complete written New Testament, these exhortations were more to listening to the **spoken New Testament** rather than reading the **written New Testament which they did not have in their hands**. For us today, however, the exhortations are to study the written New Testament. This is necessary because the gifts of prophecy and knowledge have passed away (1 Co 13:8,9).

If we use the word “understanding”

as a synonymous term for wisdom, then God would give understanding. However, in the context of this study, **we are discussing inspired understanding which we define as inspired interpretation**. God does not give this today and never has. He gives wisdom, though this wisdom will certainly aid one to better understand or apply the inspired Scriptures. We should pray for wisdom. Since God has never given direct interpretation of the Scriptures, one should ask for that which God has promised. And what He has promised is the word that can be studied.

Chapter 14

The Scriptures That Communicate

The Bible was written in a language and style so that it could be understood by diligent Bible students. It was written in a manner that would clearly communicate the message of God to all men. This fact within itself is an argument to sustain the view that God inspired the Bible to be written in such a way as to be understood by those to whom it was directed. Camp wrote, “There would be no point in giving revelation if it was impossible to understand the revelation when it was given.”^{5:33} God did not have the Bible written in a manner that would confuse or frustrate those to whom He directed the message of the Bible. God used communication that would be understandable. He did not allow man the opportunity to offer any ex-

cuse for his lost state on the basis that the lost could not understand the message.

A. God communicated through different languages.

An autograph is the original document of an inspired writer. The original autographs of the Old Testament were written in Ancient Hebrew, the language of the Jews. Ancient Hebrew was the “Jew’s lan-



guage” before the Babylonian captivity (2 Kg 18:28; Ne 13:24). While in Babylonian captivity, small portions of the Old Testament were written in Aramaic, the language of Israel’s captors (See Dn 2:4-7; Ez 4:8 - 6:14; 7:12-26).

The original autographs of the New Testament were written in *koine* (common) Greek. The word *koine* is a Greek word that means “common.” Koine Greek was the Greek that was spoken by the common people of Jesus’ day. God did not use Ancient Greek to communicate His New Testament message to churches of the first century. He used a language that could be easily understood by those who received the letters of the inspired New Testament writers. The fact that He used the common Greek language of the day, indicates that He wanted His word understood by the common people.

Language is the medium by which men communicate. The words of a language communicate the ideas of man’s experience. When God used languages of men to communicate His revelation to man, the purpose was clear for doing such. God wanted to be understood. His message was simple. Those things that God wanted man to know, He communicated in a way that men could understand (See Dt 29:29). Those things that men could not understand by the words of human communication, God chose not to reveal.

An example of the above was when Paul was caught up to the “third heaven” and “*heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter*” (2 Co 12:4). What Paul saw was not to be ut-

tered for two reasons. First, he saw the secret things that God did not want revealed. Secondly, he saw things that could not be revealed by the **words of man**. Only a “heavenly dictionary” could have defined the words that would have described what Paul saw. God, therefore, did not allow Paul to write about the things he saw simply because we could not have understood them anyway. God has revealed just enough about what is to come to excite our imagination. However, He has chosen to not reveal that which would confuse us with our earthly understandings.

If God had not desired to communicate His will to common man in a simple language, then we would assume that He would not have used the languages of common man for His communication. The fact that He did use the languages that were common to man is proof that He seeks to communicate in order to be understood.

B. God communicated through different writing styles.

God did not dictate a style of writing to the inspired writers that could not be understood by the common man. He allowed the inspired writers to use their own styles of writing and vocabularies as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pt 1:21).

God not only wanted to use the languages of the common man to communicate His will, He also wanted to allow the inspired writers as much freedom as possible to use their own writing styles.

These styles of writing are not easily discovered by reading translations of the original languages. The writing styles are detected in the original languages in which the writers wrote. Careful investigation of the original languages of the inspired writers clearly manifests the different styles of writing and vocabularies that were used by the inspired writers. Now the question is why would God allow the writers to use their own writing styles and vocabularies? Why would God allow such if He did not want His message clearly communicated in the closest cultural and linguistic manner possible? The answer is in the fact that in order for His message to be clearly understood by contemporary readers, the Spirit inspired men to communicate in styles of writing and vocabularies that could be understood.

The Bible was not written to biblical scholars in ivory offices and quiet libraries. It was written in a style that would allow the average individual on the farm and in the market place to understand it. When John wrote to his new converts in the faith (See 1 Jn 2:1), he did not write as to those who claimed to be special scholars or intellectuals. He did not write with a complicated style and vocabulary that demanded an interpreter or the Holy Spirit to be understood.

If we contend that the Bible could not be understood by those to whom the inspired letters were first written, **then we would be accusing God of not being able to inspire a book that would be able to be understood by the common man.** This is an accusation against the

ability of God to communicate to man. If God did communicate in a way that needed the Holy Spirit on the other end of the communication in order that the message be understood, **then we would expect to find promises concerning this work of the Spirit in the communication itself. However, we do not find these promises.** And if God did not promise that the Spirit would aid in understanding His communication in the first century, then such promises are not made to us today.

If God wanted to communicate His will to man in a manner that necessitated the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to understand it, we would wonder why He would have the Bible written in the first place? Why not just provide inspired prophets throughout history as in the early church when the Scriptures were being written? If the Holy Spirit is needed in order to understand the Bible, has He been doing such since Moses first inscribed the first parts of the Bible almost 3,500 years ago? If the Spirit is needed to understand the Scriptures, does this mean that the Holy Spirit inspires the non-Christian to correctly understand the word? Keep in mind that the Spirit and the angel sent a teacher to the Ethiopian eunuch, who explained to him the Scriptures (See At 8:26,29-35). The Spirit did not inspire the eunuch to understand that which he did not understand concerning Isaiah 53, the text he was reading. In this case, it was the teacher, not the Spirit, who explained the Scriptures. These are thoughts one must ponder if he believes that the Spirit of necessity has to aid one

in understanding the Scriptures.

The Bible teaches that its purpose for being written was to reveal truth to men. Therefore, this revelation of truth had to be clearly understood by men. God did not have the Scriptures written in a way that would cause religious confusion and division among men. He inspired it to be written so that men might know precisely what to do in order to be well-pleasing to Him.

C. The Bible is God's revelation for all men.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God revealed His will to men who could understand what was being said. Numerous examples in the Bible prove this point.

1. Josiah understood God's revelation. God revealed His will in the Old Testament in a manner that could be understood without the help of either the Holy Spirit or an inspired interpreter. An example of this would be 2 Kings 22 where a copy of the Old Testament Scriptures was found during the reconstruction of the temple. Hilkiah, the priest, brought the newly discovered Scriptures to Shaphan who "**read it before the king**" (vs 10). "**Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes**" (vs 11). Josiah, the king, did not need an inspired interpreter or the Holy Spirit in order to understand what was written in the book. He understood exactly what the book meant when it was read. As a result of

his understanding of what was stated in the book, he tore his clothes in repentance.

2. Israel understood God's revelation. When Israel came into the land of Canaan, the nation stood in front of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Joshua then "**read all the words of the law ... that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the congregation of Israel**" (Ja 8:34,35). No interpreter stood between Joshua and the people of Israel. The Holy Spirit did not give them an inspired understanding of the word. They simply listened and understood the reading of the law.

3. The Ephesians understood God's revelation. God revealed his will to Paul. Paul wrote this revelation to the Ephesian church. He wrote that by "**revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words ...**" (Ep 3:3). In Ephesians 3:4 Paul made a very important statement concerning the Ephesians' understanding of this revelation which he wrote to them. He said, "**... by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.**" Paul did not promise that the Spirit would lead them into an understanding of what he wrote. The Spirit, in the writing itself, was communicating the understanding of the mystery. Why would the Spirit have to be given in order to inspire understanding of that which He was writing? If the Spirit is able to communicate through writers as Paul in a way that can be clearly understood, then why the need

for an inspired understanding? If one contends that the Spirit was needed in order that the Ephesians be able to understand the letter of Ephesians, then he or she is saying that the Spirit was unable through inspiration to communicate God's will in a manner that could be understood.

Paul did not state in the letter of Ephesians that the Spirit would give them understanding of the Scriptures. Neither did he make such a promise in any other letter. If he did not make such a promise when he first wrote the letters, then certainly such a promise is not made today through the same inspired letters that he wrote in the first century.

The New Testament was written that we might understand the mystery. **We do not need inspired understanding in order to understand the inspired writings.** Paul's purpose in writing was the same as all inspired writers. He thus commanded readers to "*acknowledge that the things which I [Paul] write to you are the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Co 14:37). The inspired writings are the clear commandments written to the church (See Rv 2:1,3,12,18; 3:1,7,14). "*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words ...*" (Rv 1:3). The Bible affirms that when we read it we can understand the commandments of God. These commandments are clear and not hidden in a mystery of literary words. God never communicated anything that was necessary for salvation in a manner that was difficult to understand.

4. We can understand God's revelation. When the original autographs were

sent to the first readers, those inspired writings could be understood. Our task in understanding the Bible today is a little more challenging because we are **culturally** and **linguistically** removed from the setting and language of the first audience. Because we are culturally and historically removed from the original audiences to which the inspired documents were written, it makes it more challenging for us to understand some of the content of the Bible books. This is especially true in reference to understanding cultural matters to which reference is made in the Bible. However, God never intended that an understanding of the cultural details of the Scriptures are necessary to be understood in order to understand what one must do to please Him. God never intended that we would even have to know the original languages in which the autographs were first written. Everything that is necessary for salvation has been clearly revealed and clearly understood.

We are today in the same situation as the Jews who had returned after several decades of Babylonian captivity. When they returned, "*Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel*" (Er 7:10). Ezra had to



Language
&
Culture



do this because many of the captives who had returned could not understand the Ancient Hebrew in which the Old Testament text had been written. The language of the returned captives was probably Aramaic, the language of their captors. They, as we, were/are several hundred years removed from the original writing of the books of Moses and the prophets. God did not use the Holy Spirit to inspire their understanding of the Scriptures. He used Ezra the teacher, who acted as an **interpretive bridge** to help people who were unfamiliar with the language and culture of the original writings, to understand what was said. God does not send the Spirit today to aid our understanding. We must seek to read and study the Scriptures.

