

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

We need to emphasize something very strongly at the start.
The title of this video series is “Growing in Grace.”
We can’t say it too strongly: Most of the religion in the world is about what man must do for God.
GRACE is about what God has done for man!

You can see it in the Book of Ephesians in the New Testament. There are six chapters in Ephesians. In the first three chapters, God does not ask the believer to do one single thing. It is only when we come to chapter four that God gives the believer something he needs to do.

That’s because in Grace, God builds the believer up **FIRST**, by telling us who we now are (we are New Creatures!) and all He has done **FOR** us **IN CHRIST**. Only then, when we know who we are, and what **HE** has done **FOR** us, and all that is ours **IN CHRIST**, does God ask us to **DO**.

Are you struggling because your focus is on what **YOU** must “**DO?**”

Remember: Grace **BEGINS** with what **JESUS** cried out on the Cross: “**IT IS DONE!**”

Please watch this first –

If you are a new believer, let me first *warmly* welcome you to the family of God!

You're watching these videos now because you made a decision. Someone shared with you the message we call "the Gospel;" the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ. You believed that Good News, and placed your trust in God's Only-begotten Son, Jesus. You trusted that the work He finished on the Cross has satisfied God, the Father, as payment for your sins. By faith, you accepted God's Grace and you were born again as a child of God.

When you became a Christian, you understood and accepted *four crucial truths*:

One, you realized God is real and He is the awesome Creator of the Universe. He is a God of Love and mercy, but He is also righteous and holy. He can't accept sin in His Presence.

Two, you saw yourself the way God saw you: a guilty sinner with nothing at all to excuse you from God's righteous judgment. You realized your sins made you an enemy of God, and cut you off from the Life that is in Him. And you realized you were going to go to Hell forever for your sins, unless something could be done to save you.

Three, you learned from the Bible there was nothing at all you could do to save yourself. However, Jesus came as God's own Son in the flesh of a man. Because He loves you, Jesus allowed wicked men to kill Him on the Cross, so that He could die *in your place*, and pay in full the penalty for your sins. But then He rose from the dead to show complete victory over sin and death, and so He could give us the free gift of His Life and make us truly *alive*.

Four, you learned that God required an answer from you: you needed to trust in Christ alone and the work He finished on the Cross to be sufficient payment for your sins. You made that choice. You believed the Truth; you put your trust in Jesus and immediately received forgiveness of sins and God's free gift of eternal life.

These videos are about the Gospel message. God used this powerful message to save you, but the Good News doesn't end there. It's wonderful that you are saved from Hell and now you will go to Heaven! But there is

much more to the Gospel than that! Many, many wonderful things happened to you because of your new birth and you will never stop learning about them!

The time you have here on earth is like money that you invest for your future. How well you invest money depends on how much you know about things like stocks and bonds. Likewise, how well you invest the years you have here on earth depends on how well you learn these truths and believe them and live by them. You will be so glad you lived your life in a way that has a positive impact on eternity!

We will keep referring to parts of the Gospel message in this series. It is a powerful, life-changing message that will never wear out. Some misunderstand the Gospel, some preach false gospels; some try to change its message or water it down and weaken it. We ought to consider the Gospel of Christ our most precious treasure and safeguard it with our lives. And we ought to study it diligently and share it with others freely.

The Gospel is not about *what you must do for God*. Rather, it's all about what *God has done for you* for His own Name's sake. What you and I must do to win God's approval is the concern of "religion." What God has done and will do for you is the message of Grace.

You're watching these videos because someone loved Jesus and cared about *you* enough to introduce you to some essential truths that can make an eternal difference to you as a child of God.

You're watching these videos because God has put the desire in you to learn of Him and walk with Him and bring glory to Him in your life.

No book and no videos can take the place of the Bible. That is truly the one Book you need above all others. The purpose of this video-book is to point you to that one, and help you get the greatest benefit from it.

As we record these videos, we are praying that God might use our labors to build you up in our "most holy faith." We hope the teaching is very clear, and will reward you richly for the time and effort you put into this study. May it help you to "*taste and see that the Lord is good.*" And, by God's abundant Grace, may you "*grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.*"

"To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

Helpful Hints for Using this Series

1. These lessons were originally made for new believers; people who had recently trusted in Christ for salvation. But you don't have to be a new believer to benefit from this series. People who have been Christians for years say they have been blessed by these teachings. If you are young in the Lord, I recommend you go through the lessons with a "discipler:" a more mature Christian who can help explain these things and lead you on to grow in Christ.
2. You may want to cover one chapter or lesson each week, or you and your discipler may cover more or less each week. It depends on your own desire and how well you are understanding the material.
3. As you watch each video-lesson, keep your Bible beside you. When a scripture verse is referred to, take the time to stop and look up each one in your Bible as you follow along. Man's thoughts or conclusions don't have the real power to change you. The power from Heaven to change men is in the Bible; God's holy, inspired Word! God says it is His Word that is "alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword."
4. Try to keep a notebook and pen or pencil beside you, as well. You're going to have many questions as you begin to explore your Christian faith! Write them down, so you can ask your discipler when you meet, or try to get answers as you study on your own. It may be important to answer some of these questions as soon as possible. Others may have to wait until later. Either way, you may be glad you wrote them down, because it's so easy to forget. Don't be surprised if your discipler doesn't know all the answers, either. Some of the questions you have may be on his or her mind, as well, and you can learn and grow together. The Christian never stops learning about his Lord, no matter how long he has been a Christian!

5. Try to stick with this series, and keep meeting regularly with your discipler until you've finished it. Things will often come up that may keep you from meeting, if you let them; try to stay firm in your commitment. Sometimes, the questions you have may lead you to set aside these studies for a while to study out a particular subject. That is fine, but it is important that you come to understand the truths in this series, so don't get too sidetracked. You'll be glad you finished what you started.

6. *It's extremely important you accompany your study with prayer!* Some of the truths in this book are things that no man can teach you. *Only the Holy Spirit can reveal some of these truths to a heart that God has made ready to receive them!* For us to see, GOD has to turn the lights on!

God wants you to learn and grow even more than *you*, yourself. You can count on Him to give you the ability to understand, and the strength and energy to study these truths, even when all the circumstances seem to work against you! *PRAY* for understanding, and for the time, endurance, and even the desire to diligently work through these lessons!

7. Don't ever be discouraged if you are not making progress quickly. God knows you, and He knows how much you are able to absorb at one time. He is working from the perspective of eternity, and He never gets tired of teaching you new things, or repeating the old when necessary. You can trust Him in ALL things, even in the matter of your growth as a Christian.

Chapter One: The Bible

God's Word is the Believer's Nourishment

*“As newborn babes, crave the pure milk of the Word,
so that you may grow by it.” – I Peter 2:2*

1 Peter 2:2

Very soon after a baby is born, Mom and Dad discover an important truth – their new baby gets really hungry! And when baby gets hungry, he uses his whole body to tell you he's got to have milk right now! As a good parent, you will do whatever you can to give the best food to that hungry baby so he will be healthy and happy.

God says every Christian needs to have that same strong hunger for the Word of God that a newborn baby has for his mother's milk, because it is His Word that nourishes us so that we can grow to be healthy and strong.

When we say “the Word of God,” we mean the Bible; the words God gave to men in a holy Book. Another word is “the scriptures,” which means sacred writings.

It's important to know I Peter 2:2 was not written only for brand new Christians or “babes in Christ.” It is telling ALL Christians we ALWAYS need to have the same hunger for God's Word that a newborn baby has for his milk! It doesn't matter how long we've been believers. Just as we must have food every day, we ALL need God's Word continuously through all of our Christian lives.

Consider what Jesus said when Satan tempted Him:

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from
God.” – Matthew 4:4*

Matthew 4:4

It's sad that many Christians do not take the time to read their Bibles as they should. The Bible is God's “love letter” to you from His very heart. When you trusted in Jesus, you entered into an intimate relationship with Him. That involves a relationship also with His precious Word that is meant to last your whole life!

Long ago, the prophet Hosea wrote these sad words to Israel, God's “chosen people:”

“I have written to him (Israel) the great things of my law; but they were regarded as a strange thing.” – Hosea 8:12

Hosea 8:12

“The great things of my law” means all the precious and important things God gave to Israel in His great Book, the Bible. The people of Israel rejected God’s Word as if it came from some foreign country; something they had no real connection with. They did not want to get familiar with His Book but lived as if it had nothing to do with them.

The right view is to regard God’s Word as the most precious treasure that God ever gave to us, aside from His own Son. Those who treat the Bible this way will get God’s greatest benefits from it. One such man was David, who wrote the first Psalm in the Book of Psalms:

“Blessed is the man . . . whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law he meditates day and night; And he will be like a tree planted by rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also will not wither, and whatever he does will prosper.” – Psalm 1:1-3

Psalm 1:1-3

Again, the word “law” can mean the 10 commandments and all the rules Moses gave to Israel, but here it means *all* of God’s Word; the Holy Scriptures. The word “blessed” means this person is in a very good situation and can take great joy in this. This person will “prosper:” he will thrive and be successful; he will be strong and fruitful. This is a *spiritual* prosperity. It is not a promise that we will be rich and popular or healthy and happy if we read and meditate on our Bibles!

Here are a few important things you should know about your Bible:

First, it is right to call the Bible “God’s Word,” because the Bible is “inspired.” It is like God “breathed” the words right into the minds of certain men, and these men wrote down the words God chose as Holy Scripture. God gave His apostles and prophets the very words He wanted them to write.