When Ezra stood before Israel, he read and explained the Scriptures. *“Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, of men and women and all who could hear with understanding ...”* (Ne 8:2). *“Then he read from it ... before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law”* (Ne 8:3). Nehemiah 8:8 says of the process, *“So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.”* It is evident that the teachers both translated and interpreted the Scriptures to the people. Those who had set themselves to study the word were here interpreting and teaching that word to the people. The Holy Spirit is not here playing a part in the minds of the people. God is working through the knowledge-

able teachers in order to communicate His will to those who were culturally and linguistically removed from the original writing of the Scriptures.

D. The Bible was written to be studied.

God desires that His inspired word be studied. This is not something that necessarily needs to be commanded. If one claims to follow God, then certainly it will be his desire to seek communication from God. The older *King James Version* translates 2 Timothy 2:15 in the following manner, *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Later versions more correctly translate the Greek wording of 2 Timothy. The *New King James Version* reads, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* If one seeks to diligently seek God, then it is obvious that he will be a diligent student of the word of God. If the Bible were intended to be understood by the aid of the Holy Spirit, then we would wonder why there would be the necessity of diligent study. The fact that God calls on Christians to be diligent puts the responsibility for understanding the Scriptures on the back of Christians, not the Holy Spirit.

Acts 17:11 is an example of **non-Christians** searching and studying the Scriptures. Concerning the Bereans, Luke wrote, *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in*

that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." Could the Bereans, with their own intellectual abilities, discover by their personal Bible study the truth of what Paul was preaching? Certainly! They did not need the Spirit to aid them in order to determine the truth of Paul's message by referring to the Old Testament prophecies. If these Bereans could understand the Scriptures, then certainly we can today.

I find in the Bible no quick solution for understanding the Bible other than diligent study. No individual's interpretation is guaranteed to be inerrant. The fact that men will derive different interpretations from the Scriptures is evidence that the Holy Spirit does not directly guide biblical interpretation. **Those who maintain the teaching that the Holy Spirit directly controls interpretation must answer the question as to why every Bible student does not have the same understanding of the word of God in every passage.** The fact that there is division in the religious world over Bible interpretation is evidence against the concept that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to guard against wrong interpretations.

E. The Bible was written to be individually interpreted.

The Bible is a book of divine revelation. This revelation was communicated to us in order that we interpret the will of God. Christians are commanded to study

the Bible. Unbelievers are warned not to reject the Bible. The Bible, therefore, was written in a manner that could be understood by both unbelievers and believers.

Nevertheless, some have affirmed that 2 Peter 1:20,21 teaches that the Scriptures were never meant to be interpreted by the individual. Peter wrote, "*... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*" Verse 21 of this passage clearly explains the meaning of verse 20. **The Scriptures did not come to man by the will of man.** Peter is teaching that the Scriptures were not the product of man. They were the product of God. The *New King James* adds a footnote to the word "interpretation." It correctly suggests the word, "origin." In other words, the Scriptures are not of any private origin. Therefore, in 2 Peter 1:20,21 Peter is proclaiming the inspiration of the Scriptures, not individual interpretation or understanding.

The Bible was written to ordinary people with ordinary understanding. Therefore, God communicated in an ordinary manner. Through the Holy Spirit God did not reveal truth in a manner that would confuse us. He did not reveal truth in a manner that would divide biblical students. He communicated His will to men in a manner that would bring harmony and unity between honest and sincere interpreters.

The reason men do not understand

the Bible is not because it is difficult to understand. Men do not understand the Bible because they do not study it or they study it with preconceived ideas. Tradition and wrong motives too often distort objective interpretation. Our inadequacies in interpretation of the Scriptures must not be blamed on the Holy Spirit. If we do not understand the Bible, we

should look to ourselves. The Spirit has accomplished His work with the revelation of truth. It is now the responsibility of man to seek the truth that God desires that all men know. That truth is revealed in the Bible, and thus, it is the responsibility of every man to study the word of God.

Chapter 15

Understanding The Bible

The Bible teaches that the Scriptures can be understood through diligent study. If men were inspired to understand the Bible, then there would be no need for diligent study. One could simply allow the Spirit to work in his or her life in order to bring forth a correct understanding of the Bible. In conjunction with this thought, there would be no misunderstanding of the Bible. All Christians would agree. There would be no division over interpretation. However, the following New Testament writers emphasize the fact that one must study. The inspired writers received a knowledge of the will of God through inspiration. We must receive it through perspiration in many hours of study.

A. Jesus emphasized diligent study.

Jesus said to those Jewish religious leaders who argued with Him, “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me*” (Jn 5:39). If it

were the work of the Spirit to inspire understanding, then why did not the Spirit inspire the Jewish leaders to understand the prophecies of the Scriptures as they pointed to Jesus? The fact that they were rejecting Jesus of whom the Scriptures prophesied, was evidence that the Spirit did not give them inspired understanding of the Scriptures.

B. Peter emphasized diligent study.

In 2 Peter 3:15 Peter referred to some of Paul’s inspired Scriptures. Of Paul’s writings Peter said, “... *in which are some things hard to understand* ...” (vs 16).

Peter was an inspired apostle, and yet, he had difficulty understanding some of Paul’s writings. He did not say that the difficult passages Paul wrote were impossible to understand. He simply said that there were some things in Paul’s writings that were hard to understand. As an inspired apostle, it would seem peculiar that Peter would say this about a fellow

apostle if the Holy Spirit were supposed to aid his interpretation of Scripture. If Peter had difficulty understanding some of Paul's writings, then certainly we will, though we have the advantage of possessing the entire written New Testament. If the Spirit did not lead Peter to understand Paul's writings, then certainly He will not lead us to do so. Only through diligent study will we understand the writings of Paul and the other New Testament writers.

C. Paul emphasized diligent study.

As stated previously, Paul instructed Timothy to give diligence to present himself approved to God (2 Tm 2:15). Why would Paul make a statement as this if Timothy could understand the Scriptures with the aid of the Holy Spirit? Why did not Paul instruct Timothy to rely on the Spirit for a better understanding of the Scriptures? The fact is that Timothy had been taught the Scriptures from a babe. He was taught by his mother and grandmother, not by the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:15). He was encouraged by Paul to continue his studies throughout his life.

It is also interesting to note that Paul set an example of personal Bible study. While in prison in Rome he wrote to Timothy, "*Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus ... and the books, especially the parchments*" (2 Tm 4:13). These materials certainly included Old Testament scrolls which Paul used in his personal studies. They could also have included copies of other inspired New Testament writers as Peter. By example, therefore,

the inspired apostle is here teaching that he continued his studies. If it were the work of the Spirit to inspire understanding of the Scriptures, then why did Paul continue his personal studies?

1 Corinthians 2:9-13 is Paul's explanation of how the Spirit brought to us an understanding of God's eternal mystery of salvation. In this revelation Paul explains the work of the Spirit. "*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God*" (vs 10). This work of the Holy Spirit was accomplished through the Spirit in order "*that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God*" (vs 12). Therefore, we can know the eternal mystery of God because of the inspiration of the inspired writers who wrote the message. Paul stated, "*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*" (vs 13). The Spirit's work in revelation and inspiration was complete when He inspired the New Testament writers to record the eternal mystery of God. His work was to make the mystery known, and then have it recorded for our understanding. Paul adds, "*... by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)*" (Ep 3:3,4). In matters of revelation and inspiration, therefore, the Spirit has accomplished His work in providing the written word of God in order for us to know the mystery of the gospel. He does not

now have to interpret that record for us in order that we understand. Winters concluded,

The Holy Spirit was not given to illuminate the understanding. The revelation of the gospel was given through those who received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in apostolic times, but the receivers had to exercise their own mind in understanding the revelation once it was given just as all others did.^{10:22}

In apostolic times (when the Holy Spirit was delivering the revelation), the Spirit revealed the will of God and man had to exercise his own power of mind to understand the revelation. The Holy Spirit was given to reveal the truth, not to illuminate the understanding of truth when it was revealed.^{10:23}

D. Luke emphasized diligent study.

It was Luke who said that the Berean Jews were more noble than the Thessalonian Jews. They were more noble, or fair-minded, because they searched the Scriptures (At 17:11). Fair-mindedness in the sight of God, therefore, results in being a diligent student of the word of God. One cannot be fair-minded, or noble before God, and at the same time, be ignorant of the word of God.

We must remember that it is not possible for any one individual to know all the Bible. One person cannot know everything that is inferred in the Bible. However, one can certainly know all fundamental truths that are necessary for salvation and righteousness. These truths

come to us in clear statements. No interpretation is needed. One simply needs to read the word of God with an open mind and he will discover what God wants him to do.

God provided the inspired Bible for man in a way that would constantly challenge the minds of both the novice student and the learned student. Therefore, one should not approach the Bible with the idea that he will be able to understand everything written therein.

E. The prophets gave an example of study.

Simply because the Old Testament prophets were inspired to write the Scriptures, this did not mean that they were inspired to understand what they wrote. In 1 Peter 1:10-12, Peter wrote,

*Of this salvation the **prophets have inquired and searched carefully**, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, **searching** what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – **things which angels desire to look into.***

Peter wrote that one should do as the Old Testament prophets who “***inquired and searched diligently***” the revelation

that had been given to them concerning the mystery. They wrote the prophecies concerning Jesus, but they did not understand them. If the Spirit inspires us to understand, then certainly He would have inspired an understanding of the great Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. The fact is that even the Old Testament prophets had to study what they wrote, just as we must study what God has written for us today. It is through diligent study that one is able to “*know the truth*” as Jesus promised (Jn 8:32). In knowing the truth, we can be set free from ignorance of God’s will.

In James 1:5 James wrote, “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God....*” James encourages Christians to pray for wisdom. There are no instructions in the word of God that we pray for knowledge. Knowledge comes through study. The primary source of wisdom is experience. Through wisdom one’s knowledge is applied to one’s life. James’ promise that God will give wisdom to those who ask is not a vain promise. Christians have a

special source for wisdom. The source is God.

Through wisdom one may better understand the Bible. However, this is an indirect manner by which we would understand. If God inspired the Christian to understand the Scriptures, then the interpreter could simply read a passage, and then give an infallible explanation of the passage. He would never misunderstand a passage. He would never need to study. There would be no need for preachers and teachers of the word of God. But this was never God’s intentions for the saint in his relationship with the word of God. God desires that our characters be developed for eternal dwelling. He wants us to be a people who search for truth. We must not be spoiled children who are handed all truth without diligent study. God does not give us inspired interpretation of the Scriptures simply because He is developing our thirst for Him through our diligent Bible study. As we study, we seek more knowledge from God. We thus hunger and thirst after righteousness in order to better know God.

Chapter 16

The Cessation Of Revelation

Bible students must clearly understand the cessation of revelation from God. This fundamental Bible teaching must be understood in order to seal for all time on earth the complete revelation of God in the Bible. We live in a world of great religious division. Non-Christian religions throughout the world have

affirmed revelation from a god they have created after their own imaginations or worldly desires. The biblical teaching that God closed revelation in the first century is a vital argument against those who claim to have received further revelation from God.

There is little difference between the

doctrine that one must be led in direct understanding of the Bible and the doctrine of continued revelation. Some have taught against the false doctrine of continued revelation of Scripture, but at the same time, have believed and taught the doctrine of inspired understanding. The teaching that the Christian is inspired to understand the Scriptures is simply one step closer to the teaching that the Scriptures can be laid aside for the inspired proclamations of those who claim to have a direct link with the Holy Spirit who supposedly teaches them all truth. The subject of this chapter is very important in reference to both the teaching of inspired interpretation and inspired revelation. If God expects us to build our characters by understanding the Bible through diligent study, then there is no such thing as inspired interpretation. If God has sealed the revelation of truth to man with the writing of the book of Revelation, then there is no inspired revelation.

Various religious groups today teach that revelation by the Holy Spirit did not terminate in the first century. It is stated,

There is nothing that so well proves apostasy from the Primitive Church as denial of the spirit of revelation. To state that God did once reveal Himself to His people, ... but that now He has ceased to reveal Himself, and that apostles, prophets, and inspiration are no longer needed, shows that there has indeed been a “falling away.”^{58:298}

It is also affirmed that “without direct and continuous revelation from God,

the Gospel cannot be understood and properly applied.”^{59:1376} Some have also stated, “To understand the Bible, even the plainest translation, all these things are necessary as helps, and yet, without the Spirit of God to lead into all truth, not all of these helps are sufficient; so numerous and so vast are the difficulties to be encountered in ascertaining the true meaning of the Bible.”^{60:389} In other words, we are led to believe that we cannot understand the Bible without being inspired by the Holy Spirit and without the Spirit continuing to reveal understanding and truth to us. The Catholic position on this matter was explained by Cardinal Gibbons when he wrote, “The Church has authority from God to teach regarding faith and morals, and in her teaching **she is preserved from error by the special guidance of the Holy Spirit** (emphasis mine, R.E.D.).”^{39:54}

The following points are set forth as arguments against the concept of modern-day revelations by the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that God has ceased His revelation of truth to man. He has terminated the revelation of truth simply because the Bible contains all truth that is necessary for godly living.

A. Revelation was completed in the first century.

The Bible teaches that the revelation of truth from God was completed **in the first century** and was recorded in the Bible by men who were inspired of God. Consider the following points:

1. Jesus promised all truth to the apostles. In John 14:26 Jesus promised that the Spirit of truth “*will teach you all things.*” He promised the apostles, “*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come*” (Jn 16:13).

2. All truth was delivered to the apostles. In John 14:26 Jesus promised the apostles, “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*” Jesus made the same promise, but in different words, in John 16:13. “*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*” In order for the promise of John 14:26 and 16:13 to be fulfilled, all truth had to have been delivered to the Christ-sent apostles before they died. Jesus made the promise specifically to them. Therefore, before they all died, all truth had to have been revealed to them. Jesus kept His promise.

3. The apostles and prophets recorded all truth. All truth was revealed to the apostles. It was recorded without error by the inspired apostles and prophets for the church of all history (See 1 Co 2:10-13; 2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 3:16).

4. The truth has once and for all time been delivered to the church. The revelation of the final truth from God was

revealed and recorded in the first century for the church. This truth, “the faith”, has once and for all time been revealed to the saints. Jude wrote, “*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jd 3). Peter similarly wrote that God’s “*divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue*” (2 Pt 1:3).

Because this truth has been finalized, Christians of the first century, as well as we today, have been warned not to add to this revelation. The following key scriptures are warnings against any who would seek to add authoritative “truth” to the lives of Christians:

a. Galatians 1:6-9: In this passage, Paul wrote,

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. **But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.** As we have said before, so now I say again, **if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.***

In the preceding context Paul uses a

hyperbole to say that even if it were the case that an angel from heaven should preach another gospel, he would be accursed. If Christians should not listen to an angel speaking something different than that which has been revealed, then surely they should not listen to some man preaching a different doctrine than what is revealed in the Scriptures.

b. 2 John 9-11: John wrote, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” John warns that those who go beyond that which has already been revealed (the “teaching of Christ”) do not have God. The teaching of Christ is here considered final. Nothing is to be added to it. Therefore, if one would teach in a manner by which he binds on men commandments that are not of the teaching of Christ, he is not to be obeyed in any way. The fact that one must abide in and not go beyond the teaching of Christ, emphasizes the fact that the teaching of Christ is final.

c. John 12:48: Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” **Jesus’ word is the final authority** by which we will be judged in the last day. Since His word will be the standard by which we will be judged, then it follows that His word is final. We will not be judged by the word

of any other. This is especially true concerning any word that has followed what Jesus said in the first century through His apostles and prophets.

d. Revelation 22:18,19: In order to conclude the book of Revelation, John wrote,

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Though this passage refers specifically to the book of Revelation, the principle is certainly all-inclusive of God’s entire revelation. Such is evident in passages as Deuteronomy 4:2 where through Moses God told Israel, “*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it*” The Proverb writer warned, “*Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you and you be found a liar*” (Pv 30:6). Statements throughout the Bible emphasize the fact that the Bible alone is God’s final revelation to man. It is God’s final communication to man, and thus, God expects all men to submit to the principles of His will that are revealed in the Bible.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 Paul discussed the cessation of the gift of prophecy. This gift centered around the speaking of truth by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As discussed previously, this gift

has ceased with the termination of the rest of the miraculous gifts. **Therefore, in the cessation of this gift, there is no more inspired speaking of God's word.** Christians today have in the Scriptures all that is necessary for godly living (2 Tm 3:16,17). They now have all that is necessary for godliness (2 Pt 1:3).

B. All-sufficiency argues against continued revelation.

Contrary to the teaching that we need more revelation today, the Bible teaches that it is completely sufficient to supply the Christian with all that is necessary for godly living. The Christian's spiritual needs are fulfilled by one's direction in life through the Scriptures. In other words, any teaching that states that we need more revelation from God today for spiritual direction is a denial of the Bible teaching that it is completely sufficient to supply such direction (See 2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3).

1. *The Scriptures are sufficient for Christian conduct.* The spiritual direction of the Scriptures which was available to Christians in the first century is also available to Christians today. The word of God still does for us today the following things that it has always done:

- a. The Scriptures can be heard (Mt 13:9,43; Lk 16:29; Jn 6:45), understood (Ep 3:4,5), and believed (Jn 20:30,31; At 8:12,13,37,38; 13:48; 2 Th 3:14).
- b. The Scriptures can teach the Christian (Rm 15:4; Pv 22:6; Ps 119:103,104).
- c. The Scriptures admonish the Christian in

- moral conduct (1 Co 4:14; 10:11).
- d. The Scriptures reveal the will of God (2 Co 13:10; 2 Pt 1:12).
- e. The Scriptures direct the behavior of Christians toward one another in the church (Cl 1:5-10; 1 Tm 3:14,15).
- f. The Scriptures can guard the Christian against apostasy (Mt 4:4-11; 2 Tm 3:14-17; 2 Pt 1:12; Jd 17-21).
- g. The Scriptures assure the Christian of salvation (2 Pt 1:9-11; 1 Jn 2:2-4; 5:13).
- h. The Scriptures reprove, rebuke, correct and instruct Christians (2 Tm 3:16).
- i. The Scriptures bring fellowship between Christians and God (1 Jn 1:1-4,6-10).
- j. The Scriptures motivate the Christian to a better life (1 Pt 5:12; 2 Pt 1:12-14).

The word of God is able to accomplish at least the above functions in the life of the Christian. What more is needed for Christian living? Those who seek modern-day revelations from God are asking for more than what God promised. They are asking for direction and motivation that God never intended to give. If one asks for more than what the Scriptures provide, he is making an accusation against the Scriptures. It is an accusation that says that God cannot do through the direction of His word that which He intended to accomplish in the life of the obedient. This is thus an attack against the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

2. *Modern-day revelation could not accomplish more than the Scriptures.* The Bible teaches that the following could not be accomplished by new revelations from God. If these things cannot be accomplished, then why would we need new revelations?

- a. New revelations could not deliver to us another gospel. Christians are under the strict command not to preach any other gospel than that which has been revealed (Gl 1:6-9; 2 Jn 9-11).
- b. New revelations could not produce another means of salvation for man. All that was necessary to produce salvation in the first century (the gospel of Christ) is also available for men today (Rm 1:16; 1 Co 15:1-4; Rm 6:3-6). For one to be saved today, he need only obey the gospel which has been revealed in the Scriptures.
- c. New revelations could not supply us with more spiritual blessings and direction. The Bible claims to contain and reveal all necessary spiritual blessings and direction for Christian living (See Ep 1:3; 2 Tm 3:16,17; 1 Pt 2:2; 2 Pt 1:3).
- d. New revelations could not give us more truth which is necessary for salvation. All truth has once and for all time been delivered to the saints (See Jn 16:13; 1 Co 2:10-13; Gl 1:11,12).
- e. New revelations cannot help us better understand the Bible. The New Testament was written in order that we have the final revelation of the mystery of God (Ep 3:4,5).

The fact that the Bible claims to be complete and sufficient for the believer is the greatest argument against supposed

modern-day revelations. **God would not and did not circumvent His revelation through the Scriptures by continuing revelation unto this day. God did not minimize the Scriptures by adding new revelation for us today.** Any teaching that affirms that God added revelation to the Bible after the close of the writing of the New Testament is an affirmation that the Bible is incomplete.