The Bible is not like any other book you will ever read. With most books, you will probably never get the chance to meet and chat with the person who wrote that book. But with the Bible, every time you open it to read it is an opportunity to meet with the Author, personally, and talk over what you are reading! God really wants to speak to *you* through His Word! In

fact, the very same Spirit who gave God's words to men lives inside of every Christian, and will help you to *understand* what you read.

Therefore, when you read the Bible, it is like God is standing right in front of you, signing to you, personally, the things He wants to say to you!

Because the words of the Bible came from God, and were not made up by men, we say the Bible is "infallible." That means you can always depend on it to tell the truth. It will not lead you astray. The Bible is completely trustworthy and has authority from God in all that it says. God can't lie, and He never makes mistakes! Therefore, the Book that He gave us is a faithful record of His words that you can trust perfectly.

Because the Bible comes from God and is completely trustworthy, it is our *authority* for what we believe and for living our lives. It contains the truths by which we can know we are going to heaven, and on which we build our lives every day as His children. We always turn to our Bibles, because it is the Word God has given us to save us from the tragedy of a wasted or ruined life, and to lead us on to full growth and spiritual victory.

There is no other infallible authority we should turn to. Every other teaching should be tested according to this one reliable standard of Truth.

The greatest thing about the Word of God is it is all about the Son of God! Jesus said, "*Search the scriptures . . . for they testify OF ME*". The way we come to KNOW Christ is through the scriptures. And the Bible tells us of the great spiritual riches God has for believers through sharing in Christ's life.

John 5:39

You should start *now* to read and study God's great "love letter" to you. You won't understand everything you read at first. But you will understand enough to be excited as you enter into this wonderful relationship with God through His Book.

Depend on Him to speak to you, and *expect* Him to speak to you through His Word. Don't expect to be a full-grown man or woman of God in one day, or one month, or even a year. But now is the time to cry out to God for His nourishing food and begin to feast, feast, *feast!*

Study and Review (Chapter One) –

(Think about these questions in light of the chapter we just finished. After you have thought about them, discuss them with others to arrive at the answers together).

1. In what way is the Bible like food in I Peter 2:2 and Matthew 4:4?

2. What do you think it means to have a “relationship” with the Bible (think of what we read in Hosea 8:12 and Psalm 1:1-3)

3. What do these words mean: “inspired;” “infallible;” “authority”?

4. Do you believe you can trust the Bible as the guide for your life? Why or why not?

5. Look at these verses and tell what each one means to you: Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:105; II Timothy 3:16-17

We recommend you read the Bible in a faithful translation every day. It may be hard to understand at first, but God gave these words, and He can help you understand, if you come to Him and ask Him to open your eyes (Psalm 119:18). Pick a verse or two that seem especially important and meditate on them (*think about them over and over*) as you go about your day. God will bless you.

Chapter Two: *FAITH* Takes Hold of the Word of God

There is one thing each believer *must* add to God's Word – FAITH!

This is what the Bible teaches in Hebrews 4:2: “*The Word that was preached did not profit them, as it was not blended with faith in them that heard it.*”

Hebrews 4:2

God had a wonderful plan for the people of Israel after He saved them out of slavery in Egypt. He gave them a rich and fruitful land and promised them many wonderful blessings, but they did not add faith to His promises. The results were tragic. A whole generation lost *everything* God wanted to give them in the Promised Land. Almost all of them died in shame in the wilderness.

God also tells us in Hebrews, “*without faith, it is impossible to please Him*”. It's clear that *faith* is absolutely essential to living the Christian life. Many more statements throughout the Bible confirm that faith is the very essence of Christianity. Shouldn't we learn all we can about such an important subject?

Hebrews 11:6

What is faith? Faith takes God at His Word, and relies on Him to do what He has promised. Someone said “faith is the arm of the heart that reaches out and grabs hold of God's provision.” In the Bible, God tells us Who He is, all that He's done for us, and what He *will* do, *if we put our FAITH in Him*. It's our great privilege to study, study, study our Bibles to learn all the wonderful things God gives us. Then, it's OUR responsibility to *believe* Him and *trust* Him to fulfill His promises in our lives.

It is impossible to be saved without faith. We enter into salvation **ONLY** by believing that Jesus Christ, God's Holy Son, died for our sins, and rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the scriptures. The Bible says Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but the only people who will go to Heaven are the ones who personally place their faith in Him as Savior.

John 3:18;
3:36

It's also impossible to *grow* without faith. We live the Christian life the same way we started it. This is so important to know! People often think that

while we have to trust in God to do the work to save us, we have to rely on our own strength from now on to *live* the Christian life.

But the Bible says, “*The same way you received the Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.*” We can only receive Christ *by grace through faith*. We “walk in Him” (live our Christian lives) the very same way – *by grace through faith*.

Colossians 2:6

This means *God* provides all the power we need, and we are to cling to the power God provides *by faith*, “the arm of our heart.” We find encouragement and hope in the truths of His Word and depend on HIS strength to live the way He wants us to live.

I find I still commit sins, even after I became a Christian. But the Bible tells us all our sins are forgiven at the moment we are saved, and that includes even the sins we *will* commit in the future! If I believe this, I can enjoy such great peace. But if I don’t believe it, I may live with terrible guilt and fear of punishment, even though God says He is at peace with me.

Colossians 2:13

God also tells me He knows everything that happens in my life and He is in control. It comforts me to know that even in the most difficult trials, He cares deeply for me, and He will never abandon me. He has a great purpose for my life, and He won’t let anything happen to me that He can’t use to help accomplish that good purpose! Because of this, God tells me to “*give thanks in all things.*” How could I ever do that if I did not believe these promises?

God also tells me to “reckon myself *dead*” to sin’s power! We still experience powerful urgings to sin after we become Christians. But God says that Christ died to sin. And because I am *in Christ*, I, too, have died to its power over me. And He says His Holy Spirit lives in me, and I can trust the Holy Spirit in me to be my *power* to live a holy life. But I only benefit from these things if I add FAITH! (Don’t worry – these ideas can be a lot to take in, but we’ll explain more later)

Romans 6:1-11

It’s especially hard to believe the Bible when what I see and feel and experience doesn’t line up with what the Bible teaches. I sure don’t *feel* “dead to sin!” And it doesn’t *seem* like I’m dead to sin if I just sinned in the last few minutes! But the Bible says, “*We walk by faith, **not** by sight.*” That means even if what I see and feel seems to contradict the Word of God, *I should still believe WHAT GOD SAYS IN HIS WORD!*

2 Corinthians
5:7

We give great honor to a friend when we believe in them even if the evidence seems stacked against them. Likewise, we give God great honor when we trust Him enough to believe in these amazing truths when His Word is the *only* evidence we have!

Naturally, we want to put our faith in something we know is rock solid. We want “hard evidence” for what we believe. God says in Hebrews 11:1 that faith *gives* these invisible truths that firmness; it gives them “substance” in my soul, so I can be convinced they are true and anchor my life to them.

Hebrews 11:1

A purple shirt is still purple whether I see it or not. But I can only *enjoy* the color of that shirt if I open my eyes and look at it. The truths of God’s Word are as real as anything we see or feel, whether I believe or not. But **I** won’t get the benefit from them if I don’t see them through eyes of faith. Faith is like spiritual “sight.” Faith doesn’t *make* things real that are *not* real, but it makes real things *real* TO ME so I can live boldly by them.

True faith is not a “blind leap” into the unknown. It does not mean we will make something happen by *visualizing* it or pretending hard enough. Our faith must be based on the firm, eternal facts of God’s Word. Otherwise, it is not true faith; it is fantasy.

You see, our *faith* is only powerful because we put our faith in a powerful God. It would be crazy to buy a broken-down old lawnmower with no blades and think if I just have faith I can mow the lawn in front of the White House. Far better to buy a good, working lawnmower, make sure that the blades are intact, and put gas in it! Only then does it make sense to rely on my lawnmower to do the job.

True faith doesn’t depend on inner feelings or wishful thinking. True faith deals with **certainty** – the certainty that God always keeps His Word and can be trusted absolutely!

When I believe what God says is true and put my trust in Him, I am exercising faith – *and the results will be a supernatural life!*

Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica, “*For this reason, we thank God non-stop, because, when you received the Word of God, you didn’t accept it as the word of men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which works effectively also in you that BELIEVE*” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

1 Thessalonians
2:13

God's Word is full of amazing blessings for anyone to enjoy, if they will only *read* their Bibles and *add faith!* Faith takes what God says is true and makes it mine, personally, so I can now receive the full benefit that He offers.

Faith is me adding my "Amen!" when God says, "This is TRUTH!"

A famous Christian writer said, "Faith is simply placing your trust in the truthfulness of One Who can never lie!"

Study and Review (Chapter Two) –

1. Read Hebrews 3:7 through 4:2. What was the sad result for the Israelites who did not receive God’s Word with faith?

2. Can you explain why some people call faith “the arm of the heart?” Use Bible verses in your answer, if you can think of any.

3. What exactly did you “do” to be saved? What is the most important thing you need to do to live the Christian life?

4. Give two examples of how faith can work in the life of a Christian. You can use examples you find in the chapter, or you can come up with some examples of your own.

5. What does it mean when we say, “faith is only powerful when we put our faith in a powerful object?” What IS the powerful object of our faith as Christians?

Chapter Three: *You are a New Creation!*

When you believed the good news about Jesus Christ, God saved you from eternal Hell, and guaranteed you eternity in Heaven. And that is beyond wonderful! But too many Christians do not understand that so much MORE happened to them than that!

2 Corinthians
5:17

God's Word says you were "born again." God, the Creator, says you were RE-created as "a new creature" *in Christ*.

This is not just fancy talk; it is full of meaning. The whole race that came from Adam is infected by sin, so God utterly condemned Adam's race and started a *new* race with a new man; JESUS. God removed you from Adam's race through death, and recreated you in this new race. The beginning and head of that new race is Jesus. The Bible calls Jesus "*the last Adam*," "*the second man*," and "*the beginning of the Creation of God*."

1 Corinthians
15:45, 47

You were born into this world as a child of Adam, *the "old" man*. People often say children look like one or both of their parents. As Adam's descendant, you inherited the traits of Adam's family; you have his family resemblance.

When someone does something terrible, people sometimes say, "Well, you know, we're all the same cookie dough." They mean anyone of us is capable of doing the same terrible things, because we are all made of the same stuff inside; in the right situation, any one of us can behave badly.

Think of Adam's race as a big batch of cookie dough. It has the same ingredients all through the whole batch. Each cookie is a small lump of that same cookie dough; it has its own size and shape, but it looks and tastes like any other cookie from that batch, because it is made of the same ingredients.

Before you were saved, you were a lump of the Adamic cookie dough.

Adam was created to reveal the image of God in this world. God gave him a body, so he could interact with the world around him. He made him a soul, so he had a self and was self-aware; He gave him a spirit, so he could interact with God.

When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he died, just as God said he would. No, his *body* didn't die that day, but his *spirit* did die. His spirit still existed, but now it was cut off from God's Spirit. Adam "*died*" in his relationship with God, the source of *spiritual life*.

When his spirit died, God said Adam became "***flesh.***" He was now "fallen;" now he was not the pure, innocent creature God created him to be, and he was no longer able to truly show forth the image of God. He was ruled by selfish desires and the sensual drives of his body, just like animals. Adam now had in himself the root for every filthy form of sin. The Adamic "cookie dough" became rotten and disgusting, because it was sinful.

Genesis 6:3

Adam and Eve gave birth to children like themselves. We all begin our lives bearing Adam's fallen image and sharing his judgment. This is because Adam was the *representative* man for the whole human race. And everyone of us was *in Adam* the day he sinned in the Garden of Eden.

In God's view, the whole human race is "in Adam." Because He sees us in Adam, we, too, are guilty of Adam's sin, and we get Adam's condemnation. Each one of us has also committed plenty of our own sins, which *shows* we are guilty sinners and proves we are Adam's true descendants. The Bible says we were *made sinners* by our family connection to sinful Adam (Romans 5:19). It was our very *nature* to sin; it was who we were as members of Adam's race. You could say it was in our DNA. As fallen human beings, we were born in *slavery* to sinful impulses.

Think over what the scriptures say:
"*And God saw that man's wickedness was great in the earth, and that everything he imagined and thought in his heart was only evil constantly*" (Genesis 6:5).

Genesis 6:5

"I was born in depravity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5).

Psalm 51:5

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Jeremiah 17:9

"For the mindset of the flesh is hatred towards God; it does not obey God's law, in fact, it's not even able to do so" (Romans 8:7).

Romans 8:7

God did not give up on His original plan: He still wanted man to show forth His divine image. But God could no longer use the "original materials"

to accomplish this, because every single person born from Adam's race had *Adam's* sinful image. The poison of sin got into that batch of cookie dough, and spread so that the whole batch is rotten and every piece is full of the same pollution.

In His perfect wisdom, God used *death* to set aside Adam's race, so He could start again. God made His own Son, Jesus, the representative of every human being, like Adam was, and allowed Jesus to be killed on the cross. At the same time Jesus took the punishment for our sins, He also died as "*the last Adam*," because He represented everyone in Adam's sinful race. The Bible says He "*was made to be sin for us*." In God's eyes, Jesus *became* the sin that infected the human race so God could bring an end to that whole sinful race through Jesus' death.

2 Corinthians
5:21

God could never accept you as long as you were identified with Adam. Your ties to the "old creation" had to be completely cut, because God has completely condemned that fallen race. God is not looking for anything good from Adam's race anymore. Thankfully, He gave us another Man Who is perfectly accepted by God and is the object of His love. God perfectly accepts everyone identified with Christ and loves them as He loves His own Son.

Romans 5:12-
21

When you put your faith in Christ, God identified you with "*the last Adam*," and included you in His death on the Cross. You were cut off and removed from the first Adam forever. He also identified you with "*the new man*" and recreated you as a member of "*the [new] creation of God*." In God's eyes, you are no longer in Adam; you are *in Christ!*" Where Christ is, the Father sees you, too!

When you trusted Christ, you didn't receive *salvation* only; you received *the Savior!* God gave you eternal life by giving you *His Son, Who IS Life Eternal!* The Lord Jesus now lives in you through the Holy Spirit. God placed you in unending union with His Son through the Holy Spirit in you.

As a member of the *new creation*, you are now part of a new, pure batch of "cookie dough." The new life in you is a slice of the same divine nature as Christ, Himself and has the same character as Christ.

Ephesians 4:24

Really, the whole Bible is the history of two men – Adam and Christ. Everyone on earth belongs to one race or the other; no one belongs to both. Which one is your identity? Which one will you keep your focus on? God's eyes are set on His Beloved Son, the firstborn and fountainhead of the New

Creation. If you are a member of that race, God always approves of you as He approves of His own Son.

Centuries ago, a man named Stradivarius made violins by hand. These violins today are considered so special and amazing they sell for millions of dollars. The Stradivarius violin was designed to play the most beautiful music possible, and is so well made and fulfills its purpose so well, people consider it a great work of art itself.

God says every member of the new creation is “God’s *workmanship*; created in Christ Jesus unto good works . . .” Some translations say, “we are God’s *masterpiece*.”

Ephesians 2:10

You are God’s “*Stradivarius*,” created to produce music that is so beautiful, even people with the most perfect hearing can only imagine it, because they have never experienced anything like it! You are God’s amazing “*workmanship*,” beautifully designed and wonderfully made to show the image of Christ to a world lost in sin.

Study and Review (Chapter Three) –

IMPORTANT: This chapter will stretch your ability to understand. Feel free to spend more than one week on these truths to make sure you are able to absorb them. They may seem hard to understand and sometimes hard to believe! That makes it even more important that you study them thoroughly. They are foundational to your Christian life.

1. The truths in this chapter come especially from two passages: Romans 5:12-21; II Corinthians 5:14-21. Study them carefully. Discuss what you think they mean. What questions do you have about this teaching of TWO men, Adam and Christ, who represent TWO creations; the Old Creation and the New Creation?

2. Is it hard for you to accept the blame for Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden? Do you think you would have done a better job than Adam and Eve? What do we know about God from Psalm 18:30 and Psalm 92:15? Do you believe this? Can you trust God that Adam’s temptation in Eden was a fair test for all mankind?

3. What are the character traits of a man “IN ADAM?” What are the character traits of a man “IN CHRIST?” Write down as many as you can for each. It may help you to look back over this chapter to remember them. You may also look at Galatians 5:19-23; Romans 3:10-18; I Corinthians 13:4-8.

Chapter Four: *Assurance and Security*

PART A – ASSURANCE OF SALVATION:

How sad it is for a child to doubt that she is accepted permanently as a member of her family. How will that insecurity affect her future happiness and her relationships?

Sometimes Christians struggle because they don't feel they have assurance they are truly saved. Often, what they do feel is the same old temptation to sin and that temptation is as strong as before. They ask, "How can I know for sure I'm saved? I still want to do the same ungodly things!" Doubts and uncertainty are very common for believers, but if we don't go to God to deal with them, they can keep us from growing strong in spirit.

Remember, "*faith is . . . the evidence of things **not seen.***" The way to be sure of our salvation is *by faith*, which means we anchor our belief to *what God says*, not to how we feel or what we do. Our feelings go up and down and we often change our behavior because our feelings change. To rely on myself for assurance is like trying to keep a boat secure by leaving the anchor *inside* the boat. If I want to keep my boat from drifting, I need to hook my anchor onto something *outside* the boat that's firm and can't be moved. The Word of God is that sure and steadfast rock. Our eternal salvation is as sure and reliable as the promises of God's Word!

Hebrews 11:1

We know that we can't be saved by what we do, but *only* by what Christ has done. So why should we look for assurance of salvation in *what we do*? Followers of cults and atheists can live good moral lives and do good deeds. Jesus said many will talk about their "many wonderful works" to prove they are His, but He will say to them, "I never knew you." Human performance is a false ground for assurance. The only solid ground is *Christ's* performance!

Matthew 7:21-23

The one question I need to ask is whether Christ's work on the Cross is enough to save me. Because He is the Son of God, the blood He shed has *infinite* value! His blood is sufficient for "the chief of sinners," it is sufficient for the sins of the whole world, and it is more than sufficient for me.

The Apostle John wrote: *“If we accept the testimony of a man, the testimony of God is greater: for this is the testimony of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He that does not believe God has made Him a liar; because he does not believe the testimony that God has testified of His Son. And this is the testimony; that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; he that does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you that believe in the Name of the Son of God; that you should know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:9-13).*

God wants us to *know* for sure that we have eternal life! This is *God’s* testimony concerning His Son: whoever believes in Him has eternal life. Assurance comes from accepting God’s testimony. If we believe God’s testimony, we will have assurance. If we do not accept it, aren’t we calling God a liar?

We believe the Bible is the true Word of God. And God had *you* in mind when He gave men the words to write. When someone is truly signing His words, it is as if God is standing in front of you, signing to you, personally. God wants you to *know* all that He has written and *believe* these things for yourself. He wants your life to be guided by trusting in His Word more than you trust your own thinking and feelings. God’s Word is Truth; the most pure and trustworthy source of Truth you will ever find.