Because of man's will to place himself in the bondage of others, each of us allow religious traditions to be bound on us. This feeling and practice is so strong in the religious world, that men will often reject the word of God in order to keep religious traditions. We do so in order to be accepted by the group who maintains the traditions. But we must remember that when traditions are kept to the exclusion of the word of God, they bring men into bondage, and thus work contrary to the will of God. It is for this reason that the word of God must be our final authority in all things that pertain to faith.

Chapter 17

The Cessation Of Confirming Miracles

We live in a religious world today wherein numerous claims are made concerning the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Not only is it claimed that the Spirit works miraculously through interpretation and continued revelation of new truth, but it is also claimed that the Holy Spirit continues to work miracles. Some

state, "Miracles did not end with the Apostles. Christ Himself promised that miracles would always be a mark of His true Church, and a gift He would always bestow upon His faithful followers, the saints."^{61:50} Some boldly affirm, "Whoso shall ask it in my [Christ's] name in faith, they shall cast out devils; they shall heal

the sick; they shall cause the blind to receive their sight”⁶² Thus it is affirmed that miracles occur today and will continue until the end of time.⁶³

There are those who seek to walk by sight and not by faith. If one desires a miracle from God, he is desiring to walk by sight. Thomas had this problem in John 20:25. “*Unless I see,*” he stated, “... *I will not believe.*” There are many “doubting Thomases” today who search for a walk by sight by searching for a miracle. They would rob us of our “blessedness.” Jesus said to Thomas, “*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (Jn 20:29). **Those who search for miracles are actually expressing their lack of faith.** Because they lack faith, they are searching for an empirical foundation upon which to base their faith. If they see a supposed miracle, they have something upon which to stand. This is exactly what Thomas was asking. He would not believe unless he saw and touched. The religious world today is filled with those who are as Thomas. They seek miracles in order to believe.

A. God’s areas of work:

As stated in previous chapters, the Christian is often misunderstood on this point. If he states that God does not work miracles today, then he is accused of not believing that God works today. If he states that God does work miracles today, then he has misrepresented the teaching of the Bible. The fact is that the Bible

teaches that God does work today in the environment of the world that is not according to the normal function of natural laws. One might view God’s work in three different categories or areas. These are areas in which He has always worked in reference to the world He created.

1. God worked miraculously. As previously defined, the miraculous work of God was His work that was perceived through the senses. It was work that was immediate. It could not be denied, even by the unbelievers (At 4:14-16). Through the open, visible and obvious manifestation of the presence of God, the messengers and message of God were confirmed in the miracles of those who proclaimed God’s word (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4).

2. God works behind the curtain of natural law. God works to bring about that which is good for the Christian (Rm 8:28). In answer to prayer, He works on the bodies of those who are sick (Js 5:13-16). The results of this work are certainly not the ordinary occurrence of natural laws. Without our empirical notice, God can bring about the healing of a sick person upon the request of a saint. This is God’s work. It is not the ordinary occurrence of natural law. We would not classify this as a miracle simply because the Bible does not refer to this work of God as miraculous. Nevertheless, it is God at work outside the ordinary occurrence of natural laws.

3. God works in the environment of the Christian. God also works in our environment in order to bring about His eternal purposes. We are not perceptive

to these works as we would be if a miracle occurred. However, by faith we assume that God is working in this world in order to raise up nations and bring them down. This is God at work. But it is not classified as miraculous work. Nevertheless, it is God at work to bring about the end of all things for the salvation of the Christian.

God could work miracles today. He could manifest the environment of the supernatural today if He chose to do so. However, we must investigate the Scriptures to see if He has so chosen to reveal Himself in a miraculous manner throughout all history. It is not that we want a miracle. We must determine if it is a biblical teaching that God said He would continue miraculous work throughout the history of the church on earth.

B. The nature of true confirming miracles:

The Bible teaching concerning the nature of true miracles is evidence that such happenings do not occur today. In order to answer the claim that miracles occur today one must understand the nature of true Bible miracles. In defining miracles, we must use only the Bible. We cannot use our experiential observations today as a measure by which to define true Bible miracles. The Bible must be our only dictionary to define the manifestation of a miracle. Once our definition is established by the Scriptures, then we must consider whether or not such happenings occur today. We must also

compare our biblical definition of miracles with what we hear today that are claimed to be miracles.

1. Bible miracles were clearly seen.

The senses of man clearly and distinctly identified the biblical occurrence of a miracle. In Acts 3:1-10 a lame beggar was healed by Peter. Peter and John were subsequently brought before the Sanhedrin to answer for what they did to this beggar. However, when the Sanhedrin saw “*the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it*” (At 4:14).

These Jews, who did not believe in Jesus, said, “*What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it*” (At 4:16). This miracle was so evident to the unbelievers that they could not say anything to deny it. In fact, they actually confessed that it occurred.

The above illustrates the biblical fact that miracles were not accomplished in secret. All Jesus’ miraculous work could be seen by the human eye. In his defense before Agrippa, Paul said concerning Jesus, “*For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things, for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner*” (At 26:26). One of the first characteristics of a true miracle, therefore, is the fact that it must be able to be seen by men.

If miracles could not be clearly identified by men, then their true purpose

would have been incomplete. (The purpose of miracles will be explained in a following point.) In the Old Testament God manifested the environment of Deity before the Israelites in order to make it known that Elijah was God's prophet (1 Kg 17-21). There was no question concerning the validity of the miraculous happening. In the same manner God proved Paul to be a true Christ-sent apostle by striking Elymas, a sorcerer, blind (At 13:6-12). Paul was proved to be a true Christ-sent apostle to the Corinthians by the miraculous signs that God worked through him (2 Co 12:12). There was no question in the mind of Sergius Paulus that a notable miracle had occurred when Elymas was struck blind. There was no question in the minds of the faithful in Corinth that Paul possessed the authority to unleash the power of the supernatural.

Bible miracles were unquestionable. No doubt was left in the minds of the beholders when a miracle occurred. The beholders may not have understood the nature of the miracle. Nevertheless, they understood that something out of the ordinary occurrence of natural processes had happened. Therefore, we must understand that a miracle was something that was perceived by the observers. God intentionally made His presence known to man through miracle. Any so-called miracle today must be an observable fact.

2. Bible miracles clearly manifested the presence of the environment of the supernatural. God's working power was clearly seen in the occurrence of true miracles. People recognized that some-

thing above the natural had occurred. We would divide this point into two areas: (1) The manifestation of the supernatural could be seen in the inspiration of the messengers of God. (2) The manifestation of the environment of Deity could be clearly seen in the miracles that were worked by the messengers of God.

a. The manifestation of the supernatural was clearly seen in the inspired men of God: God warned Israel about giving heed to any self-made prophet "*that presumes to speak a word in My name*" (Dt 18:20). If the prophet spoke and the prophecy "*does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him*" (Dt 18:22). Jeremiah said of these false prophets, "*For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the Lord*" (Jr 29:9). God worked miraculously in order to prove that His men were from Him.

God's true messengers would be known by their message **which harmonized with all that God had previously spoken.** If any man spoke in contradiction to what had already been accepted as inspired, that particular person was a false prophet.

The test of a true prophet was the fulfillment of his prophecy. "*As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent*" (Jr 28:9). Therefore, God's supernatural presence was

made known in the life of the inspired prophets **by the fulfillment of the things that they prophesied.** His presence was also made known by the fact that God's prophets spoke in harmony for thousands of years.

Those who claim miraculous works of the Spirit today must speak in harmony with one another. **If they contradict one another in what they preach, they are not true prophets. And thus, the miraculous works they claim to perform by the work of the Spirit are false.** Every messenger of God in the Bible who worked miracles spoke in harmony with all other messengers of God who worked miracles. This is a very important point that must be pressed on those who claim to work miracles today. Many groups are claiming the working of true miracles, and yet, they are all preaching different doctrines. Such is proof that they are not working the works of God.

b. The supernatural power of Deity could be clearly seen in the miraculous works of the messengers of God. The presence of the supernatural must be clearly seen in a miraculous work. When a true miracle occurred it manifested the supernatural presence of God. For example, the dividing of the Red Sea before Moses and Israel manifested God's presence with Israel. Moses said to Israel, "*Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today*" (Ex 14:13). The presence of the supernatural could also be clearly seen when fire came from heaven on Mount Carmel to prove Elijah to be the true prophet of Israel (1 Kg

18:17-46). Nicodemus said to Jesus, "*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*" (Jn 3:2). Nicodemus could see the presence of the supernatural in the works of Jesus. For this reason, Jesus called on men to believe the miraculous works which He did. "... *though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him*" (Jn 10:38; see 5:26; 14:11).

During Jesus' ministry many believed on Him because of His words (Jn 4:41,42). However, they believed on Him because of His supernatural works, for in beholding the presence of the supernatural in His works they often cried out, "*A great prophet has risen up among us*", and "*God has visited His people*" (See Lk 7:11-16). Peter said to the thousands gathered on the day of Pentecost that Jesus and His disciples were "*attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know*" (At 2:22; see 10:38; Jn 20:30,31; Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). The presence of the supernatural power of God was clearly seen in the working of the miracles of the disciples. This presence **could not be denied** by those who witnessed the occurrence of the miracles. There are no denials of miracles in the Bible.

3. Bible miracles were not ordinary happenings. The miracles of the Bible were recognized as something that was not ordinary. We might add that the be-

holders were positively convinced that what they saw was not the occurrence of some natural law. Jesus calmed a storm at sea (Mt 8:23-27; Mk 4:35-41). The result was utter amazement and awe on the part of those who witnessed this great power over nature. This was not the occurrence of some unknown natural law. Jesus walked on water (Mk 6:45-52; Jn 6:16-21). This was not natural and possible according to natural law. As a result of His walking on the water, the disciples were “*greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled*” (Mk 6:51). Jesus also brought sight to the blind (Mt 20:29-34; Mk 10:46-52), changed water to wine (Jn 2:1-11), multiplied bread and fish by an act of creation (Jn 6:4-14) and a host of other miracles, “*which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*” (Jn 21:25).