Exodus 12 tells the true story of the first Passover night. Because Pharaoh refused to let the people of Israel go, God told Moses He would pass through the land of Egypt and kill the firstborn of every family in judgment. But He told the Jewish families to sacrifice a lamb, and He would accept the death of that lamb in the place of their firstborn child. He told them to take the blood of the lamb and put some on the doorposts and on the top of the doorway outside. When God saw the blood, he would *pass over* that house; He would not take the life of anyone in that home.

Imagine we are in Egypt on that first Passover night, and we visit the homes of two Jewish families. As we go into the homes, we see that one family is terribly worried and distressed, while the other is happy and rejoicing! Both families have obeyed God and have put the blood of the lamb on their doorways outside, so both are safe *because of the blood*. Yet only one is enjoying the peace and joy of that safety. Why? *Because only one family is anchoring their assurance to the promise of God!*

PART B: ETERNALLY SECURE

If Jesus has saved you, you can never, ever be lost. Our salvation is *forever*; we are “eternally secure.” *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.”* “Everlasting life” means a life that never ends! If it could end, it would not be “everlasting.” In fact, it is *Christ’s own Life* we receive, and that Life is eternal and can never be destroyed!

John 3:16

Some are afraid we can lose eternal life through some sin or by turning away from God. Again, this makes our salvation dependent on something *we* do, rather than on what Christ has done for us. In Hebrews 10:14, the Bible assures us it is Christ’s finished work *alone* that saves us forever: *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.”*

Hebrews 10:14

“Perfected” means “it is finished” or “brought to completion.” “Sanctified” means God has set them apart for Himself and made them pure. This is a very strong way of saying “by one offering He has completely saved us forever.”

“Saved by Grace” means I have received a free gift that I don’t deserve. In fact, I deserve the very opposite. He has showered me with incredible blessing when I really deserve eternal punishment! How can I become unworthy enough to lose what I could never be worthy of? How can I “un-deserve” what I never deserved to begin with? Because God saved me by Grace, what I deserve or don’t deserve has no part in my salvation!

The Bible says, *“For if, when we were **enemies**, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His Life.”* God already did the greater, harder thing; He gave His beloved Son to suffer and die for me when I was *“His **enemy!**”* Certainly, there’s nothing He won’t do to make sure I am saved all the way to the end, *now that I am His beloved child!*

Romans 5:10

Jesus said, *“And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall **anyone** pluck them out of my hand.”* What strong assurance! If one of Christ’s “sheep” could lose his salvation in any way, *he would “perish,”* and Jesus’ words would be a lie! It would mean He was dead wrong when He said no one can pluck His sheep from His hand. But we know that it’s impossible for God to lie, or to make a mistake.

John 10:27

“Anyone” would have to include you and me! We are included in Jesus’ promise that no one can pluck us out of His hand. We cannot pluck *ourselves* from His hand, either!

Sheep are among the stupidest of animals. They are known to wander off from the flock and end up walking right into a den of wolves or wandering right over the side of a cliff and dying. The word Jesus used for “perish” is in a form that is called “middle voice.” The middle voice is used when the subject of the sentence acts *upon itself* or *for itself* in some way.

Jesus knew that sheep can often destroy themselves through their own stupidity. He purposely used a word that means His sheep will not be allowed to “perish” by destroying *themselves*.

The Bible covers every possible threat to our salvation when it says, *“neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor spirit rulers nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created being shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”* Notice Paul’s list includes all things in the present, and everything in the future – *“nor things to come”*. In other words, NOTHING in this universe can separate us! NOTHING!

Romans 8:38-39

When you trusted Christ for salvation, you were “born again.” To lose our salvation, we’d have to be “UN-born again.” God has made us “new creatures;” we’d have to be “UN-created.” We are made *“members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.”* We are now parts of His body. We’d have to be amputated from Christ!

Ephesians 5:30

There’s a story about an elderly Christian lady who was challenged by a young man who lived near her. “You Christians think you’re safe and secure in God’s hands,” he said. “Aren’t you just a little afraid that someday you could just slip through His fingers?” The woman just smiled and answered patiently: “My dear young man, how could I slip through His fingers? *I AM ONE OF HIS FINGERS.*”

If we know these things, *and believe them*, we will be richly blessed. It will help us to serve the Lord for the right reasons, instead of trying to be worthy of something we can never be worthy of, or trying to keep something that we can never, ever lose. I suggest you go over these facts again and again, prayerfully, and let God convince your heart they are true.

Study and Review (Chapter Four) –

1. How is trusting in our feelings or experiences like “leaving the anchor in the boat?” What is the one sure and solid rock we should fasten our “anchor” to?

2. According to I John 5:9-13, who gives testimony about Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Who has that “witness in himself?”

3. What is the record God gave of His Son? What do we “make” God to be when we don’t believe Him?

4. Whom does John want to “KNOW” that they have eternal life?

5. A. In John 10:28, whose hand can we never be taken from?

- B. In John 10:29, whose hand can we never be taken from?

6. Study I Corinthians 6:19-20. Can we throw away our own salvation?

Chapter Five: *Accepted in the Beloved, or “Life on the Ladder?”*

PART A: ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED

Have you ever seen a picture of a bull with a ring in its nose? That ring is there so the owner can lead him wherever he wants. A bull is big and strong and extremely dangerous. But the ring pierces such a sensitive area that a small tug causes big pain. Because the bull is afraid of the pain, the owner can lead him around like a little lamb.

Are you like that bull?

All over the world people are striving for acceptance. We are always afraid that others will reject us, and that fear is like the ring in the bull’s nose. We have an enemy, and he can use that fear to lead us where he wants, *if we don’t stand on the Truth.*

Each one of us has a longing for acceptance deep inside. Really, only God can satisfy this longing. When we understand how amazingly our Heavenly Father does accept us, it satisfies our souls. Satisfied with God’s acceptance, we won’t be driven by a desperate craving for acceptance from men.

To “grow in Grace,” you need to know the truth that our Heavenly Father accepts you completely and forever *in Christ*. God approves of you ALWAYS, because you are *in Christ*. So whenever He looks at you, He ALWAYS sees His Beloved Son. You can’t do one single thing to lose His approval, because Jesus could never, ever lose the approval of His Father. And you can’t do one single thing to be *more* approved, because God can’t approve of His Son any more than He already does!

1 Corinthians 1:30

The thing you can do, and need to do, is to know and believe God’s Word. God’s Word tells us everyone who has received Christ as Savior has been placed “in Christ.” Because you are in permanent union with Christ, God the Father loves you and accepts you just the same as He does His own Son, Jesus.

Ephesians 1:6 says: “According to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace . . . He has made us **ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED**” (KJV)

Ephesians 1:6

“Accepted” means God will never reject us. But it means much more than that! It means we are “*charming, lovely and delightful*” in His eyes. God has poured out Grace on us. He has encircled us with loving approval and honored us with blessing. He does this NOT because we deserve it, but because God is unending kindness and love.

But God is also righteous and holy. How can He accept guilty sinners? The key is the phrase, “*in the Beloved.*” “The Beloved” is Jesus. God shows how He “accepts” His Son in Matthew 3:17. After John baptized Him, Jesus rose up out of the water, and God the Father spoke from Heaven: “*This is My Beloved Son, in Him I am well pleased.*”

Matthew 3:17

Because God re-created you *in His Son*, these wonderful things are true *of you!* When God looks at you, He sees Jesus, His own Beloved Son, in whom He “is well pleased.” No matter what you do, the Father *LOVES* you, because He always loves Jesus. You are “lovely” to God, because Christ’s own loveliness is passed on to you.

John 17:23

“*In Christ*” is *your* permanent position or place. And where is Christ? He is risen from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and He sits at the right hand of God in Heaven. God sees you *with Him there*, far above the sin and troubles of this world. God could never accept you “in Adam.” God’s condemnation remains on Adam.

Ephesians 2:6

Take a moment to think about this, and thank Him for His wonderful acceptance! Bask in the warm comfort of this knowledge! Meditate often on these great truths so that they become a regular part of your thinking. When they do, it will change your life.

PART B: NO MORE LIFE ON THE LADDER

My **identity** is the truth of who I am. Some people think we *choose* our **identity**, and we can change it when we want. But my **identity** is *determined by my birth!* It includes all the wonderful things God says are true about me because I was *born again* as a *new creature in Christ*. I know they are true because God is the One who says so. He is the Creator of the universe and He knows all things. And it is impossible for Him to lie. *The truest, most reliable things about me are the things God says about me.*

But there's a problem. Although my **identity** is always perfect, my life will not always look or feel "perfect." My **identity** says I am *accepted in Christ*, but I don't always *feel* accepted! In Christ, I am dead unto sin and alive unto God. *So WHY do I still struggle with sin?* If my **identity** is who I really am, why does my everyday **experience** not agree with my **identity**? This seems like a huge contradiction. It can be discouraging and frustrating.

I need to remember that everything God says is faithful and true. But many of the facts of God's Word are spiritual and invisible. God asks me to believe these truths because *He* says they are true and He wants me to trust Him. I don't believe them because I see them and experience them. I accept them *by faith*; not *by what I see*.

Satan and the world around me will tell me lies about who I am. They will tell me I can't be "dead to sin" if I still think and act like a sinner. For this reason, it's so important I *keep* immersing myself in the truths of my **identity**. God wants me to keep agreeing with Him *this is who I am*, and trust *in His power* to change me into that image. As I walk by faith, over time my **experience** will change. He will gradually make my **experience** look more like my **identity**. This is how the life of faith works.

But it is very tempting to focus on my **experience**, instead. When I go through a tough trial, or when things go wrong and it seems like I can't do anything right, I often get my mind on the circumstances rather than on the Lord and the truths of my **identity**. This is so easy to do, but it is the wrong focus. It only blocks the process and slows it down.