We cannot claim that these happenings were the ordinary occurrence of natural laws which the people at that time did not understand. Jesus, Peter and Paul raised the dead (Jn 11; At 9:40,41; 20:9-12). This was definitely not an ordinary occurrence of natural laws. This was a miraculous happening which is yet to be copied by modern-day fake healers. In the first century, even unbelievers confessed the miraculous happenings (At 4:14-16). Today, a host of unbelievers deny the so-called miracles of modern-day healers. However, in the Bible all miraculous workings were recognized to be something different than the ordinary occurrence of natural law.

4. Bible miracles occurred in such a manner as to prohibit them from being counterfeited. The characteristics of Bible miracles and how they were accomplished is evidence that modern-day healers cannot perform such deeds today.

a. Miracles were instantaneous and complete. Jesus healed known blind and crippled people in such an instantaneous and perfect manner that there was no question the healings actually took place (Jn 9; Lk 7:11,12). There was no question that the supernatural was at work in the healing. Bible healings were complete and not partial as is characteristic of modern-day healings (See Mt 12:10-14; 15:29-31; Mk 7:31-37; Lk 22:51).

Jesus never failed to heal anyone He intended to heal. His healings were instantaneous, complete and unquestionable. This is not true of the healings of modern-day healers. There were no denials or objections to the actual happening of the miracles. People may have objected to their occurrence on the Sabbath, but the miracles themselves were still claimed to have happened.

b. Miracles were worked before unbelievers. God’s messengers did not hesitate to perform miracles before unbelievers (See 1 Kg 18:30-40; Jn 11:45,46; At 4:14-16; 14:6-12; 26:26). In fact, the purpose of the miraculous works was to confirm the spoken word to the unbelievers (Mk 16:20). In other words, **the natural environment of the occurrence of miracles was in the presence of unbelievers.** From the mouth of

unbelievers there were no denials concerning the occurrence of the miracles. Many simply confessed, "*For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done ...*" (At 4:16).

5. Bible miracles were witnessed as true in the face of severe persecution.

A true miracle will stand as true in the eyes of witnesses, even though those witnesses must pay for their testimony with their lives. The apostles had everything to lose in claiming the fact of Jesus' miracles. However, the severe persecution which encompassed their lives did not drive them to deny the fact of what they had seen in the life of Jesus. In his latter years, John wrote, "*That which ... was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness ... and heard we declare to you ...*" (1 Jn 1:1-3). The test of any miracle should be the faithfulness of those who witness the occurrence of the miracle. No amount of persecution would move them to deny its actual happening.

Those who were cured in a miraculous manner did not succumb to the pressures of persecution. In John 9 Jesus healed a blind man. The man was brought before the Pharisees who severely criticized and rebuked him. However, the man stated, "*Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see*" (Jn 9:25).

Those today who claim to have been healed must also be scrutinized as the blind man was scrutinized by the un-

believers. If their healing is true, then it cannot be denied. The Pharisees in John 9 knew that the man had been healed. They could not deny the fact. Their only recourse was to cast the man out of the synagogue (Jn 9:34).

Consider this point in view of the hostility of the leaders of Judaism against Jesus during His ministry and throughout the early beginnings of the church. We must not misunderstand the fact that there was tremendous persecution against Jesus and the church in the environment of Palestine. They persecuted Jesus to the point of crucifying Him outside Jerusalem. The Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Saul and a host of others went forth while enduring the persecution of threats, intimidation and murder by those who sought to destroy the rise and growth of the church (At 6:9-15; 9:1). This would be the same environment to preaching today in an Islamic country wherein the preaching of the gospel is illegal. In this political and religious environment, the word of the disciples was confirmed through the miracles of God (Hb 2:3,4). As a result, many believed in the first century because of the miraculous works. The miracles could not be denied by the unbelievers, though they often rejected and killed those who preached as they did Jesus. A true miracle today could be worked in the presence of non-Christians in hostile environments, and yet could not be denied. Luke recorded the following testimony of hostile Jewish leaders in Jerusalem concerning their witness of a true miracle:

And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them [Peter and John] to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:14-16).

C. The cessation of the authority to command the miraculous:

The Bible teaches that the means for receiving authority to command the environment of the supernatural has ceased. There are many today who make the claim to be able to directly command the miraculous work of God. However, their claim cannot be true if the means for obtaining this authority has passed.

The apostles received the authority to command the miraculous in fulfillment of Jesus' specific promise to them as His apostles (See Lk 24:46-48; At 1:5,8). In Acts 2:1-4 they were endowed with power and authority from on high. As a result of their authority as Christ-sent apostles, they could impart the miraculous gifts to others. Simon saw *"that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given ..."* (At 8:18; see 19:1-6; Rm 1:11; 2 Tm 1:6). The "working of miracles" (1 Co 12:10) was thus received by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

God allowed the miraculous environment of Deity to be commanded only by

the Christ-sent apostles and those on whom they had laid their hands. There are no Christ-sent apostles today who can lay hands on others in order to impart the authority to work miracles. The logical conclusion is that miracles do not occur today because there are no Christians in whom has been invested the authority to command the environment of Deity.

D. Cessation of the purpose of confirming miracles:

The Bible teaches that the purpose for the occurrence of the open manifestation of the miraculous has ceased. In order to fully understand the cessation of miracles under this point, one must understand the purpose for the occurrence of miracles. Miracles did not occur in order to entertain the idle curiosity of man. God worked to accomplish specific purposes through the occurrence of miracles. When His purposes were completed, the miraculous was terminated. Consider the following purposes of miracles:

1. *Miracles proved the presence of Deity.* Gideon was a judge of Israel who first needed proof that God would be present with him in his leading of Israel against her enemies (Jg 6:33-40). God thus proved His presence to Gideon by miraculously causing dew to settle on a fleece one night and by not causing it to fall on the same fleece the following night. In Acts 4 a group of Christians prayed because of the miraculous release of Peter from jail. *"And when they had*

prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken ...” (At 4:31). This shaking proved that God was present with the disciples. God **bore witness with the early disciples** “*both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit ...*” (Hb 2:3,4).

Through the occurrence of miracles, men of God were confirmed to be messengers from God. God confirmed their word with miracles (Mk 16:20). Therefore, as men having the presence of God with them, they spoke in harmony with one another for the propagation of the gospel.

Many of the miraculous works of Jesus and the disciples were written for our learning (See Rm 15:4; Jn 20:30,31). The presence of God has already been proved in the lives of those who first spoke the word of God. This miraculous presence was recorded for our learning today. The word that the early disciples preached does not need reconfirmation. In order to have proof of God’s presence in one’s life today, one must submit to the already confirmed word of God (1 Jn 5:1,2). Only by using the Scriptures as one’s guide in life can one be assured that God is with him. We cannot trust our feelings. We cannot trust supposed miraculous works. For this reason, we must affirm that the Scriptures are the central controlling factor that directs our lives (See 2 Tm 3:16,17).

2. Miracles proved the messengers of God. God allowed His prophets and apostles to command the miraculous in order to prove to their audiences that they

were God-sent. Nicodemus’ statement in John 3:2 manifests this truth. “*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him.*” Many of the miracles of Jesus were recorded in order “*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ ...*” (Jn 20:31). Jesus affirmed that we must believe His miraculous works (Jn 10:38). “*The works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me*” (Jn 5:36; see 14:11). Paul resorted to this same witness concerning his apostleship. “*Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you ...*” (2 Co 12:12).

Paul challenged those who claimed to be true teachers. He challenged them because in their teaching they contradicted his inspired words. He used the witness of the miraculous to prove his apostleship in 1 Corinthians 4:19,20. “*But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.*” In his second epistle he warned that when he came “*I will not spare*” (2 Co 13:2). He continued, “*... since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you*” (2 Co 13:3). The proof of Christ in him was his authority to work the miraculous of God in order to discipline the Corinthian false teachers. Therefore, God’s messengers were proved to be sent from God by their authority to work miracles.

Since God has proved His inspired messengers in the first century, we do not need a continuation of this proof. The record of Paul's apostleship has been confirmed. Paul's word and the inspired words of other writers have been confirmed as originating from God. For this reason the Spirit said through Paul, "*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you*" (Ph 4:9). If we seek to follow the inspired word of Paul and other New Testament writers, God will be with us (See 2 Jn 9,10). We do not need miracles today in order to prove that we are of God. Our proof that we are of God comes from our obedience to the gospel.

3. Miracles proved the message of God. God manifested His presence with His messengers in order to validate or prove them and their message before unbelievers. The Lord worked with them "*confirming the word through the accompanying signs*" (Mk 16:20). When the apostles and prophets preached, God bore "*witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit ...*" (Hb 2:3,4). Through messengers as himself, Paul explained that Christ accomplished His work "*in word and deed ... in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ...*" (Rm 15:18,19). The word of God, therefore, came to the hearers in power (1 Th 1:5; see 1 Co 14:22). Apostles as Paul (Christ-sent) and Barnabas (church-sent) (At 14:14) went about "*speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace,*

granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (At 14:3). The purpose of miracles was to confirm the spoken word of the early evangelists.

4. Miracles built up and edified the body of Christ. The early church did not have the inspired **written** word of God. They had the inspired **spoken** word of God. Therefore, through the miraculous gifts, the Holy Spirit directed and established the body life of the church.

a. The miraculous gifts built up the church. The church in Rome undoubtedly had miraculous gifts as a result of those converted Jews who returned from the Pentecost events in Jerusalem (See Rm 12:6ff). However, the number of members who possessed the gifts was limited. Therefore, it was Paul's desire to go to them in order that they might have many members with gifts. "*For I plan to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established*" (Rm 1:11). Paul could impart the gifts. **Through the gifts they would be established in the faith.** Such was the purpose of the gift of prophecy, for it was given for those who **believe** (1 Co 14:22).

Miraculous gifts were given to the early church until the early churches came "*to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Ep 4:13). Prophets preached the word of God by inspiration to the church in order that the members "*no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of*

doctrine” (Ep 4:14). The miraculously preached word of God was able to furnish them unto every good work (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3). Therefore, in absence of the written word of God (the New Testament) the Holy Spirit worked miraculously through the gifts in order to bring the church to maturity.

b. The miraculous gifts proved the church to be true. Miraculous gifts were also given to the church to prove that it was the true body of believers as opposed to Judaism. The miraculous work among the churches proved that the church was different from the cults and pagan religions of the first century world. The use of this miraculous evidence to prove the validity of Christianity is evident in John’s argument of 1 John. Those who were of the truth could know such by the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit which they possessed. He wrote, **“By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit”** (1 Jn 4:13; see 3:24).