People have the wrong idea that the Christian life is like a ladder we have to climb; if we do lots of good things for God, we move up higher on the ladder. If we just keep messing up, we stay at the bottom. Many feel like God only loves and accepts us when we've tried our hardest and climbed to the

upper rungs. If we slip down on the ladder, God is angry and upset with us. We think maybe I've messed up too many times and He doesn't love me anymore. Comparing ourselves with others makes this worse.

It's natural to think God's love and acceptance depend on my place on the ladder, but that's wrong. This is not Grace and it is not God's plan. God wants me to keep my eyes on His precious Son, not on myself and my failures or my own goodness. Life on the ladder leads either to frustration and despair, or pride and arrogance.

Again, God accepts me *permanently* because of my **identity in Christ!** It is not because of what I do, whether good or bad. I am saved by Grace *and I stand in Grace*. God approves of me because of His perfect Son. Nothing I can do will ever change that. God doesn't have me on a ladder. God sees me forever in Christ. And Christ's rightful place with His Father can never be changed or challenged.

Romans 5:2

Still, God does care about my behavior! In John 15:16, Jesus says, "Go and bring forth fruit." In II Corinthians 7:1, we are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." Peter reminds us that the Lord commanded, "Be holy, because I am holy." God always accepts *me*, but He may not "accept" *everything I do!*

1 Peter 1:15-16

But this is very different from living "life on the ladder!" I *should* live a holy life and do good works, but *not* in order to earn God's acceptance. The truth is, once I know and believe I am "accepted in the Beloved," I will *want* to live a life that is pleasing to God because His love floods my heart.

When I accept God's amazing, unconditional love, it awakens and unleashes the love of God in me, and I will *want* to please God because I *love* Him and *His love* is working in me. When I learn from the Bible I am a new creature, and I understand what that means, I will do these things because I know that is who I am and these are the very things the new man in me *loves* to do. This is living *by Grace*. It is "*God working in me, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*"

Philippians 2:13

I am not on the ladder! I could never "earn" God's love, and I don't need to keep trying! My acceptance is not based on my **experience** but on my **identity**. It's not what I "DO," but what Christ has "DONE." God wants me to know and believe I am "accepted in the Beloved" FOREVER!

Study and Review (Chapter Five) –

1. A) What did Jesus say about all men praising us (Luke 6:26)?

- B) What did Jesus say about the things men esteem highly (Luke 16:15)?

- C) What are some things people do to win the approval of others?

- D) Whose approval really matters?

2. A) What does our acceptance with God depend on?

- B) How do we get “in Christ” (I Corinthians 1:30; 12:13)?

3. A) Will God always accept us, regardless of how we act (Romans 8:31-39)?

- B) If God always accepts us, does that mean He always approves of what we do (I Corinthians 5:9-13; 15:33-34)?

C) What are two words in Chapter 5 that show the difference between who we are and what we do?

D) Why should I keep immersing myself in the truths of my ***Identity?***

4. A) If we were on a ladder in our relationship with God, where on the ladder do you think you would be, based on your behavior over this past week?

B) Because you are in Christ, where does God see you on the ladder?

C) How do you think it would affect you to live life “on the ladder?”

D) How do you think it will affect you to know and believe you are “accepted in the Beloved?”

Chapter Six: *Under the Law, or Governed by Grace?*

PART A: THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

The Bible tells us that after God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, He gave them the Law of Moses (Exodus 19-20). The Law set Israel apart from all other nations, and showed them the kind of holy lives they needed to live as God's people. Part of the Law was the Ten Commandments. The Bible says God wrote the 10 Commandments on stone tablets with His finger. The Law also included rules for proper worship and for living together with one another as a community.

Exodus 19-20

God used angels to give the Law to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai. The people stood at a distance. God told Moses to command the people not to approach the mountain, and to put to death any man or animal that came near. The Glory of the Lord came on the mountaintop in fire and a thick cloud of smoke. The whole mountain shook greatly because of the Presence of God. The people heard the loud blast of a trumpet and the terrifying voice of God speaking. God was making a very important point. He was demonstrating how perfectly holy He is, and how polluted and sinful men are in contrast.

The people were terrified, but they missed God's lesson, just like many people miss it today. God's standard of righteousness is absolute perfection, and sinful men have zero ability to live up to the perfect righteousness He demands. Because we are born into this world as members of Adam's fallen race, lawlessness is in our nature and we *rebel* against law.

The Bible calls our inward tendency towards sin "the *flesh*." You could say it's part of the "cookie dough" we all inherited from Adam. God's Holy Law causes friction with our *flesh*, and provokes us to rebellion, because it opposes our natural lust to live for ourselves and the urge do whatever we want.

Galatians 5:19-21

So why did God give the Law? The chief reason is to show men how absolutely we need His Grace! Trying to keep the Law will prove to every person he is completely guilty and *he will never be able to live up to God's standards*. When someone understands what the Law really demands, and

Romans 3:19-21

sees he is totally unable to keep it, it should leave him speechless. He has nothing to say, because he knows he is guilty and has no excuse before God.

“Whatever the Law says, it speaks to the ones who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the Law, no one shall be justified in His sight; for by the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

For many of us, God used the Ten Commandments to show us our sinfulness even when we were little children. It is only when we see how sinful we are that we realize how desperately we need a Savior. God is able to forgive us in all mercy, because Jesus is that Savior. Jesus paid completely the penalty for the broken Law when He died on the Cross.

But now that we are *God’s children*, we *should* be able to keep the Law – *right?*

Wrong. The truth is we still have a strong tendency to sin even after we are saved. Until we die and go to Heaven, each one of us still has the same ***flesh*** we inherited from Adam. It is an enemy to God we all have inside us, and it never changes. It constantly rebels against God’s commands and insists on carrying out its own selfish desires. Because the Law and the flesh are against each other, the Law always provokes the flesh in us to rebellion.

Romans 8:7

The Truth is, God made the Law only for ***the old human race in Adam***. He *never* gave the Law to the New Creature IN CHRIST.

When we try to keep the Law as Christians, it arouses the ***flesh*** in us. This starts a terrible struggle inside, and we fail to obey even though we try our hardest. In fact, the harder we try, the more we sin. It’s like stepping into quicksand. The harder you struggle, the deeper you sink. Of course, this is no surprise to God. He knows we still have that same old ***flesh***.

Romans 7:7-24

PART B: DEAD TO THE LAW

God never intended us to achieve His righteousness through the Law! He intended that Righteousness would be *provided* for men *only through the Man He sent; Jesus, our Savior*. Instead of giving us another Law to live under, God gave us the LIFE of His Son, Jesus Christ! When we were born again, God imparted Christ's own righteous LIFE to us.

Paul wrote, "*I am crucified with Christ; I still live, but it is no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in this body, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Because if righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ died for nothing*" (Galatians 2:20). God says He set my *old self* aside at the Cross. Christ's LIFE is perfectly righteous and does not need to be under any law. I can live righteously now by trusting, not in myself, but in Christ who lives in me.

Galatians 2:20

A man only answers to the Law while he is alive. When he dies, he is set free from the law's demands. Jesus kept the Law as a Jewish man in Israel. But when He died on the Cross, he died to the rule of the Law. The Bible says *we* have died to the Law *with Christ*. We are now free from all the Law's demands!

Does that mean God doesn't care if we live righteously? Does it mean we should just live however we want? Not at all! Because the Law stirs up sin in us, the very reason God set us free from the Law was *to make it possible for us to live godly lives!*

"Through the Law, I died unto the Law, so that I might live unto God" (Galatians 2:19).

Galatians 2:19

God uses the Law to show *us* we need His Grace to live righteously even after we are born again. Just as we desperately needed God's grace to be saved, we learn *we can ONLY live a godly life as we depend on His Grace*.

Law can never produce true righteousness in my life. But Grace can and does! Grace is God completely disregarding what I deserve, and acting for my good out of His own Goodness, Mercy and Love. Grace is God doing for me what I can't do for myself.

I am saved by Grace. I also "stand" in Grace. This means God ALWAYS accepts me just as He accepts His Son, Jesus. And I can come into His

Presence at any time by faith to receive the Grace I need. It has nothing to do with what I do, but only with Who Jesus is. Romans 6:14 promises me sin shall not rule over me, because I am “*not under Law, but under Grace.*” Being “*under Grace*” means Grace now rules in my life. I am under the rule of Law no more!

Romans 6:14

PART C: UNDER THE RULE OF GRACE

How does Grace “rule” in my life? First, Grace sets me free. Grace means I don’t have to keep working and striving, always wondering if I’ve done enough to be accepted. I am *always* “accepted in the Beloved.” I don’t have to struggle to become “righteous” in God’s eyes; He sees me as righteous in Christ from the start! My relationship with God is NOT one of fear and condemnation. It is a relationship of love, devotion and gratitude. This lifts a huge burden from me. It gives me a healthier point of view for living the Christian life!

Second, Grace provides perfectly for my failure. I may still sin after I am saved, but I have an Advocate in Heaven; Jesus Christ the Righteous. Jesus, my Advocate, answers any accusation against me; He points to the blood He shed as full payment for all my sins. My eternal salvation is never in danger. I only have to confess my sins to Him, and my *fellowship* with God that was broken is always immediately restored (We’ll talk more about this in the next chapter).

1 John 1:9

Third, Grace provides perfectly for my success. God says He has supplied me with everything I need in Christ to live a life that pleases Him.

2 Peter 1:3

II Peter 1:3 says God has already given me “all things related to life and godliness.”

Colossians 2:10 says I am “complete in Christ.” It is like a ship that is fully equipped for a long journey on the sea.

Romans 8:31 assures me “God is FOR me;” He is not eager to accuse and find fault with me, but He is cheering me on and working *for* me so I’ll succeed! God very much wants me to do well and He will give me the strength and encouragement I need to win.

Fourth, Grace gives me all-sufficient *motivation* to succeed. Take a few minutes to read Luke 7:36-50. See how the grace of God moved this woman to total devotion to Christ. Philippians 2:13 says, “*For it is God that works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*” God, Himself, puts His own right desires in my heart, *then He gives me the power to DO those things He desires!*

Luke 7:36-50

Finally, Grace *teaches* me to live a godly life. The book of Titus tells me Grace teaches me to *refuse ungodliness* and to *live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.* A right understanding of Grace will never

Titus 2:11-13

encourage sin in my life. Grace lovingly teaches me, like loving parents teach their children to do right. And God's Grace will chasten me in love to encourage me in the way of righteousness.

The supreme mark of Grace is it is undeserved. In fact, under Grace, God gives us the very opposite of what we deserve! We deserve eternity in Hell and God pours out all blessing on us instead. You can never be too great a failure for Grace, because it's only when we've failed that we are qualified for God's Grace! A wise Bible teacher said, "Grace is the side of God you can ONLY see in the presence of failure."

The Apostle Paul never stopped marveling at how God's grace *abounded* towards him when he was "*the foremost of sinners*" (I Timothy 1:14-15).

1 Timothy 1:14- 15

To receive God's abundant Grace, I only need to acknowledge my failures and come to Him for Grace in the time of need. We can live a life of Grace when we realize we *NEED* God's strength ALL THE TIME; every minute of every day.

Grace is not just some dry old doctrine. It is liberating and exciting; full of the Life and Love of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is truly "Amazing Grace" that operates in my life; leading me, motivating me, teaching me, and working to make me succeed. God only wants me to recognize my own weakness and then depend on Christ as my Strength.

You'll be *amazed* at what God can do in the life of a Christian who will live by Grace. God doesn't want us to just "get by." He wants Grace to *REIGN* through us so our lives become a huge spotlight and everyone in the world can see His amazing Grace!

"Just as sin ruled unto death, even so shall Grace now reign through righteousness unto Eternal Life by Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Romans 5:21

Study and Review (Chapter Six) –

1. A) What point was God trying to make to the people of Israel when He gave them the Law at Mount Sinai?

B) What one thing makes men unable to live up to God's perfect righteousness?

2. What was God's main reason for giving the Law to men?

3. A) What do we all have that makes us insist on having our own way?

B) What do we need to lead a godly life that we also needed for salvation?

C) God provided righteousness only through a man. Who is that man?

4. A) The Bible says I *needed* to die to the Law (Romans 7:4). Why?

Chapter Seven:

Sin, Confession and the Cross

PART A: OUR COMPLETE SALVATION

Yes, believers still sin *after* they are saved by Grace. No doubt you've experienced temptation since you believed the gospel, and you've given in at times. Christians do still sin. After you sinned, you likely went through a wide range of feelings, from confusion to discouragement to self-condemnation.

Be comforted, beloved! This is a very *common* experience for Christians. Still, we should never think of sinning as the "*normal*" Christian life! A "*normal*" heartbeat means your heart is functioning in the strong, healthy way God intended. Likewise, the "*normal Christian life*" means you are living the life of victory God intended. Yes, you still have a ***flesh*** or "*sin nature*," but because of the Cross, it no longer has the rule over you! God has provided a beautiful way for you to recover if you fail, and to live in victory over sin!

It's very important to know the Bible speaks of "salvation" not just in one way. God saved you from the *PUNISHMENT* for sin when He *forgave* all your sins and *reconciled* you to Himself. Now, God credits you with the righteousness of Christ. We call all of this *JUSTIFICATION* (or "Salvation: Phase One").

Romans 3:21-28

But God also saved you from the *POWER* of sin. We call this *SANCTIFICATION* (or "Salvation: Phase Two"). Remember, His promise to you is, "*Sin shall not have the rule over you, because you are not under the Law, but under Grace.*" It doesn't matter how powerful the temptation is. It doesn't matter how much "baggage" you carry around from your past, or what "temperament" you are. These don't scare God – ***you do NOT have to yield to sin anymore*** – *no, not even for one moment!* God has given you the victory in Christ, and you can enjoy freedom from sin right now!

Romans 6:14

God has also saved you from the *PRESENCE* of sin. The word for this is *GLORIFICATION* (or Salvation: Phase Three). One day, our bodies will be transformed in the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and will be revealed in the radiance of His own glory. At that time, we will be delivered once and for all from all temptation and from the corruption caused by sin.

Romans 13:11

Notice I spoke of all three as if they were in the *PAST!* You and I see only Justification as a PAST work of God. Sanctification is something we *experience* now, in the PRESENT, and we will only experience Glorification in the FUTURE, when our lives here are over. But God is the Creator and Lord of Time. When He decides to do something *in the future*, you can consider it DONE NOW. It doesn't depend on what we experience. When God decides to do it, nothing in the universe can keep it from being accomplished.

Isaiah 46:9-10

In God's mind, *all three of these* were DONE for us when Jesus died, and rose again from the dead. He says I am already *dead to sin*, and He says I am already *glorified!*

Romans 8:30

Every believer can agree with God and count on these things as finished *NOW*, by faith, even though we have not yet *experienced* our Salvation from Sin's Presence, and we are still in the *process* of *experiencing* our Salvation from Sin's Power. Isn't it amazing that God has provided you with a *complete* salvation, not just a partial one!

How much I *experience* and *enjoy* my completed salvation in this life depends on me. God has equipped me for victory, but I need to take that equipment *by faith* and use it, or it won't do me any good day by day. First, I need to *KNOW* what God has already done for me by learning and understanding what the Bible says. Second, I need to "*reckon*" or *consider* these things to be true, *believing what God says*, regardless of how I feel. Third, I need to *yield*, or *present myself* to God to do His will *by His power*.

Romans 6:1-14

This is God's way of walking in victory. For as long as I live on this earth, I will need to LIVE by these three: *Know, Reckon and Yield*. No, I might not always *experience* complete victory right away. There is a *process* involved, and the process involves time as I *grow* in grace, in knowledge, in understanding and in my faith. God wants me to keep on trusting Him!

PART B: GOD'S CURE FOR THE SIN PROBLEM

So what happens if I sin? Remember, ALL my sins are forgiven and taken away forever through the work Christ finished on the Cross. Because of Christ, I am reconciled to God. Nothing I do can ever change my eternal standing. Satan may accuse me, but Jesus, Himself, presents the perfect case for my defense. He points to the blood He shed for me, and no charge against me can ever stand. Jesus has already paid for any sin I may *ever* commit.

1 John 2:1-2

Still, when I choose sin, it breaks the *fellowship* I enjoy with my Heavenly Father. When I choose sin, I am not walking in agreement with Him. Our *eternal relationship* is never affected one bit, but it disrupts our *fellowship*: it destroys my *enjoyment* of that relationship. I am now walking according to my *old life in Adam*, out of harmony with my God.

1 John 1:6-9

But God has made a very simple provision for my recovery. He only asks that I *confess* my sin, and my fellowship with Him is restored immediately! *Confess* means “*speak the same*.” I need to *admit* my sin to God, *agreeing with Him* that it is sin; taking *His* side against *myself* in this matter. I can confess my sin directly to God. I don't need to go through a priest or pastor. (If my sin has hurt someone else, I should go to them and ask them to forgive me, and do what I can to repair any damage I've done).

Of course, if I decide I just want to keep doing that sin, I am not *saying the same* as God and agreeing with Him this is wrong for me to do. We may need to *repent*, or come to a “change of mind” about our sin *first*, before confession is meaningful. Sin can bring us pleasure for a while, so God often has to do a work in our hearts to bring us to the place of *repentance*. Then we *confess* and we are walking with God again.

It is wonderful that God has made it so simple to walk in fellowship with Him! It's a bit sad, though, that many Christians get caught in a constant cycle of *sin-confess, sin-confess, sin-confess*, over and over again, and they never get beyond that in their lives. God wants far better for us than that. Confessing our sin is the *remedy*, or cure, for *AFTER sin is committed*. But God has also given us an amazing provision to *prevent* us from sinning *BEFORE* sin overtakes us!

God's instrument for saving me from Sin's *PUNISHMENT* is the Cross of Jesus Christ. God's instrument for saving me from Sin's *POWER* is the

same – the Cross of Jesus Christ! However, the way this powerful instrument is used is different.

To pay the penalty for my sins, Jesus died on the Cross as my *Substitute*. I deserved to die, but He died *in my place*.

To free me from Sin's Power, Jesus died on the Cross as my *Representative*. God *identified me with Christ on the Cross*, so in God's eyes, *I DIED WITH CHRIST*.

Galatians 2:20

In one case, Jesus died *instead of me*. In the other case, *I was JOINED TOGETHER with Jesus in His death*. This is an important difference! From God's point of view, the sinner I was came to an end when I was put to death on the Cross with Jesus Christ!

Watchman Nee said, "*Our sins were dealt with by Christ's blood; we ourselves are dealt with by the Cross. The blood procures my pardon, the Cross delivers me from what I was. The blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my 'old man'*" (that is, the person I was because I was born in Adam's race). *I need the Cross to crucify ME – the sinner.*"

Romans 6:6-7

Death is God's only cure for ***the flesh***. All my efforts at self-improvement will never get rid of my sin nature. Sin's career must be ended by death.

PART C: CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

When Jesus was crucified, I was crucified with Him. That's what the Bible says!