Paul used the same argument with the Galatians in order to identify their separation from Judaism. He asks, **“Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”** (Gl 3:5). Paul asks the question and assumes the answer that they received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit as a result of the hearing of faith. Paul was aborting their apostasy to Judaism by calling their attention to the fact that God was proving Christianity true through the miraculous gifts. He was therefore asking them to consider the fact

that they received the miraculous gifts when they became Christians, not when they were under the legalistic system of Judaism. If they returned to Judaism, they would be doing that which the apostates of Hebrews did. Hebrews 6:4 states, **“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit ... to renew them ...”** (Hb 6:4-6). Apostates gave up the confirming work of the Spirit. They experienced the miraculous, but went back to Judaism.

Today, the church has the record of both the confirming miracles and the truth of God. By this word the church can prove all things and hold on to that which is true (1 Th 5:21). Therefore, the miracles are not needed today in the church. If one asks for miracles today in the church, then he is saying that the word of God is not sufficient.

God intended and did confirm the Scriptures through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. However, when the revelation ceased, so did the purpose of the confirming miracles. Once the word was confirmed, there was no more a need to have the confirming miracles. In other words, (1) The revelation of the gospel was confirmed by miracles in the first century (Mk 16:20; At 14:3; Hb 2:3,4). (2) The revelation of the gospel was completed in the first century (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3; Jd 3). (3) Therefore, the conclusion is that there is no more a need for confirming miracles because there is no more new revelation for the church today. When the revelation ceased, so

did the confirming miracles.

God intends for His written word to thoroughly furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 Tm 3:16;17). Through it He has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pt 1:3). Those who would contend for the necessity of miracles today are saying that the word of God is not sufficient to furnish the Christian completely in everything that pertains to godly living. The argument for miracles today is an argument against the all-sufficiency of the word of God.

I would also add that it was **not** the primary purpose of miracles to be benevolent. After all, Jesus left many people who were still sick and crippled in the world. Why did He not heal everyone? Why did He not commission His disciples to heal everyone? If it were the commission of the disciples to heal, why were some left unhealed, especially those who were essential to evangelism. Epaphroditus was very sick in Paul's presence. However, it was only after some distress that he recovered (See Ph 2:25-27). Timothy had a stomach problem, but was not miraculously healed (1 Tm 5:23). Paul had a thorn in the flesh. However, it remained unhealed (2 Co 12:7). Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tm 4:20).

From the above we would conclude that miracles **were not for personal benefit**. One could also conclude that miracles were not for the benefit of the church. We would also conclude that **it was not the purpose of the early evangelists to go about healing**. God allowed

sufficient miracles to be worked in order to accomplish the purpose of confirming His messengers and spoken word. Once these purposes were completed, the miracles ceased. God intends that men today emphasize the Scriptures in evangelism, not supposed miraculous works of the Holy Spirit.

In this book I have emphasized that source of encouragement and faith which is emphasized in the Scriptures. That source is the Scriptures. It is to this source that I commend Bible students. We must endeavor to follow the inspired directions of the Spirit through the word of God.

We live in a time when men have grown dull of hearing what is right about matters according to Scripture. Men are moved away from God's commandments into the clutches of traditional religion. Men have sought for mysticism in order to discover some notion or nudge from the spirit world. This mysticism has often crept into the church. There is always the threat of drifting away from a book-chapter-and-verse understanding of Christianity to an emotional-oriented Christianity that is better felt than told. Has our ignorance of the Scriptures moved us away from the Book of God?

This is not to say that our faith must be cold of emotion and feelings. In fact, a faith that is void of emotion leaves one spiritually thirsty on the deserts of human rationalism. Our knowledge of the cross must move us to tears. Our knowledge of the empty tomb must move us to overwhelming joy. If there are no tears

and joy, then our knowledge of the Scriptures has not passed through our heads into our hearts.

Our emotions and beliefs must be based on a knowledge of God's word. God said of Israel, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget you children*" (Hs 4:6). Israel did not turn away from God by becoming less religious. The Israelites retained their religiosity. However, in their ignorance of the word of God, they create a religion after their own desires. This same thing happens today. When Christians become ignorant of the word of God, they created a "christianity" that conforms to their own desires. Those who have done this think that they are Christian. They have convinced themselves that they are following God. They feel good in their hearts and comfortable with their relationship with God. However, unless we continually investigate the word of God in order to substantiate our religiosity, we will go astray. We will create a religion after our own desires. Paul said that this would happen to those who do not love the truth. "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their*

own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tm 4:3,4; see 2 Th 2:10-12).

There is no fast, Spirit-inspired solution for spiritual growth and faith. We must search the word of God for spiritual strength and guidance. We must not make the New Testament a dead letter to churches by emphasizing a direct work and control of the Spirit in the lives of the believers to produce that which God expects of us. God's word is living and active (Hb 4:12). It is a light to our way in a dark world of confusion. Through His word, God seeks to lead us through the confusing maze of religious error to the victory of the gates of heaven. By depending on the direction of God's word we will move toward subjectivism, if we subject ourselves to our own inclinations we will lead ourselves after a religion of our own desires that is constructed to please our own misguided feelings. We must commit ourselves to cling to the word of God. Only by doing this will we guarantee that our direction in life is directed by God. If we trust in our own inventions, we are always insecure in our faith.

Chapter 18

Angels

One of the most intriguing studies of the Bible is in reference to the existence and work of angels. This subject has

stimulated the curiosity of Bible students for centuries. In today's religious world, there are enough misunderstandings

about angels to write a book. It is not my intention in this brief chapter to give any lengthy study of angels. Neither is it my intention to present to you countless speculations concerning the work and being of angels. I will simply seek to remain with what the Bible says on the subject, and thus, constantly remind you to do the same.

I must confess that I have little trust in the theologies of those who have claimed today that they have personally talked to angels. This is not to say that I do not believe that angels exist. It is not to say that angels are not at work today among the saints of God. From the previous studies you have made in this volume, you can understand why I believe the Bible teaches that God is not working in a manner today that appeals to our empirical perceptions. He seeks to build faith. I believe He desires that we walk by faith in order to develop our characters for eternal dwelling. Therefore, those who seek to walk by sight, and thus conjure up all sorts of fantasies concerning close encounters with the extraterrestrial, should not allow their experiences to be the judge of what the Bible says. It is not my purpose here to survey the personal experiences of those who claim to have personally encountered an angel. Our task here is simply to understand what the Bible says concerning this subject, and thus, understand what the Holy Spirit desires that we know about angels.

We must assume that the inspired Scriptures were meant to give us a definition of that which God feels is essential for our faith. Whatever our beliefs

may be, or the experiences we may have had, we must allow our understanding of this subject to be directed and defined by the word of God.

One of the first surprises that the Bible student learns about the study of angels is that there is so much to study in the Bible about angels. This is a surprise simply because there is usually little study among Bible students of this subject. Angels were God's messengers throughout history. And simply because we do not see angels today does not mean that they are not there. According to what the Bible says, they are there. Angels are present among us though it is not necessary to personally see or hear them (Hb 13:2). They are doing their intended work as the messengers of God. As with our study of the Holy Spirit, we do not have to understand everything concerning the being and work of angels in order to know that they are doing what God wants them to do. The limitations of our awareness of their presence or their work does not limit what they are doing. Since there is so much in the Bible about their ministry to those on earth, the logical assumption is that they are still here. They are still working for their Creator on behalf of the saints.

A. Hebrew and Greek words used in reference to angels:

Malakh is the common Hebrew word that is used in the Old Testament for angels. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit used the word *aggelos*. Both words refer to angels as supernatural beings who

were sent forth as messengers on behalf of God. The common definition of the word *aggelos* is “messenger.” Angels were thus messengers of God who worked to carry out the will of God (Jg 6:11-23; 13:3-5).

1. Old Testament definition of angels: Both the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated “angel” are also used in reference to men as messengers (1 Kg 19:2; Lk 7:24). When the plural form of *malakh* is used, reference is to human messengers. However, when the singular form of the word is used, reference is almost always to the divine messengers of God. The plural form of the word is used to refer to Haggai (Hg 1:13) and to the priest (Ml 2:7). It is even used to refer to the one who was to come as the messenger (John, the Immerser) in order to prepare the way for the Messiah (Ml 3:1).

In the Old Testament, there are other Hebrew words that refer to angels. They are translated in various forms by different translations. Angels are referred to as “holy ones” (Jb 5:1; Ps 89:5,7; Dn 8:13) and “watchers” (Dn 4:13,17,23). Collectively, they are referred to as “council” (Ps 89:7), congregation (Ps 82:1; 89:5) and “host” or “hosts.”

The phrase “hosts of heaven” is applied to angels because there are many angels (Dn 7:10). This host of angels is pictured to be standing at the right and left hand of God (1 Kg 22:19). They are there to continually praise the name of the Lord (Ps 103:21; 148:1ff).

2. New Testament definition of an-

gels: When the word *aggelos* is used in the New Testament in reference to angels, it is usually used in a qualifying phrase, as “the angels of heaven” (Mt 24:36) and “heavenly hosts” (Lk 2:13). References to angels in the New Testament also infer that there is an order or rank among angels. Paul refers to “Michael the archangel” (Jd 9). He also refers to the “voice of the archangel” (1 Th 4:16). It may be also that Paul includes angels when reference is made to “principalities,” “powers,” “thrones,” and “dominions.” At least Peter had angels in mind when he spoke of the kingship and lordship of Jesus over all things. He wrote that Jesus “*has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him*” (1 Pt 3:22). Though we may not understand all that is involved in the order or rank of angels, we do know that Jesus is now the ruling head over all angels. Therefore, what work angels now do, they do on behalf of Jesus who has authority over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-23).

B. The work of angels in the Old Testament:

There is more in the Old Testament concerning angels than is usually considered. In our efforts to study and understand the work of God through the patriarchs to preserve the seedline of the Christ, we often overlook the fact that God worked through His messengers on many occasions in order to bring about this work on earth which would conclude

in eternal heaven. Though the Old Testament does not focus on angels as a primary theology to be studied and understood, angels played a part in many unique situations where God was working in order to accomplish His plan. The presence of angels is mentioned as an ordinary manner by which God worked among men. He work predominately through angels before the revelation of the gospel. After the coming of Jesus He initially worked through the miraculous work of Jesus and the early disciples, and the preaching of the word. Since all revelation has now been given through the word of God (2 Tm 3:16,17), He does not need to work openly through angels, since all men have the opportunity to respond to Him through His revealed word.

1. Angels were present at the time of creation. When the earth came into existence, there were angels already in existence. God, the Son, was the creator of all things. Paul wrote, *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him”* (Cl 1:16). Angels would fall under the category of things **invisible**. Therefore, in the work of creation, God the Son created angels. In the category of angels would come Satan. He certainly was not created as the evil one we see in the garden of Eden. However, as an angel who rebelled against the authority of God, he is fallen. Nevertheless, his origin was originally in the creation of all things by

God the Son.

Since Satan and his angels gave up their proper habitation (2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6), and Satan was present at the time of the temptation in the garden of Eden, then we must assume that angels were in existence before creation. Their creation took place before the creation of the material world. Satan and his heavenly hosts evidently rebelled, and subsequently were cast down before the creation. Therefore, we would conclude that all angelic beings were in existence at the time of creation. The Psalmist refers to them in creation (Ps 148:2,5). Angels rejoiced over the creation of all things (Jb 38:7).

Some have conjectured that reference is made to angels in Genesis 6:1,2 when a statement is made concerning the “sons of God.” *“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that **the sons of God** saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose”* (Gn 6:1,2).

It is believed by some that in Genesis 6:1,2 Moses referred to women of this world marrying the “sons of God” who were angels. It is certainly unlikely that this is the interpretation of the passage. Since there is no gender with angels, and thus no sex of either male or female, then the passage would not refer to women of this world marrying angelic beings. The correct interpretation of the passage would be that those who were in covenant relationship with God (“sons of God”) were marrying unrighteous people (“daughters of men”). It was simply the

case of believers marrying unbelievers, and thus, the infection of wickedness increased on the face of the earth.

2. Little is known of the nature of angels. We know little of the character of angels from the Old Testament. Job 15:15 states that God does not put His trust in His holy ones (angels). Whether correct or not, Eliphaz stated in reference to angels, “*If He puts no trust in His servants, If He charges His angels with error ...*,” then certainly God will not put His trust in man (Jb 4:18). He would not put His trust in angels simply because angels receive their commission from God. The point is that angels work in obedience to the will of God. They have no indigenous authority. This would even be true of Satan. He has no indigenous power. He has only that which God allows him to exercise.

When angels appeared to men, they came in the form of men (Gn 18:2,16; Ez 9:2). There is a possible reference to angels who appeared as women in Zechariah 5. But there no references in the Bible to angels as having halos. The concept of winged angels possibly came from the “flying” angel of Revelation 14:6 and Zechariah 5 (See Dn 9:21). We must not allow our concept of angels to be determined by the fine artwork of those who have portrayed on canvas their understanding of these heavenly beings.

3. Angels carried out the will of God. On several occasions, angels are pictured as carrying out destructive consequences in the affairs of man. In this sense, they were angels of destruction (1 Sm 16:14; Ps 78:49). The warlike work of angels is

portrayed in the word “hosts” (Gn 32:1f; Ja 5:13-15; 1 Kg 22:19; 2 Kg 6:17). They stand ready to carry out the work of God against the enemies of God. They even stand ready to carry out God’s work in reference to the error of the saints. When David numbered Israel in violation of the will of God, an angel destroyed many in Israel with a pestilence. “*And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, ‘It is enough; now restrain your hand’*” (2 Sm 24:16). An angel was also sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 19:13). When the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, an angel of the Lord came in the night and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. “*And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead*” (2 Kg 19:35). In the prophetic visions of Ezekiel, Ezekiel heard the command that six angels were to destroy the wicked of the city of Jerusalem (Ez 9:1-7). From these few cases in the history that is recorded in the Old Testament, it is clearly evident that angels carried out destructive works in order to accomplish the goals that God was working in Israel.

Angels also functioned in the Old Testament era in order to carry out many different works, most of which were positive in their results. While on Mount Sinai, the Old Testament law was evidently given through angelic service (At 7:53;

Gl 3:19; Hb 2:2). An angel appeared to Jacob in a dream (Gn 28:12; 31:11). In order to divert Balaam, an angel once appeared to the donkey on which Balaam rode (Nm 22:22-41). There was also the angel who interpreted to Daniel a vision that was given to the prophet (Dn 10:5). Another angel also interpreted a vision that was given to Belshazzar (Dn 7:16). On other occasions, Gabriel interpreted visions and dreams for Daniel (Dn 8:15ff; 9:21).

In the book of Daniel reference is also made to Michael who is described as “one of the chief princes,” “the great prince who stands for the children of your people,” and “your prince” (Dn 10:13,21;12:1). Reference is made to the “prince (commander) of the host” of God in Joshua 5:14. This is undoubtedly a reference to Michael. In some way, therefore, he functions as the “prince” of angels in his relationship with other angels.

4. *The “Angel of God” works on behalf of God.* On several occasions, there appeared to man the “angel of the Lord,” or “angel of God.” Some biblical interpreters have assumed that this angel was the Son of God before His incarnation. In fact, some translations capitalize the word “angel” when used in various contexts in order to infer this interpretation. However, it is doubtful that such is true simply because this angel worked on behalf of God. The angel of the Lord appeared on special occasions in order to carry out specific tasks in reference to God. Because the Bible defines the work of the angel of the Lord as being the direct work of the Lord, the

angel of the Lord is figuratively placed in the position of the Lord Himself. It is because of this that many assume that the angel of the Lord is a reference to God the Son.

Several contexts in the Old Testament mention the special work of the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar in the desert (Gn 16:7), to Abraham when Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 18), and to prevent the sacrifice by Abraham of his son Isaac (Gn 22). Abraham promised that Eliezer would go in the protection of this angel (Gn 24). Later, the angel appeared to Jacob (Gn 31), and Jacob wrestled with the angel of God (Gn 32:24ff). Jacob even spoke of the angel and God as the same (Gn 48:15ff). The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3; At 7:30). He appeared to Joshua (Ja 5:13 - 6:2). He also appeared to Gideon (Jg 6:11ff).

Israel was commanded to obey the angel that God sent before them to lead them out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 23:20ff). On this occasion, God had empowered the angel with His authority. If Israel disobeyed the angel, they would be disobeying God. In this sense, therefore, the angel stood for God because God had invested his authority within this angel in order to lead Israel. We should not confuse the angel with God, and thus refer to him with the nature of God or as being God.

In Exodus 32:34 - 33:17 Moses interceded for the nation of Israel when they sinned against God. God instructed Moses that His angel would go before

him to lead Israel (Ex 32:34; 33:2). God then said that He would not go up with Moses. *“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiffnecked people”* (Ex 33:3). In the context of the incident, therefore, there is a distinction made between God and the angel of God.

It is thus difficult to determine who the special “angel of the Lord” is in the Old Testament. My conclusion would simply be that God could use a special angel to carry out His work, and in so designating this special angel, we would view him as different than other angels. Since this angel of the Lord worked so obediently on behalf of God in special situations, we could only conclude that the angel of the Lord was a special angel who was chosen to accomplish specific works for God.

C. Angels in the New Testament:

Angels in the New Testament are associated with beginnings. We see their appearance when the Son of God is born into the world. We see their appearance when Jesus, the Son of God, begins His ministry. And finally, we see the special work of angels in the beginning of the church. We would conclude, therefore, that God’s sending of angels was unique in the first century in His work to begin this dispensation of His work on earth. Since the focus of their work was to begin this dispensation of God’s work among men, then we would conclude that the manner or reasons for which they

worked would not continue as in the beginning.

1. Angels worked at the beginning of the incarnation. The work of one prominent angel was significant at the time of the incarnation of Jesus. An angel, possibly Gabriel, appeared three times to Joseph in circumstances surrounding the birth and early life of the baby Jesus (Mt 1:20; 2:13,19). In reference to the birth and ministry of John the Immerser, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias (Lk 1:8-20). The angel of the Lord appeared to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and stated of Jesus, *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son. And you will call His name JESUS”* (Lk 1:30,31). Angels also appeared before shepherds who were in their fields at the time of Jesus’ birth (Lk 2:8-14). In fact, when the angel had announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, *“then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God ...”* (Lk 2:13).

2. Angels worked during the beginning and ending of Jesus’ ministry. Angels were involved in the ministry of Jesus when He prepared Himself for the work of the ministry. After Jesus had fasted for forty days, *“behold, angels came and ministered to Him”* (Mt 4:11). They came in order to minister to His physical needs. Immediately before His crucifixion, they came to strengthen His soul. In the Garden of Gethsemane *“an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him”* (Lk 22:43).

There was a traditional belief in

Jerusalem concerning the pool of Bethesda that an angel stirred the waters of the pool. It was supposed that an angel troubled the waters of the pool of Bethesda, and subsequently offered healing to the one who first entered the water when it was troubled. This statement is recorded in John 5:4 in older texts of the New Testament. However, because of the lack of manuscript evidence, this reading has been left out of more recent text. It was a reading that was not a part of the original autograph, but was probably inserted into the text from a marginal statement that was made by some scribe who simply wanted people to know what the belief in Jerusalem was concerning the troubling of the pool of Bethesda.

There were angels present at the time of Jesus' resurrection. At the end of Jesus' existence on earth, and after the crucifixion and three days in the tomb, an angel came and rolled away the stone from the tomb of Jesus (Mt 28:2). When certain women came to the tomb on this glorious Sunday morning, there were angels who reported the resurrection to the women (Lk 24:23).

Keep in mind that throughout the ministry of Jesus, angels did not assume the work of Jesus. They did not in any way serve as messengers to the unbelieving public in order to preach the gospel. Gabriel announced to Mary the good news of her pregnancy. However, the focus of the announcement was her pregnancy, not the preaching of the gospel. This same indirect function of angels happened in reference to the unbeliev-

ing world. This is witnessed in the work of angels at the time of the early beginnings of the church.