Romans 6:1-14

Obviously, I was not physically on that Cross myself. But God has *identified* me with His Son; He has placed me in union with Jesus, *and He "reckons" me to be INCLUDED in Jesus' death!* Likewise, I am *not* physically "dead!" But Jesus physically died *unto* sin once and for all, and God chose to *include ME in that death*. God gives me all the benefits of Jesus' death, without me having to suffer and die on the Cross myself.

Just as God *reckons* these things to be true, He wants me to *reckon* them to be true. God wants me to agree with Him by faith that what He says is *true*, is true *for me, personally*.

You see, when a person is baptized, she goes down into the water. She is *immersed* in that water. God has baptized, or *immersed*, every believer, not into water, *but into His Son, Jesus Christ*. This is an invisible truth of the Word of God. It is not a truth I know because I feel or experience it. It is a truth of God that I take by faith.

Through this baptism, God has placed each one of us *in union with Christ*, so that what happened to Jesus has happened to me. It is as if we were conjoined twins who can never be separated – *where He goes, I go!* Because of this union, God's Word tells me **I** was crucified and died with Jesus on the Cross.

That means the old sinner I was has died, and I am *separated* forever from that sinner I was. The Cross holds him in the place of death, and God wants me to see myself on the other side of the grave from him!

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin; for he that is dead is freed from sin." (Romans 6:6-7).

Romans 6:6-7

God no longer sees me as a member of Adam's race. All I received from my ancestor, Adam, has been nailed to the Cross. God now identifies me with Christ, who is risen from the dead. As I *believe* these truths for myself, I will begin to experience the benefit from them. This is God's way of freeing me from the power of the sin that dwells in me! *"Likewise, reckon (consider)*

Romans 6:11

yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord” (Romans 6:11).

It’s so very important to remember there are *TWO* sides to this truth. I am not just told to consider myself “dead unto sin.” God also says to “reckon myself *ALIVE* UNTO GOD through Jesus Christ, our Lord!” He doesn’t leave me in the grave. God has raised me from the dead in Christ and given me *TRUE LIFE* and a living, intimate connection with Him through His Son.

I needed death with Christ to set me free. But freedom is not all about death; it is *even more about NEW LIFE*.

These are not just verses to pull out in an emergency, when temptation is bombarding me. As God immersed me in Christ, I should immerse myself in these great and crucial truths of His Word. I recommend memorizing them. I need, not just to refer to these facts occasionally, but to *live* in the reality of them every day!

When I know these truths and rely on them, I am in a *Grace* position to obey God and live a life that pleases Him. In the past, I habitually presented my mind and body to Sin, to do whatever my *flesh* wanted. Now, I am truly free to present myself to God to do His will.

“Don’t let sin rule in your dying body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And don’t yield any part of your body as the instrument of unrighteousness unto sin. But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and yield every part of your body as the instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:12-13).

Romans 6:12-13

If God says He has set me free from sin, I need to believe His Word, even if that is not what I am experiencing. In the end of Romans chapter 7, Paul doesn’t wait until he is *experiencing* deliverance before he thanks God for delivering him. He thanks God because *GOD’S WORD SAYS* he already has freedom *in Christ*, even at the very time Paul may be experiencing defeat.

God has performed a radical “spiritual surgery” on me. He has cut me loose once and for all from the infectious cancer of sin and has given me a new life that is healthy and whole. Through my identification with Christ, He has put all the machinery in place to allow me to live free from sin’s rule. And He has provided the power to operate that machinery. That power is the Holy Spirit, Who lives in me, and enables me to live a supernatural life!

2. A) According to this chapter, what three things does God ask me to do so I will *experience the benefits* of being “crucified with Christ” (Romans 6:1-13)? Explain each one in a brief sentence.

B) When I sin as a believer, it does not affect my *eternal standing* with God. What *does* it affect?

C) What is the one thing God requires me to do to restore my fellowship with Him? What scripture verse tells us this?

3. A) According to Watchman Nee, what does Christ’s *blood* do for me?

B) According to Watchman Nee, what does *the Cross* do for me?

Chapter Eight: *The Holy Spirit reproduces Christ in you!*

PART A: THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVES WITHIN US

A greatly respected Christian teacher was speaking to his class on the heavenly life God calls us to in the Bible. At one point, he stopped and said to them, “Men, I realize what I’m describing to you is a *supernatural* life. But I don’t want you to be afraid of that – *because you are supernatural men!*”

The teacher was not saying that his students were better Christians than others. He was saying that there is a *supernatural power* in EVERY Christian that enables him to live a victorious Christian life!

That “power” is actually a divine Person Who lives in each and every true believer in Christ – the Holy Spirit! In fact, any Christian who tries to live the Christian life *without* depending on the Holy Spirit is not living the Christian life at all.

Romans 8:9

We should learn several important things about the Holy Spirit:

- A) Just as Christ is 100% God and equal with God the Father, the Spirit is also 100% God and equal with the Father
- B) He is not just a spiritual “force;” He is a divine *Person* (the Bible says He can be “lied to” and “grieved”).
- C) Along with God the Father and Jesus, the Son, He is an eternal member of the Holy Trinity; God in three persons in perfect unity.
- D) In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit doesn’t draw special attention to Himself, His ministry is to shine the spotlight on the Lord Jesus

The Bible teaches us the Holy Spirit has several very important ministries, both to unbelievers and believers. We will focus on a few that are especially important to us now. First, it is the Holy Spirit who *regenerates* us, or gives us *new birth*. Jesus referred to this when He spoke of being “*born of the Spirit*” in John’s Gospel. This happens at the moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

John 3:5-6

Second, the Holy Spirit *dwells in us*. Through Him, GOD comes to live permanently in each and every believer. Again, this happens the moment we believe and are saved! Each believer’s body becomes His “temple,” and the

John 14:16-17

Church, made up of *all true believers*, is now His Temple as a whole. This takes the place of the Temple of stone in Old Testament times.

Third, the Holy Spirit *baptizes*, or *places* us into Christ. Through this baptism, the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ in an intimate, living way so that we are now permanently “in Christ” with all the spiritual blessings that includes. So many of the wonderful things we described in previous chapters are true of us because of this remarkable ministry of the Spirit (see chapter 3, 5 and 6). He also makes us part of “the body of Christ” (the Church). This baptism spiritually unites us with all other believers in Christ, so that we are all members of one and the same body.

1 Corinthians 12:13

By the way, this is an *invisible* baptism; it is not a baptism that involves water. Our water baptism is a beautiful outward *picture* of what happens when we are *identified* with Christ at the time we are born again.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit *seals* every believer. In Bible times, people would always place a clay or wax seal on important documents, and then put their own personal stamp on that seal. Sealing a document in this way was like our personal signatures today; it made the document legally binding. The Holy Spirit is God’s personal *seal* to our salvation! His Presence in every believer is the mark that can never be erased that we are God’s own children.

Ephesians 1:13

Back in Bible times, a document was sealed to show a business transaction was completed. Likewise, you could say every believer is “sealed” to show Christ has completed the work for our salvation. A seal also showed ownership and security. We are sealed “*unto the day of redemption*,” which guarantees our salvation right up to the time the Lord takes us home to Heaven, no matter what happens in this earthly life.

Ephesians 4:30

PART B: WALK ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

The four ministries we mentioned are all accomplished for every believer, once and for all, the moment he is saved. But the Holy Spirit also ministers in *ongoing* ways in the life of every believer who comes to God in need and relies on Him to meet that need.

In chapter 7, we talked about three things we need to do to experience victory over sin in our lives: *Know* that “our old man” was crucified with Jesus; *Reckon* ourselves to be “dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord,” and “*Yield*” ourselves unto God, as people who are alive from the dead.

Romans chapter 8 gives a fourth thing to do: “*WALK not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*”

Romans 8:1, 4
(NKJV)

The book of Romans teaches there is a “*condemnation*” on Adam’s whole race. That condemnation is like a *sentence* that a judge gives to a criminal for a crime he’s committed. Eternity in Hell was only part of the condemnation on Adam for his sin. Adam and all his descendants were also *condemned* to live as slaves to sin their whole lives!

Romans 5 teaches how Adam’s slavery to sin and death was passed on to every man, woman and child born into Adam’s race. Romans 6 shows how God has ended that slavery for all believers, because when Jesus was crucified, we were crucified also “in Christ.”

But Romans 7 teaches we can still *live* as slaves to sin if we try to live according to the Law. God gave the Law to *Adam’s* race. A Christian trying to live under the Law is acting like a man who is still in the flesh, and he has only the flesh to rely on for strength. As a result, even a believer in Christ will *experience* Adam’s slavery to sin, even though the Bible declares him free!

The Holy Spirit is not mentioned even once in Romans 6 or 7. But Romans 8 speaks of Him 19 times. This tells me the Holy Spirit is the central focus of the chapter. He is the *Power* I need to live free from sin.

The key to *experiencing* freedom from Adam’s condemnation is in the first few verses: “*There is therefore now **NO** CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for the Law*

Romans 8:1-2
(NKJV)

of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2).

To “*walk according to the Spirit*” means two things. It means a new viewpoint: we must share the same viewpoint as the Spirit. The Holy Spirit tells me in scripture that I am no longer in Adam, but I am a “new creature” in Christ. The Law was *against* my very nature when I was a fallen man in Adam. I could not keep the Law, because I was flesh and the Law is spiritual. The Law could only condemn me and show me that I was a hopeless sinner.

But the Bible describes the “new creation” as “*born of incorruptible seed by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.*” It says I am “*created according to God’s image in righteousness and true holiness.*” As a new creature, Christ is now the head of my race. I am made up of the “Christly cookie dough,” instead of the “Adamic cookie dough.” The new man I truly am takes after Jesus Christ, and not after our forefather, Adam.