3. Angels worked at the beginning of the church with special people who worked for God. When the church was first established, unique events transpired as a result of the work of angels. When the apostles were imprisoned, an angel opened the doors of the prison for the apostles and instructed them to go and preach in the temple (At 5:19). Because God wanted the Ethiopian eunuch as a special evangelist to Africa, an angel was sent to Philip in order to inform Philip that the eunuch was on his way back to Africa (At 8:26). When God sought to inform the church that He wanted the gospel preached specifically to the Gentile nations, He sent an angel to Cornelius, the one who would be the example of Gentile obedience (At 10:3). An angel appeared to Peter while he was in Herod's prison, awaiting execution by Herod (At 12:7). An angel also smote Herod for his arrogant behavior, and thus, he was eaten with worms (At 12:23). An angel also appeared to Paul in a dream in order to comfort him on his journey as a prisoner to Rome (At 27:23).

In all the above cases of the appearance of angels, angels worked in unique situations in order to bring about the will of God. They were not sent to be preachers of the gospel to the unbelievers. They were not sent as teachers to the saved. They were sent as special envoys of God in times of crisis for the comfort of those who were the messengers of God to the world.

D. The work of angels with the early believers:

Sprinkled throughout the New Testament are several references to angels, as well as teachings concerning angels. What we would learn from discussions in the New Testament concerning the subject of angels is the fact that belief in angels played a significant role in the theology of the early believers.

1. Teaching of angels in the gospel records: During His ministry, Jesus spoke of the angels of heaven (Mt 22:30), and the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41). There were thus these two realms in which there were angels. There were angels who worked on behalf of God for the sake of the disciples. There were also angels who were associated with Satan.

a. The angels of heaven: Jesus declared that the angels of heaven were holy (Mk 8:38). Though they are intellectual beings, they are not omniscient; they do not know the coming of the Lord (Mt 24:36). They are beings without sex, and thus without sexual desires (Mt 22:30). In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus taught that angels were present at the time of the death of Lazarus (Lk 16:22). From this we would assume that at the point of death of the righteous, there are angels present, though we cannot perceive their presence through the senses. They are there to carry away our spirits to Abraham's bosom. Jesus said that twelve legions of angels could have been sent to deliver

Him from the hands of His enemies (Mt 26:53). Angels are also pictured as coming with the Lord in judgment, both in time and at the end of time (Mt 25:31). They come in order to aid in the separation of the good and bad (Mt 13:41,49).

In reference to the spiritual behavior of man, angels rejoice when just one sinner repents (Lk 15:10; see 1 Co 4:9; Ep 3:10; 1 Pt 1:12). In Luke 12:8 Jesus said, *"Also I say to you, whoever will confess Me before men, him will the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God."* In this statement, Jesus wants us to understand that the angels are sincerely interested in our repentance. They seek that we repent and join them in eternity.

There is little information in the Bible concerning "guardian angels." In a single statement that is recorded in the Bible, there is an indication that there is before God a "guardian angel." Jesus said, *"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven"* (Mt 18:10). Since this is the only place where the concept of guardian angels is mentioned in the Bible, it would be a weak argument to assume that this is a central theology of Christian belief. If the concept is true, keep in mind that the angels about which Jesus spoke, are "in heaven." Has God assigned an angel to the "little ones"? Are the little ones represented before God with the presence of an angel? There is certainly no harm in this belief. It is an area in which one would walk by faith. Whether the Holy Spirit or angels, we would conclude from

a summary of New Testament statements that God is present and working in the lives of His saints. He is there for aid. In this context of teaching concerning angels, the Hebrew writer made the statement in reference to angels, “*Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation?*” (Hb 1:14). The Hebrew writer assumed that we would answer the question, “Yes!”

Another statement that enlightens us concerning the behavior of angels is the statement of Jesus in Matthew 6:10. “*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” Obedience to the will of God is carried out in heaven by those who dwell in heavenly places. Angels dwell in heavenly places, and thus, angels are obedient to the will of God in heaven. Those angels who are in the presence of God are behaving in obedience to the will of God. This indicates that in some way that angels have free-moral choice in reference to obedience to the will of God. They are not robots. Free-moral choice indicates that they have the choice of obeying the will of God or disobeying. Those angels who are “in heaven,” therefore, are an example of obedience to the will of God. We should pray that this obedience prevail throughout the world.

b. The Devil’s angels: Throughout the Scriptures there is also revelation concerning the fall of angelic beings (See Jb 4:18; Ez 28:12-19; Mt 25:41; 2 Pt 2:4; Rv 12:9). Dwelling in the heavenly realm of existence are also the fallen angels; those who have been

cast down. Peter wrote that, “... *God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to pits of darkness and reserved them for judgment*” (2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6). These are those Jesus will consign to eternal hell at the end of time (Mt 25:41). The fact that some angels in the past rebelled against the will of God, assumes the fact that angels are free-moral beings who have the opportunity to choose in reference to the will of God.

Since all things have been created by God the Son (Cl 1:16), then we must conclude that the Son created all angels. However, we must not conclude that Satan was created evil. All that God created was good. Nevertheless, since angels, including Satan, were created with the freedom to make choices, Satan and some angels gave up their proper dwelling, and thus, rebelled against God. They were subsequently cast down from their dwelling in the presence of God. What Jesus seems to indicate in the Matthew 25:41 statement is the fact that destruction is waiting for these rebellious angels, including their leader, Satan. Jesus will eventually say to all the wicked, “*Depart from Me you cursed into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.*”

2. Teaching of angels in the epistles:

Throughout the writings of the New Testament, several statements have been made concerning angels. However, many of the statements are made with little explanation. Why the Holy Spirit left us with little explanation is not difficult to understand. Our primary emphasis as

Christians is to be on Jesus, not the Holy Spirit or angels. The New Testament writers were inspired to mention angels in different contexts, but at the same time, not to dwell on the subject of angels in order that our focus as Christians not be diverted from the central theme of Jesus. For this reason, therefore, the Holy Spirit left us with our imagination concerning the presence of angels in our lives.

Another thought for why the Holy Spirit left us with little explanation is in the fact that He wanted us to assume that God's normal work with men throughout history needs no further explanation. As we study the work of angels throughout the history of man in the Bible, God assumes that we will draw the conclusion that He has not parked His angels in a situation of inactivity. They have not gone into retirement. They continue to work on behalf of the saints, though our perception of them is not through our senses. Though they are not perceived, we must not conclude that they are inactive. What the Holy Spirit wants us to conclude is that God continues to work through angels on special occasions. They are there, though just beyond our senses.

In the Colossian epistle Paul attacked the Colossian tendency to worship angels. *"Let no man disqualify you of your reward by delighting in false humility and the worship of angels ..."* (Cl 2:18). When John fell down before an angel of God during the revelations of the book of Revelation, the angel said to him, ***"Do not do that, for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and***

of those who keep the sayings of this book. Worship God" (Rv 22:8,9). From Paul's admonition in Colossians 2:18 and the event of John falling down before an angel who rebuked him for doing such, we would conclude that angels are not to be worshiped. Angels themselves understand that worship is to be directed only toward God. If they accept worship, then they are in danger of being cast down to darkness to await the destruction of the final day (2 Pt 2:4).

Jesus now has authority over all angelic beings. He *"has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him"* (1 Pt 3:22). Since Jesus is our King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15), then all those who are of His kingdom reign are empowered with Him. This seems to be what Paul indicated in 1 Corinthians 6:3 when he mentioned that saints will judge angels (See Rm 5:17). It is for this reason that angels watch in reference to the obedience of the saints. Some sisters in the Corinthian church were uncovering their heads as a show of disrespect for authority. Since angels are aware of the behavior of the saints, Paul exhorted that the sisters maintain their positions of submission for the sake of the angels (1 Co 11:10). He did not want those who had aligned themselves with Jesus as their King and Lord to arrogantly rebel against the authority of God. In this sense, therefore, Paul could have been exhorting the women of Corinth to continually manifest a spirit of obedience to the will of God for the sake of angels. The saints,

therefore, must give an example of obedience even to angels.

Angels are often mentioned in the manifestation of visions that came to John the apostle. Throughout the book of Revelation we are constantly reminded that angels played a key role in the Holy Spirit's work to bring the visions to John. It is probably a personification that the word "angel" is used in reference to there being an angel of each of the seven churches of Asia (Rv 1:20). Therefore, we do not need to conclude that God assigns an angel to every established church throughout the world. However, in the book of Revelation, John mentions the "angel of the waters" (Rv 16:5), the angel that "has power over fire" (Rv 14:18; see 7:1; 19:17), and the "angel of the abyss" (Rv 9:11). Mention is also made that there was war in the spiritual realm between Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angelic beings (Rv 12). The result of this war was that Satan was cast down. Whether or not this is a picture of what actually happened before the creation, we are not told. Nevertheless, we could assume that John was given a vision of what actually happened before the creation to be used as an illustration of what happened in the spiritual realm at the cross of Jesus.

In Jewish theology unto the coming of Jesus, there was a development of teaching concerning the existence and work of angels. Since there was a lack of an intercessory being who would function as Jesus eventually would, the Jews sought for mediators between God and

man. This urge for mediators or intercessors led to concerted effort on the part of Jewish theologians to exalt the place and work of angels between God and man. This exaltation of angels is seen in the first arguments of the Hebrew writer in order to avert the apostasy of some back to Judaism. In the first two chapters of Hebrews, the writer contrasted the place and being of Jesus in reference to that of angels. Throughout Hebrews 1 & 2, the writer affirmed the proposition that was set forth in the question, "*But to which of the angels did He ever say, 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool'?*" (Hb 1:13).

Though our focus as Christians is to be on Jesus, this does not set aside our beliefs, and often speculations, concerning the presence and work of angels in our lives. Angels are still rejoicing over the repentance of sinners. Angels are still working as ministering spirits for the sake of those who will inherit eternal salvation. They are still before the throne of God, giving glory to God.

We are limited to a small empirical world that is opened to us through our senses. However, there is a world beyond our senses that is filled with the activity of God. In this spiritual realm are angels who go about in order to service the needs of the saints. We can speculate concerning the ministry of angels. We can imagine their presence and being. However, the limitations of our senses frustrates us from visually encountering these heavenly beings. We even say this with caution, since the Hebrew writer indicated that some have enter-

tained angels without their knowledge thereof. “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels” (Hb 13:2).

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