1 Peter 1:23

The commands that God gives to the new creation are good ways to *describe* what the Life of Christ is like in me. They tell me what the new creation man looks like *in action*. You might say those commands are the same incorruptible seed I am born from; they are in my DNA; they are part of my very make up; they are ingredients in the new creation “cookie dough.”

When I agree with the Holy Spirit, I will see that those commands are not contrary to my true *identity*, like the old Law and Adam. The *grace* commands of Jesus agree perfectly with who I am as a new creature in Christ; I am made of the same stuff. I *am* the man described by these righteous commands; they are the very things my inner man fervently desires to do!

To “*walk according to the Spirit*” also means living by a new POWER. It means to walk, not in my own power, but in the power of the Spirit of the Living God, Who truly lives in me.

The Bible says to “*walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*” Someone said to “walk in the Spirit” is to “depend on the Holy Spirit to do the walking in me.” It means to believe *the Spirit IS my true power*; and to walk in His commands, trusting Him to live the Life of Christ through me. It is truly a life of faith – trusting in and relying on God, the Holy Spirit, moment-by-moment, to do for us what we can’t do for ourselves. It is a very difficult challenge to trust Him this way, because we all have a strong tendency to believe in ourselves and trust in ourselves.

Galatians
5:16

PART C: THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES US LIKE CHRIST

The Word of God tells us as long as we live here on earth, we will live in bodies that the Bible describes as “dead;” meaning, the impulses of our body will always pull us towards sin and the **flesh**. We can’t trust those bodies to draw us towards the righteousness and godliness of True Life. But we *CAN* trust the Spirit of God inside us, because He *IS Life*.

Romans 8:2 says “*for the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*” It is called a “law,” because we can completely depend on the Holy Spirit to act the same way every time, just like we can always depend on the “law of gravity.” We can trust Him to give *LIFE* to our “dead” bodies, and to lead us in the way of righteousness as we yield ourselves to Him and depend on Him as our strength. We can trust Him with our lives.

Romans 8:2

As we rely on Him, the Holy Spirit *fills* believers with Christ, “*who is our life.*” He is the One who gives us power to serve God, and prompts our hearts to praise and thanksgiving. It is the job of the Holy Spirit to manifest the **identity** of Christ through our lives. Only He can produce the fruit of the Spirit in a believer’s life, as described in Galatians 5:22-23: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control*”

Galatians
5:22-23

These qualities go against our selfish, depraved sin nature! They are the traits of the Life of Jesus Christ, not of Adam and his fallen race. I may try to produce them in my own strength, but human beings can only produce counterfeit fruit. I may as well go to the dollar store and buy a bunch of plastic fruit, and then Scotch tape that plastic fruit to a drawing of a tree. I might make it look pretty good, and I may even fool some people, but without real life, it is worthless. No one would enjoy a meal of plastic fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit is a *living* reality that we, ourselves can’t produce. It is fruit that springs forth from the Life of Christ, not from Adam and the flesh. To be “filled with the Spirit” is to accept God’s Word that I have died out of Adam’s race, but that Christ lives in me, and then trust the Holy Spirit to produce the *fruit* of Christ’s Life in me, as I walk by faith in obedience to God’s Word!

When we talk about “being filled with the Spirit,” we are not talking about a flashy experience that only happens for a few special people. There are no “spiritual exercises” we must perform or rigid conditions we have to meet. Some people call it “the deeper life,” but it is really the “normal” Christian life, because it is the life God intended for ALL His children, and it is what happens when we are functioning in a spiritually *healthy* way!

Ephesians
5:18

The Holy Spirit *fills* us when we see that we, ourselves, are *empty*, and we come to Him and *rely* on Him to fill us with Christ. Spirituality, first of all, is like our salvation; it is *by grace, through faith*. It is not something we can earn or deserve, and we cannot manufacture it by our own efforts.

When we first got saved, we came to the Lord Jesus “just as we were,” with all our sin. Now, as His children, we still need to come to Him, *just as we are*, with our need for Him to fill us. Jesus said, “*those who are well don’t need a doctor; but those who are sick.*”

Luke 5:31

Until I depend on the Holy Spirit, I am like a limp, lifeless glove. The glove lays motionless on a table. I can give commands to that glove all day long to do this or do that, but it will just keep laying there. The glove is not able to move, because it has no life in itself. But if I put my hand in that glove; if I fill it with REAL LIFE, it will then do whatever I ask it to do.

Likewise, when we depend on the Holy Spirit to fill us with the Life of Jesus, we can walk in true obedience to the commands of Christ in the Bible. With the power of the Holy Spirit living in me, each *command* the Bible gives actually becomes a *promise* of what He will do in and through me as I trust His Life in me. I can claim those promises by faith in the Holy Spirit who lives in me.

Over time, as we stop looking to ourselves and diligently “*look unto Jesus*” in the scriptures, the Spirit of God gradually *transforms* us into the image of Christ. We must learn that all we need is *in Christ*, and allow *HIM* to fill our vision. As we occupy ourselves with Christ, through the process of *time*, we will take on His likeness, *by the power of the Spirit*.

2 Corinthians
3:18

The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit is the One who is able to make us “like Christ,” and He is extremely eager to do so. He is praying constantly inside us with “groanings” so deep they are impossible to express! When we refuse to let Him have His way in our lives, we “quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and “Self” reigns in His place. When we continue to tolerate sin in our

1 Thessalonians
5:19

lives, we can “grieve the Spirit.” Instead of the *fruit of the Spirit*, we will then produce *the works of the flesh*.

As we seek to apply these great truths, it’s important to see that true spirituality involves a process of steady *growth* in Christ. A teacher named H. A. Ironside said, “Nowhere does scripture teach that there is a sudden leap from carnality to spirituality, or from a life of spiritual apathy to intense devotion to Christ. Increase in devotion to God is always presented as a *growth*, which should be as normal and natural as the way a baby grows to full adulthood.”

For the Lord’s sake, and for your own maximum blessing; and for the sake of all the many, many people who may be blessed through contact with you, keep feeding on the things of Christ in His Word, and keep being “*filled with the Spirit*.” Keep “*growing in Grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ!*”

2 Peter 3:18

Study and Review (Chapter Eight) –

1. What do the words, “*victorious Christian life*,” mean to you? What would that kind of life be like?

2. The Bible says that a Christian’s body is “the temple of the Holy Spirit.” If I understand and believe that, how should that affect my attitude and how I live my life? Meditate on Romans 8:9-14 and I Corinthians 6:19-20. What comfort and encouragement do these verses give you? What responsibility does it mean?

3. Are there ways you have been “grieving” or “quenching” the Holy Spirit in your life? Study Ephesians 4:17-32. What do you see as the solution? Study and meditate also on Galatians 5:16-25.

4. You may want to read this chapter more than once, just to let it “sink in.” People get very mixed up about this subject of the Holy Spirit and how He works in our lives. It might help you to study some of the books that good Christian teachers have written, but always remember to ask *GOD, the Holy Spirit* to teach you, and check what anyone says to make sure it lines up with what the Bible really teaches.

Closing Thoughts –

As we close this study, we hope you'll remember that Grace means God accepts us because of His Son, Jesus Christ; and it means God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The Christian life is a full life. It's good to be busy in the work of the Lord; serving Him, bringing forth fruit to His glory, giving of ourselves to help and encourage others, and spreading the message of Grace to a world of lost souls.

But in order to give, we *MUST* first receive from Him. It is His Grace that renews us and supplies us and enables us to be His vessels of Grace to the world. Apart from Him, we can do nothing and we have nothing to give to others in need.

Always remember the importance of your relationship with the Lord, and with His Word. Every human relationship we have deserves our focused attention. If we value a relationship, we will devote quality time to nurturing that relationship. God gave us His blessed Word, and He wants us to spend time in that Word; it is more precious to us than fine gold.

The Bible is not like any other book you will ever read. It gives us instructions, but it is much more than an instruction manual. It teaches us great Truths, but it is much more than just a great source of Truth.

Jesus said, *"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are LIFE."* What makes the Bible the only one of its kind is God imparts His own Life into the words of this Book.

The Bible says we are *born* by the Word of God, and it is His Word alone that nourishes and sustains the Life He has given us. Jesus said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."*

Jesus also said, *"If you abide in my Word, then you are truly my disciples, and you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free."*

As Christians, we are eternal beings who are only passing through this world. This is not our real home. In fact, we are strangers here living in an alien

land. The world had no place for our Lord and Savior, and it is not a friendly environment for us to grow comfortable in.

In this unfriendly, alien environment, we are like spacemen on the moon; we have to bring our own oxygen supply, because this place can't offer us what we really need for life! The Word of God IS the oxygen supply we desperately need to sustain us and keep us thriving here. It is the lifeline we need to our true home in Heaven.

We are so glad and thankful for people who have labored to provide the Bible in ASL. And we are grateful for this opportunity to bring to you this small work in ASL. We hope these tools continue to speak to the hearts of Deaf people.

But we strongly encourage you to become diligent *readers* of the Bible and of good, Bible based materials that are in print.

God gave us His Word in written form to be read and treasured by millions throughout all ages. When Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, the Lord responded to those temptations every time with "It is written."

With His written, unchanging Word, you can always check for yourself the faithfulness and accuracy of what has been signed. And you can probe deep into depth of the Word God has inspired and preserved for us to this day.

It is always work for deaf people to become readers of English. But God is worthy of our utmost efforts, and He will certainly richly bless our desire to know Him and His will as fully as we possibly can.

May God bless you always in ways beyond all you ever imagined!